

ABSTRACT

PARKER, RUSSELL LEE. Key Partnership Roles in High-Quality Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. (Under the direction of Dr. James Bartlett and Dr. Michelle Bartlett).

Pre-apprenticeship programs are a very effective tool to help youth and adults enter a Registered Apprenticeship program. Participants can also use the experience to pursue further training or enter the workforce. The pre-apprenticeship is designed to help youth or adults take a snapshot of their current skills and use that data to address gaps in their aptitudes. One of the challenges with starting a pre-apprenticeship program is that many business and educational leaders need help knowing where to begin. Business leaders assume the school system or community college will manage the program. Educators assume workforce development organizations like a local Chamber of Commerce or Workforce Development Board will take the reins. The solution is that all of them must be involved. The bridge between the two sectors is a person or group acting as the champion for creating the organization. The research questions that guided this study focus on partnerships. What key partnership roles are needed to start and sustain a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program? What skills and traits are needed to sustain the program? How should the effectiveness of the program be evaluated? Uncovering answers to these questions is essential so communities nationwide will have a list of best practices to use as they begin a program.

To understand how a pre-apprenticeship program begins, operates, and is evaluated, the researcher used a qualitative multi-case study methodology to identify best practices. The cases are three community-based organizations in North Carolina. Data were collected through group interviews, one for each case. Data were analyzed and synthesized using inductive and deductive coding processes. The data was triangulated through three main themes: Partnerships, Startup and Sustainability, and Evaluation.

The significant finding from the research is that a successful pre-apprenticeship program begins and is managed very much like a business. All three cases operated as a 501c3 non-profit organization or an LLC (Limited Liability Company). To operate as an effective program, there must be processes for managing finances, onboarding, marketing, promotion, and general operations. Career counseling is also a significant need in a successful pre-apprenticeship program. All three cases mentioned how important constant contact is with the student. Students need quality career counseling to make meaningful decisions about their career direction. While some community-based organizations do not evaluate their program, reviewing their progress is also essential to growth. The program's goals can only be achieved with a thorough evaluation process.

In the United States, there are very few studies on pre-apprenticeships specifically. Therefore, this research immediately impacts community-based organizations starting and sustaining a pre-apprenticeship program. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by creating a series of best practices that helped three specific organizations develop and sustain their program.

Future research should focus on how career counseling affects the pre-apprentice; how special population students can benefit from a pre-apprenticeship program; and how effective a pre-apprenticeship can be in moving youth or adults into a Registered Apprenticeship program.

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Key Partnership Roles in High-Quality Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

by
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mary Jane Parker, who made a tremendous sacrifice so that I could have the best education possible.

BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Pre-apprenticeship programs prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship or other industry-related employment (Toner, Lloyd, 2012; Stromback, 2011; JFF, 2019). The pre-apprenticeship experience must lead to a Registered Apprenticeship but can also lead the client to further training and professional development (Helmer, Blair, Gerber, 2012). Pre-apprenticeships can take on several forms and aid various demographic needs. The primary factor contributing to the success of a pre-apprenticeship program is the public-private partnership designed to create it (Bridgman, 2003). Public-private partnerships, when aligned cleanly, can aid the development of a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program that is community-wide and systemic (Reinhardt, 2014). This research study is designed to discover the key partnerships and organizational roles needed to develop and sustain a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program. The researcher will investigate the skills and traits each partner needs to support the organization's business functions. Program evaluation will also be a topic of study.

Support Models for Pre-Apprenticeships

Public-private partnerships designed to support pre-apprenticeships can take on a variety of broad models that can vary in size and scope (Toner, Lloyd, 2012). Most follow three main structures: Academic Institutions; Company Coalitions; and Public Entities and Labor Market Intermediaries (Manufacturing Institute, 2014). Academic institutions include the K-12 system, community colleges, career colleges, universities, and vocational schools. Company coalitions are cohorts of businesses that come together because of a commonality, mainly to bring greater recognition to a specific employment need (Wang, 1990). Examples of public entities and labor market intermediaries include labor unions, industry associations, community-based organizations, and government agencies that work to support local business and industry

employment needs (Wagner, 2010; Helmer, Blair, Gerber, 2012). These entities can include a chamber of commerce, the local workforce development board, or the local economic development commission (Manufacturing Institute, 2014). All these models can be used when creating a public-private partnership but can vary in size, the number of members, or the demography served (ACICS, 2014).

The Business Need for Pre-Apprenticeships

As of this writing, the overarching need in many business sectors is the shortage of workers (Toner, Lloyd, 2012). Pre-apprenticeships are one pathway to help individuals interested in entering the workforce do so through a Registered Apprenticeship program (Stromback, 2011; Conway, Gerber, 2009; Taylor, 2006). Growing pre-apprenticeship programs through public-private partnerships help increase the number of employees in the workforce (Worthen, 2004; Kania, Kramer, 2011).

Another issue affecting business leaders is the skills gap or the disparity between what the workforce needs in a worker and what our education system provides. “Gaps between skills learned and skills needed are common” (Lerman, 2010, p. 20). “Almost 40 percent of American employers say they cannot find people with the skills they need, even for entry-level jobs. Almost 60 percent complain of lack of preparation, even for entry-level jobs” (Laboissiere and Mourshed, 2017, p. 2). Eldridge (2022) addresses the digital skills gap. She states that while in years past, employees may be behind by two or three years in their digital skill level, with the pandemic, these same employees may be a decade behind in their knowledge of managing the digital world.

The need of the business community is to have a skilled workforce. This will require more education and training for youth after high school. “The growing complaints of a skills gap

from some of the nation's most prominent companies and business organizations underscore a hard reality: their growing reluctance to hire young people with just a high school degree” (Symonds et al., 2011, p. 4). The skills gap is a business need addressed by a pre-apprenticeship pathway. While federal policy concerning closing the skills gap is being developed, apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships should be included as training options (ACICS, 2014).

Business Goals for Pre-Apprenticeships

Across the nation, public-private partnerships focus on workforce development needs and address various goals. However, the common theme is developing a pipeline of workers for various industries (Nichols, Sofer, n.d.). One partnership may have a goal to realign a regional manufacturing sector that has struggled to find trained employees. Another goal may be to increase the number of Registered Apprenticeships in the IT or Healthcare industry (Reinhardt, 2014; New Business, 2008).

Another goal may be to address equity issues with apprenticeship participation (Tieszen et al., 2020). Women and minorities apply to apprenticeship programs at lower rates and cancel out their apprenticeships more often than their white male counterparts (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). As of 2017, 7.3 percent of apprentices nationally were women, an increase from a decade earlier (Tieszen et al., 2020). With this increase, Tieszen et al. (2020) further state that women's wages are much lower than their male counterparts. Pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs can successfully address the gap between various demographics.

Although each program's goals may differ, the outcome is to create a pathway for employees to enter the workforce (Bartlett, 2019). Key partners in the pre-apprenticeship program must have a clear vision and mission, focusing on the skills gap and developing high-

quality talent (Laboissiere, Mourshed, 2017). The outcome of the partnership is to help employers tap into an existing workforce to close the skills gap (Reinhardt, 2014).

Background of the Problem

With various models used to establish a supportive public-private partnership, leaders face several challenges when selecting team members to build the program (Kibler-Jose, 1995). Each team member fills a specific role in the structure of the partnership and should bring their talents to the table to strengthen the overall program (Nichols, Sofer, 2017). The purpose of each partner is to address specific needs using the skills and talents they bring to the organization. Public or private sector organizations can fill partnership roles, but all need to maintain a clear focus on the overall vision and mission of the program (Morley, 2015).

Disconnect Between K-12 Systems and the Workforce

“The United States apprenticeship system is largely a private-sector program. In the United States, apprenticeship is largely a program for career training of adults who are already employed” (Howze, 2015, p. 49 – 50). Helmer and Altstadt (2013) state that a significant problem in the workforce is that industry partners need to maintain their connection to the K-12 school system. Young adults need to understand the many career options available to them. K-12 support can aid students with career counseling and developing career awareness (Rojewski, 2002). Students can also gain support at their local community college through curriculum and dual credit arrangements (Robinson, 2017). Actual training sites can provide mentoring opportunities and feedback (Kearney, Harris, 2014). To bridge the gap between the K-12 system and the workforce, partnerships with key stakeholders are essential to planning successful youth pre-apprenticeship programs (Martin, Smith, 2017).

Lack of Pre-Apprenticeship Data

The need for more data is a significant problem with the pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship pathway (Kibler-Jose, 1995). The United States Department of Labor does not keep data on pre-apprenticeship programs, although it does keep data on Registered Apprenticeship programs (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). Even with their best efforts, the department can only account for apprentices participating in programs registered with the federal government or state agencies. The Office of Apprenticeships estimates that their data only represents about 60 percent of the apprentices who complete a program (Conway, Gerber, 2009). Studies using pre-apprenticeship data in countries other than the United States include data collected from government and non-governmental agencies (Taylor, 2006). Researchers from Australia and Canada focus on data from alternative sources, such as private industry and workforce training providers, to research pre-apprenticeship performance (Toner, Lloyd, 2012; Taylor, 2006). With accurate data, it is easier for workforce development leaders to gauge the effectiveness of a pre-apprenticeship program since its overall evaluation can become subjective and skewed (Kibler-Jose, 1995).

The Need for a Shared Vision

Another problem occurs when partners have different visions for the pre-apprenticeship program allowing theoretical differences to bring conflict into the organization's leadership (Taylor, 2006). Taylor (2006) further states that differences can occur when discussing funding, curriculum content, performance indicators, and objectives. "Having competing organizational objectives for joint working leads to confusion and conflict as these differences are manifested in differences in behaviors, priorities, resource allocations and in how performance is evaluated" (Morley, 2015, p. 214). Partners should be involved in the design process so they understand

their role in supporting the program (Nichols, Sofer, 2017). Partnerships are successful when the leaders come together around a recognized need and then develop a shared vision around that need (Turner, 2012). When leaders provide program support and a shared vision, trust and confidence will be maintained, and ultimately the program's purpose will be recovered (Morley, 2015). To create a skilled and job-ready workforce, all stakeholders must work collectively to ensure the program's success (Goins, 2015).

Problem Statement

The issues mentioned can improve by implementing a pre-apprenticeship program. High-quality pre-apprenticeship programs need a strong partnership structure to begin and sustain over time (Nichols, Sofer, 2017). One problem with pre-apprenticeship programs is that many education and business leaders need a greater understanding of how to start one and the amount of work involved to sustain one. Success relies on creating a structured partnership model with clearly defined roles and an approach that is systemic and community-wide (Reinhardt, 2014). Since the goals of each community-based organization can be different, the problem lies in creating a partnership structure that meets the needs of each partner while also realizing the broader vision and mission of the established pre-apprenticeship program (Iyer, 2003).

For a partnership to be successful, there must be a champion (Nichols, Sofer, 2017; Hixon, 2016). This frontline leader can be an individual or a group of individuals who see the vision for how pre-apprenticeships can benefit their community (Freyer, Forbes, Howze, 2019). The champion can be a union leader who sees the lack of employees represented in his/her industry (Hixon, 2016). The champion can also be an educational leader from the K-12 system or the community college who sees the educational value of pre-apprenticeships (Amey et al., 2007;

Pedersen, 2019). “Successful apprenticeship programs always have at least one champion – no matter their size or make-up” (ApprenticeshipNC, 2019, p. 7).

A significant problem in creating a public-private partnership to support pre-apprenticeship development and sustainability is getting the right people around the table to work in the same direction (USDOL, 2018; Worthen, Haynes, 2009). Daniel Szpiro, Ph.D., dean of the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University, says, "Identifying the best educational partner must begin with an organization's clear definition of the problem it is facing." (Freifeld, 2013, p. 48). For any organization, including public-private partnerships, one major challenge is to have the right people with the right skills at the right time to see results (Manufacturing Institute, 2014; Eldridge, 2022).

Another area for improvement is the disconnect between workforce development programs and employers (Conway, Gerber, 2009). Industry partners must be involved with secondary and post-secondary leaders to design projects and work-based learning opportunities to reduce this disconnect (Symonds et al., 2011). Internal supervisors and trainers working within the pre-apprenticeship program must also recognize this disconnect to remove barriers for clients entering the workforce (Majeska, Portis, 1998). When everyone in the public-private partnership understands their role and responsibility, the pre-apprenticeship will be a quality learning experience for students (Morris, Blaney, 2010).

Purpose Statement

Pre-apprenticeships support various demographic needs within a local community (Worthen, Haynes, 2009). “Through various unique program designs and approaches, pre-apprenticeship programs can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse populations being trained, the various employers and sponsors they serve, and specific opportunities within the local labor

market” (Oates, 2012, p. 1). The goal can be general to align with the more considerable unemployment need or focused on enabling specific demographic populations to succeed in the workforce (JFF, 2019; Hoyle, 2019). The target market for the program may be youth, adults, women, or minorities (Kearney, Harris, 2014). Youth pre-apprenticeships are for young adults between the ages of 16 to 24 years (ApprenticeshipNC, 2019). The current national unemployment rate for youth and young adults is 8.6 percent, more than double that of all workers (Freyer, Forbes, and Howze, 2019).

This study will discover the key partnership roles needed to start and sustain a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program. Partners in the success of youth pre-apprenticeship programs include the K-12 school system, community colleges, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, and employers (Freyer, Forbes, and Howze, 2019; Nichols, Sofer, 2017). Each partner has a role to play in the program's success, and he/she brings specific strengths and assets to the table (Iyer, 2003). Partnerships provide extra or combine existing resources to develop and strengthen a new or existing organization (McQuaid, 2000). This ability to leverage the strengths of each partner is what makes the relationship successful (Wagner, 2010). “A precursor to successful collaboration involves developing a shared understanding of the relationships and roles for all involved” (Amey et al., 2007, p. 10). This study aims to uncover the key partnership roles and responsibilities that make youth pre-apprenticeships successful. The research will focus on how to pull business and educational leaders together to develop a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program.

Research Questions

Pre-apprenticeships are career development programs designed to support various demographic needs. For this reason, this research study's concentration will focus on partners'

roles and responsibilities and the skills and traits needed to support youth pre-apprenticeship programs effectively. Three research questions guide this study.

1. What are the key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs?
2. What skills and traits are needed to successfully contribute to developing and sustaining a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program?
3. How are youth pre-apprenticeship programs evaluated?

Theoretical Framework

Partnership Theory is the framework for this study. An alliance or partnership can be defined as a bond or connection between two or more individuals or institutions (Iyer, 2013; Harrison, Weiss, 1998). The theory behind creating a partnership is that the alliance will produce a far greater outcome than everyone could produce on their own (Iyer, 2013). Education leaders need help to develop a pre-apprenticeship program for their students. Business leaders also need help to develop and provide quality pre-apprenticeships opportunities for future employees. Both groups need each other to develop a successful program. They both provide resources that will make the program successful; therefore, they must work together to see the program develop and become sustainable. This research will focus on the partnerships needed to form a community-based organization that provides high-quality pre-apprenticeships to youth. The research is based on Partnership Theory and will add to the literature through examples of business and education leaders working across the aisle to develop solid programs. Partnership Theory will also be discussed further in Chapter 2 of the Literature Review.

Business Partnerships with Educational Institutions

“The Association of Career and Technical Education identified Business and Community Partnerships as one of the 12 elements of high-quality CTE programs” (ACTE, 2019, p. 1).

Business partnerships are essential for schools and community colleges to expand existing programs while creating new ones (Fleming, 2017). Business partner support can include donating money; donating goods such as computers or school supplies; offering scholarships or mentoring programs; supporting teacher professional development; or serving on advisory boards to help align curriculum and work-based learning initiatives (Worthen, Haynes, 2003; Fleming, 2017). Partnerships support facility-sharing opportunities during challenging economic situations (Amey et al., 2007). Partners are also becoming more active politically by supporting education through lobbying efforts (Grossman, 2015). By providing various resources through a partnership with educational institutions, the business community can help generate a wide range of quality jobs and training pathways for many young people (Holzer, Lerman, 2014).

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations are non-profit public-private entities that work to expand social services in a local community (Turner, 2012). They work to bridge employment gaps by serving as the intermediary between a particular population and the workforce (Bridgman, 2003). CBOs may be a partnership between churches, school systems, community colleges, and companies such as banks, construction companies, contractors, and unions (Worthen, Haynes, 2009). Their primary purpose is to act as a public-interest organization committed to advancing their social cause (Leroux, 2007). As a public-interest organization, the community-based organization should be “actively committed to increasing the recruitment and participation of people of color, immigrants, and formerly incarcerated individuals” into their program (Tieszen et al., 2020. p. 8).

The Building Bridges Project of Arise Chicago is a community-based organization in Chicago, Illinois. The CBO aims to increase minority employment in unionized construction jobs

(Worthen, Haynes, 2009). Worthen and Haynes (2009) state that their CBO prepares participants to enter pre-apprenticeship programs to move directly into a Registered Apprenticeship in the construction industry. "Banding together as a consortium of partners, meeting regularly, sharing strategies, and practicing collective advocacy both toward funders and toward the contractors in the Builders Association helped the project avoid the pitfall of competition among partners" (Worthen, Haynes, 2009, p. 218 - 219).

Networking

In Partnership Theory, networking is a specific strategy for building a personal partnership (Harrison, Weiss, 1998). Networking is a term used to describe the social relationship that one person has with another. Networking can come through individuals, businesses, unions, trade association leaders, and public officials (Helmer, Blair, Gerber, 2012). Job seekers from lower-income communities may need a network to know about job openings since their network with a prospective employer never intersects (Harrison, Weiss, 1998). An option to help job seekers build a network is to cohort pre-apprentices so they begin to develop social capital and meet the industry leaders who can help them gain employment (Tieszen, 2020). The network developed through a pre-apprenticeship program allows job seekers and potential employers to connect (Alfeld et al., 2013). Since many employment decisions come through referrals from existing employees, pre-apprentices must learn how to build their network to find meaningful employment (Harrison, Weiss, 1998; Bartlett, Kahn, 2017).

Alignment with Research

Partnership theory is the framework selected for this study because pre-apprenticeship programs can only operate effectively with successful partnerships between business leaders and educators. Business and education leaders must work together to develop effective pre-

apprenticeship programs that meet the local community's needs. McQuaid (2000) states that public-private partnerships come from a social perspective, and education is a social issue. Fleming (2017) adds that while few formal evaluations of business partnerships with education entities exist, positive student outcomes are evident. He states that students can find employment immediately after graduation through a partnership with business entities. They can also receive on-the-job training through a variety of work-based learning opportunities. Through his research, Fleming (2017) also notes that school administrators experience positive results from business partnerships through their participation in instructional planning and curriculum alignment. It is only possible to place students into a pre-apprenticeship opportunity with a devoted business partner who desires to see the student reach their fullest potential (Fleming, 2017). This research study aims to identify key partners and what skills and traits they possess to create and sustain a successful pre-apprenticeship program.

Conceptual Framework

Since this study focuses on how community-based organizations create and sustain high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs, a variety of people and organizations play a role in the development and sustainability of the program. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) is shown as a target. The bull's eye of the target is the high-quality pre-apprenticeship program operating successfully with youth gaining worthwhile employability skills. These skills could include gains in communication, math, or science; increased school attendance; fewer failed courses; improved employability skills; and fewer discipline referrals (Shirley, Pritz, 1992). The bull's eye represents the ability to provide support services to youth pre-apprentices successfully.

The next outer circle includes the roles people play who directly impact the creation and development of the program. Included in this circle are those who interact daily with clients

(Nichols, Sofer, 2017; Freyer, Forbes, Howze, 2019). People in these roles see the vision and take the lead on the development and structure of the organization (Morris, Blaney, 2010). This circle includes business and education leaders who work together to design, develop, and sustain the program. This leadership team sees the value of pre-apprenticeships for the local community.

The larger outer circle includes the public and private organizations with a vested interest in the program's success. They indirectly support the development and sustainability of the community-based organization (Morley, 2015). Members of these organizations can provide funding and act as cheerleaders for promoting the pre-apprenticeship program (Bridgman, 2003). They can also provide support through advisory boards, acting as guest speakers, volunteering at career fairs, and supporting teacher staff development and externships (Fleming, 2017).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Partnership Support in a Pre-Apprenticeship Program



In the conceptual framework, there are dependent and independent variables. The pre-apprenticeship program is a dependent variable since it relies on the decisions and support from the independent variables (Creswell, 2014). Independent variables are the individuals and

organizations that make up the public-private partnership. As change happens with independent variables, such as a change in leadership or the economy, there is a cause-and-effect relationship with how the dependent variable, the pre-apprenticeship program, operates (March, Sutton, 1997). This study will discover each partner's role in the pre-apprenticeship program's overall productivity. The focus will be on the two outer rings in the target to share best practices from roles that affect the pre-apprenticeship program directly and indirectly.

Limitations

In this study, there are limitations. One limitation is the researcher's ability to interview each person with a significant role in the organization. Someone else may give feedback on another person's role, which could skew the data based on their limited understanding. The person interviewed may need to be more transparent about all the roles in the organization, so assumptions may also come into play. A leader may assume that a subordinate is doing a specific task when someone else has taken over that role. Having a misinformed interview sample could skew the data.

Another limitation could be the existing structure of the organization. For those organizations in the sample that still need a structured organizational chart, the roles may be undefined and need clarification. The final structure could also be under development if the organization realigns positions or hires a new position. This lack of structure in the organizational chart could be a limitation.

Delimitations

There are certain boundaries with the study. All three cases reviewed for the research are within the State of North Carolina. Each sample is a community-based organization created as a

public-private partnership. The partnerships all offer and promote pre-apprenticeship programs to youth.

A boundary of the study concerns the roles within the organization. The participants are all in leadership positions within the community-based organization. They can affect change, but from different directions in the organizational chart. Their interest may focus on the area within their support role. The focus of the study is to understand these roles and how they affect the program's outcomes.

Definition of Terms

Apprentice – “A person who learns a trade by working under the guidance of a skilled master” (Gordon, 2014, p. 456).

Apprenticeship – “Programs registered with the Department of Labor or a state apprenticeship agency in accordance with the Act of August 16, 1937, commonly known as the National Apprenticeship Act, which is conducted or sponsored by an employer and a union, and which contains all terms and conditions for the qualification, recruitment, selection, employment, and training of apprentices” (Gordon, 2014, p. 456)

Business Functions – “High-level groupings of a company’s capabilities and processes that describe its work. They ensure an organization runs properly and does well for its customers, employees, leaders, and shareholders” (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

Career & Technical Education – “Organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment and current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Such programs should include competency-based applied learning that contributes to an individual’s academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning, problem-solving skills, work attitudes, general

employability skills, and the occupational specific skills necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society” (Gordon, 2014, p. 457).

Career Pathway – “The organization of related occupational areas within a specific career cluster. Within each pathway, a number of discreet occupations have a shared set of technical knowledge and skills” (Meeder, 2016, p. 312).

Collective Impact Initiatives – “Long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication and are staffed by an independent backbone organization” (Kania, Kramer, 2011, p. 39).

Community-Based Organization – “Public-private partnerships involving churches, school systems, community colleges, private entities such as banks, and, in an industry where training is done via an apprenticeship program, as in construction, unions, contractors, and community development corporations” (Worthen, Haynes, 2009, p. 208). For the purpose of this study the terms “community-based organization” and “organization” will be used interchangeably.

Lobby or Lobbying – “Influencing or attempting to influence legislative or executive action, or both, through direct communication or activities with a designated individual or that designated individual's immediate family. b. Developing goodwill through communications or activities, including the building of relationships, with a designated individual or that designated individual's immediate family with the intention of influencing current or future legislative or executive action, or both. Exception: communications or activities as part of a business, civic,

religious, fraternal, personal, or commercial relationship which is not connected to legislative or executive action, or both” (N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 163A-250).

Network – The relationship or connection with others who are already employed. “Such connections can be characterized by strong or weak ties or both. Strong ties are those to close friends, relatives, or members of the same race, ethnicity, or clique. Weak ties are more voluntarily associational, referring, for example, to relationships with former schoolmates or comrades in some political or civic activity” (Harrison, Weiss, 1998, p. 36-37).

Partnership – A bond or connection between two or more individuals or institutions. The alliance or partnership is based on the expectation that the result of the partnership will produce an outcome far greater than anything each individual can produce on their own (Iyer, 2013).

Pre-Apprenticeship – “A paid or unpaid work experience used for recruiting apprentices that includes either on-the-job learning, related education, or a combination of both” (Andrews-Standafer, 2018).

Pre-Apprenticeship (Adult) – A pre-apprenticeship program with a Registered Apprenticeship sponsor as a principal partner. The adult pre-apprenticeship serves participants who are 24 and older. The program includes adult learning styles and their distinct life situations—often including the challenges of being unemployed and having family responsibilities. Training may focus on developing specific academic and technical skills for the adult workforce (ApprenticeshipNC, 2019, Gomez Antolinez, 2022).

Pre-Apprenticeship (Youth) – A pre-apprenticeship program serves individuals between the ages of 16 to 24. Youth pre-apprenticeships can have various institutional frameworks, depending on which segments of youth are being served. Students still in school may receive pre-apprenticeship training through a collaboration between their school and Registered

Apprenticeship sponsors. Community or faith-based organizations also sponsor programs for out-of-school youth. These partnerships address behavioral, economic, and other barriers to employment of youth who do not have a clear career path. (ApprenticeshipNC, 2019).

Public-Private Partnership - Where two or more organizations agree to act with commitment consistent with such an agreement to contribute competencies, organizational capabilities, and capacity toward achieving shared objectives (Morley, 2015).

Work-Based Learning – “Work-based learning is an instructional strategy that prepares all students for success in postsecondary education and careers. The primary purposes of work-based learning are to expose students to future options and provide opportunities for skill development and mastery over time. Work-based learning experiences involve interactions with industry or community professionals linked to school-based instruction” (Linked Learning, 2012, p. 2).

Organization of the Study

This study is a traditional five-chapter qualitative research analysis. The research will be conducted through interviews with the leadership teams from three community-based organizations that provide pre-apprentice and apprenticeship opportunities to their communities. Each organization is a public-private partnership created to support social issues in their region of North Carolina.

The research questions to be answered focus on each leader's role in the startup and sustainability of each public-private partnership. The researcher will also look for skills and traits essential to developing a pre-apprenticeship program. Interview questions are divided into three main categories: Partnerships, Start-Up and Sustainability, and Program Evaluation. Additional questions are nested within these major themes and included in Appendix B.

Chapter Summary

Pre-apprenticeship programs are a challenge to start and sustain. It takes a person or team with a vision for the program who can build consensus with others in the community and set strategies to keep it going (Hixon, 2016). Once a leader starts a pre-apprenticeship program, a significant challenge is selecting the others who need to be involved (Nichols, Sofer, 2017). The challenges for leaders and their teams are to select qualified partners, define the roles, and assign the responsibilities to make the program successful. To build the team, the leader needs to look at the strengths and talents each partner can bring to the team (Nichols, Sofer, 2017). This study will uncover the roles within three successful public-private partnerships and how the skills and traits needed for those roles will aid other communities as they develop additional programs.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study focuses on three interconnected strands. One needs a clear definition of work-based learning and the pre-apprenticeship model to begin a study on pre-apprenticeships. Vital to the study is an analysis of partnership theory and how it applies to community-based organizations that support pre-apprenticeship programs. Finally, essential to the research is an understanding of the local, state, and federal policies and legislation that guide apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship structure.

When evaluating previous dissertations, two specific writings were significant to this study. While much literature on pre-apprenticeships in the United States does not exist, Ellen Kibler-Jose (1995) and Terrence Robinson (2017) write considerably in their dissertations about the key partnerships needed to support work-based learning initiatives. They show how partnerships help with school-to-work transitions and why work-based learning is a skills gap improvement strategy where business leaders should invest (Kibler-Jose, 1995; Robinson, 2017).

Kibler-Jose (1995) recommends that further research is needed on partnerships. "Further study is needed to examine the complexity of these collaborative efforts if these new alliances are to avoid problems of past school/business partnerships" (Kibler-Jose, 1995, p. 7). Her writing focuses on the partnerships within a joint school and community-based organization vocational support program in Indiana. She explicitly mentions partnerships and how the roles they fill support the organization and, ultimately, the students. In the conclusion of her dissertation, she addresses the need for further research. "Studies of other programmatic partnerships between local educators and regional and local divisions of Workforce Development . . . partners could provide additional insights into the partnerships and programs' approach to educating at-risk youth" (Kibler-Jose, 1995, pp. 216 – 217). The dissertation includes research questions and

findings used as building blocks for this study. Three specific questions from her writing are listed below.

- What responsibilities have business and education leaders assumed with the program?
- How has the relationship in the partnership evolved?
- How and in which way does the collaboration design enable the partnership to address the realities of a changing workplace in a changing economy? (Kibler-Jose, 1995, p. 8)

Building on the partnership need, Terrence Robinson (2017) states in his dissertation that "it takes a strategic plan and partnership in order to pull all of the resources together for a comprehensive apprenticeship program" (Robinson, 2017, p. 16). His dissertation studies how work-based learning opportunities for students are used to address the skills gap through highly structured business partnerships. He mentions how business community partners must provide hands-on experiences for youth and new workers to learn needed skills. In alignment with this research, he also mentions the need for developing specific roles for each partner. He mentions the champion and how this person must have the passion and persistence to see the program become successful. He shares through his research that companies that engage in partnerships with education entities should see work-based learning as an investment in their community (Robinson, 2017).

Work-Based Learning

Miller (1984) states that vocational education bridges school to work. With the passage of the *National Vocational Education Act of 1917*, also known as the *Smith-Hughes Act*, the federal government stated that vocational education should include a work-based learning component where students are supervised or directed by an instructor in a real-world practice experience (*National Vocational Education Act, 1917*). High-quality work-based learning is integral to

career development and should be systemically integrated into Career & Technical Education programs (Alfeld et al., 2013; Gordon, 2014). From the inception of the *Smith-Hughes Act* to the approval of the *Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, vocational education has been the catalyst to link school to the world of work (Hyslop, 2018; Gordon, 2014; *Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, 2018).

Work-based learning is an overarching term that includes a continuum of on-the-job training activities ranging from less-intense actions aimed at career awareness and exploration to more involved programs aimed at career preparation and training (Miller, 1984; Morris, Blaney, 2010). As part of a vocational education pathway, these activities can include internships, job shadowing, school-based enterprises, cooperative education, practica, or apprenticeships (Rojewski, 2002). “High School students with work-based learning experiences are more likely to achieve degree attainment and be better prepared for the workforce than peers without work-based learning opportunities” (Bartlett, Howze, 2018, p. 2). Work-based learning activities are designed to help students and workers prepare and access good jobs through supervision and mentoring in a real-world work experience (Spaulding et al., 2020).

For centuries people have been transferring job skills from one generation to the next. During the Middle Ages, a master craftsman would contract an apprentice to teach a trade or skill (Wolfe, 2021). Today, countries still follow a similar process as part of their apprenticeship model (Taylor, 2006). “In Germany, approximately 70 percent of high school youths participate in an apprenticeship program of three years or more, which combines classroom education with paid on-the-job training in a local business or factory” (Kibler-Jose, 1995, p. 37). European apprenticeship models work so closely with education entities that they drive instruction to create a pipeline of skilled workers (Deal, 2017).

In 1911, Wisconsin passed the country's first apprenticeship law, which became a model for other states and the federal government in developing their systems. (The NorthEast Wisconsin Building & Construction Trades Council, 2022). Since then, several other bills have been enacted to promote work-based learning, specifically apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, as part of an overall vocational pathway (Gordon, 2014; Bragg et al., 2002). President Trump signed Executive Order 13801 – *Expanding Apprenticeships in America* to help promote affordable education and rewarding jobs for American workers (Executive Order 13801, 2017). The focus of the Executive Order was to close the skills gap by strengthening job-ready skills. The Executive Order documents that many American workers cannot afford higher education, and there is a skills gap between what potential employees know and what a job requires (Executive Order 13801, 2017). Both issues can be addressed by creating quality apprenticeship programs and removing ineffective job-ready programs.

The Pre-Apprenticeship

The Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning defines a pre-apprenticeship in a framework designed and promoted by Jobs for the Future (2019). The framework summarized in Appendix A provides a definition and a process for creating and maintaining pre-apprenticeships programs. The framework was created to give communities a model to use when starting a pre-apprenticeship and includes six tenets that frame the work. Some pre-apprenticeship models may have only some of the characteristics mentioned in the design, but a majority possess most (J.F.F., 2019).

Pre-apprenticeships prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship or another high-quality apprenticeship program, ultimately leading to a career (Toner, Lloyd, 2012; J.F.F., 2019). A range of community partners can manage the pre-

apprenticeship program, including community-based organizations, high schools, labor organizations, workforce agencies, or a community college (Worthen, Haynes, 2003; J.F.F., 2019). The U.S. Department of Labor issued a Training and Employment Notice to define a quality pre-apprenticeship program further (Oates, 2012). The notice states, "pre-apprenticeship is defined here as a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, Registered Apprenticeship program(s)" (Oates, 2012, p. 2).

The definition of a pre-apprenticeship differs slightly when comparing terms between education leaders and industry experts (Helmer et al., 2012). In industry, the pre-apprenticeship definition is more extensive. Since the number of slots for apprenticeships can be relatively small, the pre-apprenticeship option can lead a client directly into employment (Stromback, 2011; Toner, Lloyd, 2012). For industry leaders, a broader definition includes a pathway leading directly into the labor market or further training (Stromback, 2011). Some in the industry debate whether the term "pre-apprentice" should be used at all since the program can be a fertile training ground for those who plan to go directly into the workforce or further their education (Conway, Gerber, 2009).

Alluding to multiple completion options, the United States Department of Labor (2018) states that while not all clients enter a Registered Apprenticeship program, the design of the pre-apprenticeship should guide them to that option. The USDOL further suggests that pre-apprenticeships are a unique work-based learning opportunity because they lead a client into another work-based learning opportunity, a Registered Apprenticeship program (USDOL, 2018).

Pre-Apprenticeships Target Diverse Talent and Demographics

The United States Department of Labor (2018) states that the pre-apprenticeship experience can support a specific demographic need. Pre-apprenticeship support strategies can target a specific industry or a specific group of people (Conway, Gerber, 2009; Nichols, Sofer, 2017). In their Training and Employment Notice dated November 30, 2012, the department states that pre-apprenticeship programs can serve as a pathway to employment in an industry, such as construction or electrical trades. Program goals can promote the trades to women or marginalized groups who may not have a direct pathway to employment (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). Other demographics supported through a pre-apprenticeship program include veterans or youth apprentices (USDOL, 2018). By tailoring pre-apprenticeship programs to various demographics, the playing field is leveled for "those who face the greatest hurdles, including people of color, youth, people who are immigrants, people with disabilities, women, and others" (Tieszen et al., 2020, p. 3).

Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. is an example of a pre-apprenticeship program that helps women enter and succeed in the construction trades (Conway et al., 2010). The organization provides career fairs that promote the trades as an option for women and young girls. They aim to encourage entry into trade programs for those who may not consider the industry an option (Conway et al., 2010). The United States Department of Labor (2018) further recognizes a pre-apprenticeship program designed to support women in manufacturing. Although the program is now disbanded, the Partnership for a Competitive Workforce in Cincinnati, Ohio, used an approach where women in pre-apprenticeship programs learned manufacturing skills. At the same time, their children were concurrently enrolled in STEM programs (USDOL, 2018). The

strength of the Ohio and Oregon programs is their focus on providing services that could remove barriers to employment for a specific demographic.

Youth Pre-Apprenticeships

ApprenticeshipNC (2019) identifies “pre-apprentice” and “youth apprentice” as interchangeable terms. Either term denotes a young person between 16 and 24 participating in a formal pre-apprenticeship program to learn more about an industry or a specific employer (Lerman, 2012; Holzer, Lerman, 2014). Toner and Lloyd (2012) also posit that a pre-apprenticeship program aims to educate youth to the point where he/she can make an educated career choice.

Whereas adult pre-apprentices may need support for their lack of academic or technical skills, the challenge for youth pre-apprentices is a lack of an understanding of the world of work coupled with the rigid formality of high school graduation requirements (Lerman, 2012, Bartlett, Howze, 2018). Holzer and Lerman (2014) concur that youth apprentices/pre-apprentices need support to understand industries and the jobs that support those industries. They continue that youth need more basic work experience and an understanding of the credentials required for a specific job (Holzer, Lerman, 2014). To alleviate this discrepancy, Bartlett and Howze (2018) affirm that all students should participate in Career & Technical Education courses while in high school. A quality pre-apprenticeship through Career & Technical Education can help youth make effective choices about their career (Gordon, 2014).

The Harvard Graduate School of Education, in their 2011 report *Pathways to Prosperity*, mentions the large number of students who do not graduate from high school and how this fact is negatively affecting the workforce (Symonds et al., 2011). The report states that over 1 million students drop out yearly for various reasons (Symonds et al., 2011). Most young adults between

the ages of 16 and 24 need proper vocational training, while jobs for that demographic are decreasing (Symonds et al., 2011). The report shares data showing that from 1973 until 2007, the number of jobs requiring a high school diploma declined from 32 percent to 11 percent of the total employable workforce. Since the publication of the Harvard Report, the United States Department of Education (2019) documents that the graduation rate has been increasing across all population subgroups. However, as of 2017, dropouts still stood at 5.4 percent or 2.1 million students. From their data, even with an increase in graduation rates, students are still dropping out at an alarming rate.

In 2017, the Kinsley Construction Company of York (P.A.) partnered with the York County Alliance for Learning to develop a pre-apprenticeship program in construction (Pederson, 2019). Businesses in this region of Pennsylvania were skeptical about a pre-apprenticeship program, although their apprenticeship programs had a solid track record for helping adults enter the workforce. After three years, the pre-apprenticeship program has proven to be very successful in preparing students for work and leading them into a Registered Apprenticeship (Pederson, 2019). Work-based learning programs, including pre-apprenticeships, allow students to develop skills valued by employers (Bartlett, Howze, 2018).

Adult Pre-Apprenticeships

Many adults entering or reentering the workforce face different challenges than youth pre-apprentices when seeking gainful employment (Conway, Gerber, 2009). Low-skilled adults are very cautious or hesitant about furthering their education since they may have felt humiliated during school. The thought of further education only adds to the pressure (Illeris, 2006). Helmer and Altstadt (2013) also suggest that adult pre-apprentices may need more test-taking strategies or study skills. For these reasons, adult pre-apprenticeship programs are more likely to provide

support or wrap-around strategies for clients needing improvement in their academic or technical skills (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018; Tieszen et al., 2020). The key is to evaluate the employee's gap in skills and develop a training plan that meets those needs (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013).

To spotlight one very successful adult pre-apprenticeship program, Livengood (2017) shares an example from Detroit, Michigan, of a small non-profit organization meeting the workforce needs of its local community. Skilled Trades Enrollment Assistant Program, or STEAP, in partnership with Better Man Outreach, is a non-profit mentoring program for adult men, most of whom have been previously incarcerated. In his article, Livengood (2017) shares how Dino Vann championed the program to help low-skilled men become gainfully employed. Livengood highlights that while Detroit experiences an economic resurgence and construction jobs are increasing, the city's skilled labor force does not meet the demand. Vann created the program to align with Detroit's specific labor market needs. The program is successful because each applicant is taught based on their identified gap in skills. Mr. Vann says, "We build them into an all-around, qualified, employable worker so (contractors) cannot have any excuses for not hiring our guys" (Livengood, 2017, p. 1). STEAP is successful because the focus is on identifying the skills gap for each client while aligning employment services to meet the specific labor needs of the community.

Summary of Pre-Apprenticeships

Pre-apprenticeship programs aid youth and adults in beginning a Registered Apprenticeship, entering the labor market, or furthering their education and training (Helmer et al., 2012). Nichols and Sofer (2020) see pre-apprenticeships, whether serving youth or adults, as a program that helps "a diverse range of workers access jobs with good starting wages and the prospect of wage and career growth" (Nichols, Sofer, 2020, p. 1).

While pre-apprenticeships are a positive experience for many, research and data on the topic are limited, while standards for implementing a quality program can be inconsistent (JFF, n.d.). The United States Department of Labor keeps data on Registered Apprenticeships but not on pre-apprenticeship programs. The Center for Law and Social Policy (2022) recommends that the federal government require pre-apprenticeships to be registered. Once registered, pre-apprenticeship data can be collected along with Registered Apprenticeships (Tieszen et al., 2020). In North Carolina, where this study is based, pre-apprenticeships must be registered with the State Approving Agency, which is ApprenticeshipNC (Standafer, n.d.). Jobs for the Future (n.d.) also recommends that stronger standards be implemented to guarantee the quality of pre-apprenticeship programs nationwide.

Contributing to the lack of data, more research is needed within the United States, specifically about pre-apprenticeships (Kibler-Jose, 1995). “Americans know little about the success of apprenticeship systems abroad nor are they or their political leaders aware of the growth of apprenticeship programs in Australia, England, and other advanced economies” (Lerman, 2012, p. 6). Researchers in countries such as Australia and Germany have undertaken studies with reliable student data to determine the effect of pre-apprenticeships (Karmel, Oliver, 2011; Toner, Lloyd, 2012). The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in Australia commissioned several studies to document pre-apprenticeship trends. They looked at enrollment and the effectiveness of active pre-apprenticeships. They also reviewed the outcomes each pre-apprentice experiences as they leave the program (Foley, Blomberg, 2011; Karmel, Oliver, 2011; Toner, Lloyd, 2012). Political and workforce leaders in other countries, such as England, Denmark, and Canada, have also engaged in studies to discover pre-apprenticeships' effectiveness (Kuczera, 2017). Pre-apprenticeship research in the United States has not been a

stand-alone strategy but undertaken as part of the research focused on Registered Apprenticeship programs (Lerman et al., 2009).

Partnership Theory

Researchers have studied Partnership Theory in various fields "such as law, medicine, investment banking, management consulting, advertising, and accounting" (Levin, Tadelis, 2005, p. 1). Partnerships are also needed to support environmental and sustainability issues where one organization needs help to undertake the task. Worthen (2004) states that partnerships are essential to aid with funding and assist with decision-making. Each member of the partnership must come to the table ready to meet and share their experiences (Worthen, 2004).

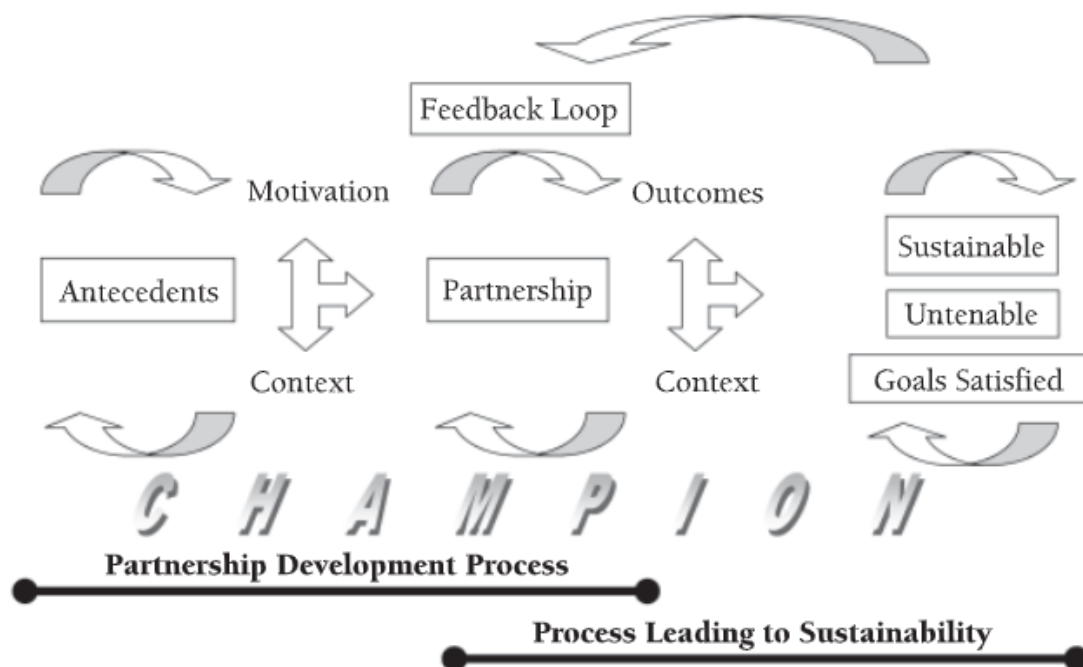
The primary purpose for forming an alliance or partnership is to create an organization "based on the expectation that the result of an alliance will produce an outcome far greater than anything that each individual could have produced independently. In other words, the synergistic increase in effectiveness resulting from the alliance is the primary motive in its formation" (Iyer, 2003, p. 42). Each partner brings specific attributes to the table with the knowledge that other partners are there to add their strengths to the organization. Iyer (2003) states further that "the pooled advantages can stem from each organization's strengths compensating for the other's weaknesses or from amplifying or enhancing their combined strengths" (Iyer, 2003, p. 43).

For partnerships to be successful, "it is critical to develop a common understanding of relationships and roles involved in the partnership (Essex, 2001, p. 7). "Establishing common language along with shared understanding as well as developing expectations, goals, and assessment measures represent movement toward making a partnership part of the life of the institutions involved" (Essex, 2001, p. 8).

To explain the theory of partnerships in more detail, Amey et al., (2007) developed a model (Figure 2) that shares how partnerships develop and grow between education entities and the business community. “Antecedents derived from the context and issues facing individual partners act as an incentive for the partnership (Amey et al., 2007, pp. 9-10). The issues become the partner’s motivation to engage.

Figure 2

Partnership Development Model



The two major themes are feedback and the role of the champion (Amey et al., 2007). Feedback must be shared among the partners to maintain and sustain the partnership. “Within the early development and maintenance stages of partnership development, feedback is critical; it helps organizational members make sense of intended and actual outcomes (Amey et al., 2007, p. 11). The common thread that ties the partnership together is the champion. This is the person who keeps all the processes moving. “The champion is a person or group that advocates for the

initiative. Typically, the champion believes in the partnership and its goals. The champion needs to have the support of the positional leader but does not have to be in a particular position of traditional power within the organization (Amey et al., 2007, p. 11).

Types of Partnerships

Iyer (2003) notes that an alliance or partnership definition can include various types of organizations. The partnership can include businesses, non-profit organizations, and government entities. Kopp (2020) discusses for-profit business partnerships falling into three main categories: general partnerships, limited partnerships, and limited liability partnerships. Bridgman's (2003) definition mentions partnerships involving non-profit organizations. Many non-profits participate in public-private partnerships designed to resolve a social issue, workforce development being one of them (Bridgman, 2003).

Public-Private Partnerships

Morley (2015) states that public-private partnerships, or "joint working," is "where two or more organizations agree, and act with commitment consistent with such an agreement, to contribute competencies and/or organizational capabilities and/or capacity towards the achievement of shared objectives" (Morley, 2015, p. 44). Public-private partnerships, which have existed since the Roman Empire, are only formed if at least two organizations come together to form an agreement (Forrer, Kee et al., 2010). Those involved must understand the shared objectives and roles they play for it to be successful (Morley, 2015; Bridgman, 2003).

Morley (2015) further states that public-private partnerships are established for various reasons. Some focus on changing how public entities provide resources and services to their local communities. For example, public entities previously managed trash collection, but now that work is outsourced through partnerships with private companies (Morley, 2015). Public

entities previously provided public services, but that is no longer the case. Katz and Bradley (2013) posit that many metropolitan areas are seeing the “rise of new forms of public partnerships to design, finance, deliver, and operate core elements of metropolitan infrastructure” (Katz, Bradley, 2013, p. 199). “The expanding domain of goods and services provided by P.P.P.s includes private toll roads, schools, hospitals, security services, wastewater treatment, and emergency response” (Forrer, Kee et al., 2010, p. 475). Many private companies carry out these services of public entities through a public-private partnership.

Essential to this research, public-private partnerships can also support workforce development issues. Bridgman (2003) uses Eva's Phoenix as an example of a public-private partnership to get homeless youth off the streets in Toronto, Canada. The purpose of the partnership, started by Eva Maud Smith, was to help youth ages 16 – 24 obtain employment, so they can eventually find affordable housing. For Eva’s Phoenix to become successful, multiple partners came to the table to support the development of the program. Bridgman (2003) details how the City of Toronto donated a vacant 20,000 sq. ft. warehouse to the effort. The City also helped with \$500,000.00 in capital funds for renovations to the building (Bridgman, 2003). “A number of labour unions and private businesses helped to set up mentoring programmes” (Bridgman, 2003, p. 210). The program's success lies in the fact that each entity shares the same vision. As the champion, Ms. Smith started with a mission to help Toronto's youth, and her passion is now one of Canada's most successful public-private partnerships (EVA’s Initiative, 2022).

Forrer, Kee et al., (2010) give an overview of the purpose of forming a public-private partnership. “The assumption is that governments often do not have the in-house knowledge of the most cost-effective ways to deliver many public goods and services—either directly or

through contracts” (Forrer, Kee et al., 2010, p. 477). Government entities increasingly rely on consulting firms to do their thinking since they do not possess the expertise to manage certain goods and services (Guttman, 2000). “The presumption is that governments can partner with private firms in a relationship in which government gains access to the technical expertise it requires and can assess the cost-effectiveness of private delivery, and firms are willing to share their expertise in exchange for long-term service contracts” (Forrer, Kee et al., 2000, p. 477).

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations are non-profits that “share a common feature in that they exist to fulfill a mission (Leroux, 2007, p. 414). Leroux (2007) states that non-profit organizations are partnering with government entities, unions, and for-profit companies to develop a structure for solving the social issues faced by their community. Compared to public-private partnerships, which focus on providing public services, such as water and sewer, community-based organizations are committed to advancing their social cause (Morley, 2015; Forrer, Kee et al., 2010). Groups can “include social-service providers, arts and cultural institutions, local civic clubs, and community groups organized around a variety of neighborhood interests” (Leroux, 2007, p. 412).

Many community-based organizations are established to support workforce development issues at the local level. Harrison and Weiss (1998) mention The Center for Employment Training in San Jose, California, as an example of a community-based organization that started as a job training center for farm workers. The program, which started in 1967, was so successful that it quickly expanded, and by 1976, there were six locations in the central California region. As Harrison and Weiss (1998) reference, what started as a small community-based organization grew into a much larger community development corporation. The C.E.T. website (2020) shows

the organization's focus on supporting the community's economic development. "The mission of C.E.T., an economic and community development corporation, is to promote human development and education by providing people with marketable skills training and supportive services that contribute to self-sufficiency" (C.E.T., 2020, p. 1). The Center for Employment and Training is a thriving community-based organization that began as a local workforce development entity. However, it is now the central hub of a much more extensive network of organizations interested in providing job skills to potential employees (Harrison, Weiss, 1998).

C.E.T. is an example of how a small community-based non-profit organization has been able to move and shift with changes in the industry. As Harrison and Weiss (1998) attest, while farming was the program's focus when it started, it now provides training for employees in business, childcare, construction and building maintenance, culinary, medical, technical trades, truck driving, and logistics.

Partnerships in Career & Technical Education

Career & Technical Education is a collection of "organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment and current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree" (Gordon, 2014, p. 457). Federal legislation governs the program, including several references to partnerships and work-based learning (Hyslop, 2018). The *Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (2018) defines work-based learning as the sustained interaction with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings. Alfred et al., (2013) "suggest that integration of high-quality W.B.L. (work-based learning) more systematically into C.T.E. programs in the United States may be a promising way to increase

students' educational engagement and their career readiness and attainment" (Alfred et al., 2013, p. 1).

The Association of Career & Technical Education (2018) developed a framework so communities can effectively develop high-quality C.T.E. Programs of Study. Developing business and industry partnerships is one of the 12 tenets of the framework to help build high-quality C.T.E. programs (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018). Career & Technical Education, specifically work-based learning programs, will only be successful if business partners open their doors to allow students inside their world of work (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018). Fleming (2017) states that “quality business partnerships attempt to advance student opportunities by collaborating on curriculum development, providing work-based learning programs, and participating in career pathway development advising” (Fleming, 2017, p. 11). Career & Technical Education programs thrive on business partnerships to provide real-world school-to-work opportunities for students (Bartlett, Howze, 2018). Gordon (2014) further posits that business partnerships with Career & Technical Education programs support educators and students in their work to understand real-world career experiences.

Partnership Benefits for the C.T.E. Educator

Gordon’s (2014) work on the history of Career & Technical Education includes several references to partnerships and how business and industry leaders can support the educator. One way to support educators is by helping to change the perception that Career & Technical Education is for students who do not plan to attend college. “Through collaboration (with business and industry), we can elevate the image of career and technical education through the perceptions of students, parents, and the public” (Gordon, 2014, p. 373). His view is that through

collaboration, the image of Career & Technical Education can be elevated, and the benefit to educators will come through perceptions changed for the better (Gordon, 2014; Fleming, 2017).

A benefit to educators is the trend by business and industry partners to be more involved in the education process by making their hiring practices more transparent (Yang, 2013).

Business leaders need to make job descriptions open to educators so they can understand the needed skills. Yang (2013) mentions online learning as an opportunity to achieve this goal by sharing which courses could help develop job skills. This alignment would help educators as they prepare lessons and support students through career development activities. Yang (2013) describes the benefits.

Making job requirements more transparent would go a long way toward bridging the skills gap. Companies would define jobs not only by traditional job descriptions but also by skill-based courses over which prospective job seekers can demonstrate mastery. Job descriptions could include a playlist of courses required to prepare for the job. This approach would help students determine the education and skills required for a given job. With the rise of online courses, creating a playlist is easier than ever (Yang, 2013, pp. 3-4).

Another benefit to educators comes through teachers being encouraged to participate in work-based learning opportunities themselves. Teachers need to get out of the classroom and get into the companies in their community (Gordon, 2014; Hyslop, 2018). This opportunity, or "externship," has been very successful in school districts nationwide (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018). "Counselors and teachers also should participate in externships with employers to learn more about the workplace, emerging careers, and the application of knowledge to workplace problems" (Brand, 2003, p. 18). Freyer et al., (2019) mention that supporting education

professionals to complete short-term externships would help them understand the local workforce and feel more prepared to discuss work-based learning options with students.

Partnership Benefits for the C.T.E. Student

Just as industry partnerships benefit educators, partnerships can also benefit students. Imperatore and Hyslop (2018) mention several opportunities for business leaders to partner with educators to directly impact students' career development.

- Industry leaders can act as guest speakers.
- Participate in career day events.
- Judge Career Technical Student Organization competitive events.
- Provide job shadowing opportunities.
- Provide field trips.
- Offer work-based learning options.
- Act as a mentor and advisor to students.
- Donate equipment.
- Serve on an advisory council to help with curriculum planning and program of study development.

The development of high-quality programs of study is one of the significant needs addressed through effective business partnerships (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018). High-quality programs of study are provided to students through the following three areas.

- Identifying, validating, and reviewing curriculum.
- Identifying appropriate assessments and recognized post-secondary credentials.
- Evaluating facilities, equipment, technology, and materials to ensure consistency with industry standards (Imperatore, Hyslop, 2018, p. 4).

“It is important that employers are engaged with education throughout the complete process to become co-designers of the system that develops the future workforce to ensure that the skills needed for their workers are being developed” (Bartlett, Howze, 2018, p. 8). ACTE, the Association for Career & Technical Education (2019), further addresses the need for businesses to be involved in developing their future workforce.

Partnerships with employers, industry groups, economic and workforce agencies, community organizations, and others are fundamental to C.T.E. program quality and student success. Strong business and community partnerships are characterized by active, intentional outreach; a diverse range of stakeholders who represent different local perspectives and needs; a formal structure, with processes that help each participant understand their roles and responsibilities; and a range of activities and opportunities for partners to contribute to the program of study and realize the success of their efforts (ACTE, 2019, p. 6).

"C.T.E. has long incorporated employer partnerships, but in the past few decades, national, state, and local C.T.E. leaders have increasingly made it a goal to build more systemic and diverse partnerships with business and the community." (ACTE, 2019, p. 2)

Key Partnership Roles in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

When beginning a partnership for a pre-apprenticeship program, Nichols and Sofer (2020) state that leaders must strongly consider who needs to be at the table and the roles each partner is being asked to play. Partners could be union or non-union associations, businesses, non-profit organizations, government agencies, community colleges, and K-12 representatives (Bridgman, 2003). Browning and Nickoli (2017) address the increased interest in the community colleges' role in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs and an increased need for the

business community to be involved. While community colleges are expanding their role in apprenticeships, they need increased support through "employer engagement and securing funding to step into new roles with apprenticeships" (Browning, Nickoli, 2017, p. 4).

Nichols and Sofer (2020) give guidance on specific skills needed in a partner. Reviewing what each partner brings to the table is more important than who comes to the table (Nichols, Sofer, 2020; Worthen, 2004). They further state that selecting the right partners can create cheerleaders for the program with organizations that can bring much-needed resources to the vision (Kibler-Jose, 1995). On the other end of the spectrum, McQuaid (2000) posits that selecting the wrong partners could lead to conflict through hidden agendas and false expectations. Consideration should also be given to the partnership dynamics and how each member relates to one another (McQuaid, 2000; Worthen, 2004).

For the partnership to be effective, each partner must understand the expectation of the organization and their role in the pre-apprenticeship process. Taylor (2006) adds that "the development of partnerships requires clear roles and mechanisms for coordinated cooperation and significant effort on the part of the government, educators, and trainers" (Taylor, 2006, pp. 322-323). Without defined roles and clear expectations, problems can occur as the work begins. Worthen (2004) addresses the political agendas that can arise and derail progress. With clearly defined roles and expectations, the partnership will be several steps toward its goal (Taylor, 2006; Worthen, 2004).

The selection of the right partners is essential to the success of the pre-apprenticeship program (Worthen, 2004). The leadership should take time to develop each partnership completely, so they understand how their support contributes to the program's success (Iyer, 2003; Taylor, 2006). While this may be a time-intensive process, it will reap the rewards if

leaders take their time to develop the program thoroughly (Iyer, 2003; Worthen, 2004; Holzer, 2007). To help select the right partners, Stevenson (2023, slide 12) shares a sample grid (Figure 3) used to select members for non-profit boards. The grid is based on skills needed to support the non-profit. It also includes sections for diversity criteria and what area of the community the member will represent. To choose the right partners, leaders must develop criteria for selection (Stevenson, 2023).

Figure 3

Partner Evaluation Grid

Name	Occupation	Asian American	African America	Latino	Native American	White	Age: 25-34	Age: 35-47	Age: 47-59	Age: 60 +	Central CLT	South Meck	North Meck	West Meck	East Meck	Legal	Accounting/Finance	Insurance	Fundraising	Marketing	Sales	Operations	Real Estate	Technology	Education	Event Planning	Human Resources
						X									X					X				X	X		
						X													X	X					X		
						X										X		X	X				X	X		X	
						X										X											
						X													X		X	X			X		
X						X													X			X					
	X																X			X	X						
						X																X				X	
						X																X					
						X										X		X	X							X	
						X											X										
						X											X		X	X	X						

Partnership Outcomes in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

A significant outcome of the pre-apprenticeship model is introducing the client to business and community leaders who can recommend them to a Registered Apprenticeship program or further employment (Helmer, Blair et al., 2012). The contacts developed through the pre-apprenticeship model will help employees build their social network with potential

employers (Harrison, Weiss, 1998; Tieszen et al., 2020). A network is a relationship or connection with others who are already employed (Harrison, Weiss, 1998). Networking through current employers and advisory boards can help employees find employment opportunities (Morris, Blaney, 2010; Helmer, Blair et al., 2012; Tieszen et al., 2020). Key partnerships help develop the program and connect a pre-apprentice with a potential employer (Harrison, Weiss, 1998).

As Harrison and Weiss (1998) continue, developing a network can be a massive task for a job seeker, especially in low-income neighborhoods, since the “networks to which these workers and their prospective employers belong never intersect” (Harrison, Weiss, 1998, p. 36). Developing partnerships that support pre-apprenticeship programs promote this network intersection by introducing workers to a potential employer whom they may never meet otherwise (Helmer et al., 2012; USDOL, 2018). By creating quality networks, each pre-apprentice supported through the program can tap into that network of business leaders and find employment (Tieszen et al., 2020).

Policy and Legislation Related to Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

The first Registered Apprenticeship program in the United States was started in 1911 by the state of Wisconsin. By the mid-1940s, there were over 6000 apprenticeships nationwide (Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, n.d.). Several presidents have signed Executive Orders to provide funding and support for apprenticeships, most recently Donald Trump (Executive Order 13801, 2017). Although apprenticeships are currently part of education legislation, in the United States, early legislation did not include apprenticeships in conjunction with education bills (Gordon, 2014). While legislation for vocational education and apprenticeships seemed to be two separate pathways, they converged with the *Strengthening*

Career & Technical Education for the Twenty-first Century Act (P.L. 115-224). Over the past several decades, many pieces of legislation have been passed that address employment issues. The following is a review of the legislation concerning work-based learning, specifically the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship model, and how they are now closely tied to education reform.

Policy and Legislation (1600 – 1700)

The first permanent settlement in the United States was in Jamestown, Virginia, settled in 1607 (Wolfe, McCartney, 2015). The first representative Virginia General Assembly, established in 1619, became the first governing body in North America (Morgan, Morgan, 1971). Many early labor laws enacted by the Virginia legislature were to "protect masters from terms that did not fully recoup their cost of transporting servants from England to Virginia, in addition to their subsequent care" (Wolfe, McCartney, 2015, p. 8). Wolfe and McCartney (2015) state that on August 4, 1619, the legislature enacted a law requiring all indentured servants to register with the secretary of state upon their arrival in Virginia. Even during economic growth in the colonies, mainly due to tobacco exports, labor laws extended the terms of indenture contracts, ensuring that masters would not experience a labor shortage (Snyder, 2007; Wolfe, McCartney, 2015). "The practice of indentured servitude made it possible for emigrants from many European nations to journey to the New World and was, indeed, a common practice that was vital to the economy and social development of colonial America" (Snyder, 2007, p. 66). "Indentures were the forerunners of our modern apprenticeship agreements" ("History of Apprenticeship," 2017, p. 1).

Policy and Legislation (1700 – 1900)

Gordon (2014) writes that in colonial America, apprenticeships eventually became the primary method of vocational instruction, although this type of education was not part of the

school curriculum. In the colonies, the master became required by law to provide basic educational skills for their apprentices (Snyder, 2007). Gordon (2014) identifies two forms of apprenticeships in early America. One form was voluntary and followed European customs and traditions. This form, in general, was not subject to particular law provisions, although they were entered into the town records. The second was an involuntary apprenticeship, which provided a means of taking care of poor children and orphans (Gordon, 2014).

Through an apprenticeship agreement, the master craftsman was responsible for the personal and occupational needs of the apprentice. Those needs included food, clothing, shelter; religious training; and general education as needed in the trade (Snyder, 2007, Gordon, 2014). To protect the apprentice and the master, the contract was recorded and became a public record (Snyder, 2007; Gordon, 2014).

Policy and Legislation (1900 – 1920)

Smith – Hughes Act of 1917 (Public Law 64-347).

In 1917, the *Smith-Hughes Act* was passed to promote Vocational Education, which included apprenticeship support. From the federal level, this landmark act provided financial assistance to state agencies for workforce education and training (*Smith-Hughes Act of 1917*, 1917). According to Jacobs and Grubb (2002), up until this time, state governments managed the education process. The *Smith-Hughes Act of 1917* represented the first time the federal government extended support to K-12 education (Jacobs, Grubb, 2002; Rojewski, 2002).

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson commissioned a study of vocational education. Gordon (2014) states that a committee was established to implement the findings of a study conducted by two congressmen from Georgia: Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley Hughes. From the committee, Senator Smith introduced Senate Bill 703, designed to provide

financial support for the establishment of vocational programs; financial support for the training of teachers in vocational education; and guidelines for cooperation with states as they implement vocational education programs (Gordon, 2014; Moore, 2017). In 1916, Representative Hughes introduced House Bill 11250, which provided similar guidance on supporting vocational education programs. The House Committee on Education quickly approved it (Gordon, 2014).

As Moore (2017) states, up until this time, a high school focused on preparing students for college. The theme of the *Smith-Hughes Act* was to provide relevance to students' daily life while supporting the employment needs of industry (Moore, 2017; Fristoe, 2017). Once signed into law by President Wilson, the *Smith-Hughes Act* became one of the most critical pieces of legislation to affect vocational training in our nation's history (Rojewski, 2002; Gordon, 2014). Although it was repealed in 1997, this legislation was the precursor to what we know today as the *Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (Fristoe, 2017).

Policy and Legislation (1920 – 1940)

Gordon (2014) states that Senator Walter F. George, a Democrat from Georgia, followed in the footsteps of Senator Smith and Representative Hughes in their push to support vocational programs. “It is significant in the legislative history of vocational education that in six Senate terms, Walter F. George sponsored every federal act for vocational education since the *Smith-Hughes law of 1917*” (Gordon, 2014, pp. 103-104). The legislation included the addition of programs not mentioned in the *Smith-Hughes Act* while also providing increased funding. The following are Acts sponsored by Senator Walter F. George:

- *George-Reed Act of 1929* – Authorized an increase of \$1 million in funding for agricultural education and home economics for four years (Gordon, 2014).

- *George-Ellzey Act of 1934* – Increased funding of \$3 million annually to agriculture education, home economics, and trade and industrial education (Gordon, 2014; Jacob, Grubbs, 2002).
- *George-Deen Act of 1936* – Increased funding to approximately \$14 million annually for agriculture education, home economics, trade, and industrial education. This legislation also included marketing education for the first time (Gordon, 2014; Jacob, Grubbs, 2002).

National Apprenticeship Act – 1937 (50 Stat. 664; 29 U.S.C. 59)

As part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the National Youth Administration was established in 1935 to support the employment needs of youth between the ages of 16 and 25 (Abramowitz, 1984). This organization became the standard bearer for how apprenticeships were managed in the United States (The National Youth Administration, 1935). In 1937, the U.S. Congress passed the *National Apprenticeship Act* to expand President Roosevelt's Executive Order and support apprenticeship programs nationally (Our History, n.d.). This law, also referred to as the *Fitzgerald Act*, was the first legislation to spell out labor standards for the safety and protection of apprentices (*National Apprenticeship Act*, 1937; Our History, n.d.). The Act also encouraged contracts to pull together employers and labor “for the formulation of programs of apprenticeship” (“*History of Apprenticeships*,” 2017, p. 7). Within this act, management of the apprenticeship process was transferred from the National Youth Administration to the Department of Labor, where it still resides today.

On March 2, 2020, the House of Representatives released a discussion draft document for the reauthorization of the *National Apprenticeship Act* (Discussion Draft - National Apprenticeship Act of 2020, 2020). On February 25, 2021, after the House of Representatives

approved, the Senate received the reauthorization and referred it to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Policy and Legislation (1940 – 1960)

During the 1940s, policy and legislation were significantly affected by World War II. As Gordon (2014) states, several pieces of federal legislation promoted vocational education and training for war industry workers. The *Serviceman's Readjustment Act*, also known as the "GI Bill," was enacted to provide vocational opportunities for veterans (P.L. 78-346).

During this time, Senator Walter F. George continued to press for vocational program support at the federal level (Gordon, 2014). The *George-Barden Act of 1946* increased appropriations for vocational programs to \$14 million and included a greater emphasis on supporting veterans returning from World War II (P.L. 79-586). The Act also included funds to support two youth agencies, later known as Career-Technical Students Organizations, Future Farmers of America (F.F.A.) and the New Farmers of America (Public Law 79-586). George cosponsored additional legislation, the *George-Barden Amendments of 1956*, to add nursing and fishery occupations to the list of approved areas of instruction (P. L. 84-911).

Policy and Legislation (1960 – 1980)

Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P. L. 88-120).

In 1963, a study was conducted at the federal level to evaluate workforce education (Gordon, 2014). As Gordon (2014) states, from this study, the foundation was laid for the most crucial vocational legislation since the *Smith-Hughes Act of 1917*. The *Vocational Education Act of 1963*, written by a very young Carl D. Perkins, changed all previous acts concerning vocational education by increasing appropriations and allowing states flexibility in developing programs (Jacobs, Grubb, 2002). The legislation was the first time students' needs were

mandated rather than the needs of industry (*Vocational Education Act, 1963*; Gordon, 2014). Even with the sweeping changes in this legislation, the only mention of work-based learning is the inclusion of the Work-Study Program (*Vocational Education Act of 1963, 1963*). The Work-Study Program was established “to provide part-time employment for youths who need the earnings from such employment to continue their vocational training on a full-time basis” (*Vocational Education Act of 1963, 1963, p. 1*). It focused on offering work options to students who needed financial assistance.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-452).

In 1964, the United States Congress passed the *Economic Opportunity Act* (P.L. 88-452). Building on the guidelines of the *Vocational Education Act of 1963*, this federal legislation provided additional support for work-study programs, specifically for post-secondary students (*The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, 1964*). Of major significance is the introduction of a federal pre-apprenticeship model called Job Corp, designed to help students who need additional support while completing their education.

The Economic Opportunity Act was developed from President Kennedy's desire to address poverty in America (McKee, 2014). After his assassination, President Johnson continued the War on Poverty as part of his platform for the 1964 election. This legislation created several social services, including Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program (McKee, 2014).

While many notable accomplishments occurred through the *Economic Opportunities Act*, the establishment of Job Corps stands out in a study on work-based learning. Job Corps is a residential and non-residential pre-apprenticeship program where students receive wrap-around services to support their educational goals (*The Economic Opportunities Act of 1964, 1964*).

From the Act, “enrollees may be provided with such living, travel, and leave allowances, and such quarters, subsistence, transportation, equipment, clothing, recreational services, medical, dental, hospital, and other health services, and other expenses as the Director may deem necessary or appropriate for their needs.” (*Economic Opportunity Act*, 1964, Sec. 105, p. 509).

This federal legislation was significant for work-based learning research because it created a pre-apprenticeship model for communities to support unemployed youth ages sixteen to twenty-four (*Economic Opportunities Act*, 1964).

Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 (P.L. 90-576).

Jacob and Grubb (2002) note that in 1968, the *Vocational Education Act* was amended to give broader support for work-based learning opportunities to youth and adults. Gordon (2014) states that the amendments to the Act replaced all previous federal legislation about workforce development except the *Smith-Hughes Act of 1917*, which was kept for sentimental reasons, as it was the first piece of federal legislation supporting vocational education. The major thrust of the amendments was to include support for post-secondary institutions and to align vocational education more closely with general education (Gordon, 2014, *The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968*, 1968). Like the original Act of 1963, the amendments also allocated funds to states based on a formula that included allotments for disadvantaged persons who have “academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in regular programs” (Gordon, 2014; *The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968*, 1968, p. 3).

The Amendments include the first mention of “Cooperative Vocational Education Programs.” The Act states cooperative education involves students who “alternately attend school and work in positions related to their vocational studies” (*The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968*, 1968, p. 5). The main difference between this Act over its predecessor

focused on how a student's work should be performed (*The Vocational Education Amendments, 1968*). Whereas the 1963 Act included Work-Study Programs designed to support students with financial needs, the work performed was not required to be in the student's study area. *The Amendments of 1968* required work to be performed in a program of study related to the student's vocational education (*Vocational Education Amendments, 1968*).

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-203).

This legislation focused heavily on providing "job training and employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged, unemployed, and underemployed persons," including youth (*Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, 1973, p. 839*). The law continued support for the Job Corps program while starting an additional program called the Summer Program for Economically Disadvantaged Youth (SPEDY). Both programs focused on unemployed, disadvantaged youth, but the subsequent program focused specifically on summer employment (*Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, 1973*).

The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (Public Law 94-482).

Gordon (2014) states that vocational education in the United States expanded in 1976 through amendments to the *Vocational Education Act*. The major thrusts of the *Amendments of 1976* were to extend, improve, and, where necessary, maintain existing programs of vocational education; develop new vocational education programs; and provide part-time employment for youths who need the earnings to continue their training on a full-time basis (Gordon, 2014; *The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, 1976*). The legislation specifically addressed Work-Study Programs and Cooperative Education as options for students to earn while they learn. While mentioned in the first two iterations of the legislation, the third version gave a greater

definition to grants used in the funding model to support the programs (*The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976*, 1976).

Youth Employment and Demonstrations Project Act (P.L. 95-93).

The Youth Employment and Demonstrations Project Act was enacted in 1977. The purpose was “to provide youth, particularly economically disadvantaged youth, with opportunities to learn and earn that will lead to meaningful employment opportunities after completing the program” (*Youth Employment and Demonstrations Project Act*, 1977, Sec. 321, p.632). While this legislation did emphasize “learn and earn” as an option for disadvantaged youth, the industry that became the focus of the legislation was agriculture. Section 802 of the Act creates a Young Adult Conservation Corps to work on projects in Federal and non-Federal public lands and waters (*Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act*, 1977, Sec. 802, p. 627). Like Job Corps, the program could be residential or non-residential, but youth must work in an area aligned with the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture (*Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act*, 1977).

Policy and Legislation (1980 – 2000)

Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (P.L. 97-300).

The Job Training Partnership Act became law on October 13, 1982 (P.L. 97-300) and repealed the *Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, 1982). This Act established programs to prepare youth and unskilled adults for entry into the labor force and to afford job training to those economically disadvantaged individuals and other individuals facing severe barriers to employment who are in special need of such training to obtain productive employment (Gordon, 2014; *The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, 1982, 96 Stat. 1324).

Through this legislation, state and local governments, rather than the federal government, were charged with administering the mentioned programs (*The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, 1982). Community-based organizations are mentioned as an option to support local workforce training and development initiatives (*The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, 1982). This Act mentions pre-apprenticeships explicitly under Title II – Part A as a permissible use of funds for adult and youth training (*The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, 1982). Additionally, the Job Corps and the Summer Youth Employment and Training programs continued to receive support through this legislation. *The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982* was a precursor to the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* (P.L. 105-220) and the *Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act of 2014* (P.L. 113-128).

The Carl D Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-524).

In 1984, Carl D. Perkins again led the revision of the nation’s federal workforce development legislation. The *Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984* updated the *Vocational Education Act of 1963* and its subsequent Amendments (Gordon, 2014). Specific wording in Subpart 1 – Cooperative Demonstration Programs addresses consolidating Vocational Education and apprenticeship training programs. In this subsection, we also see the additional mention of “pre-apprenticeship programs” in legislation. In this iteration of the Perkins legislation, work-based learning opportunities begin to take a more significant role in vocational education (*The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act*, 1984).

The *Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act* stipulated that the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education should develop and implement a plan for greater coordination between vocational education programs and apprenticeship training programs. Linkages between such programs shall be established relating to apprentice-school programs, pre-apprenticeship

programs, and program evaluation and performance standards (particularly concerning apprenticeship training and programs of related instruction) (*The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act*, 1984, Sec. 411 (e), p. 2471).

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-392).

In 1990, Congressman Perkins led another revision of the nation's workforce development legislation. *The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990*, also known as Perkins II, became law on September 25, 1990. The law addressed three main areas in workforce education: the integration of academic and vocational education; the articulation of programs between education segments; and a closer linkage between school and work (Gordon, 2014). While there were notable improvements in the legislation, there were several flaws in its implementation. The law allowed more federal involvement in managing funding at local levels. Gordon (2014) notes that this micromanagement formula was a considerable detriment to the program's success.

School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P. L. 103-239).

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is significant in studying work-based learning because it strongly focuses on integrating school-based learning with work-based learning. Permissible work-based learning activities include “paid work experience, job shadowing, school-sponsored enterprises, or on-the-job training” (*The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994*, 1994, Sec. 104, p. 577). The Act also mentions school-to-work activities that include career counseling and career exploration. Students should participate in a program of study designed to prepare them for post-secondary education or training, including credentials or a skill certificate as a measurable outcome (*The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994*, 1994).

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-332).

On October 31, 1998, President Clinton signed the *Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998*. Perkins III introduced the Tech Prep program into workforce education. Tech Prep is a program that combines a minimum of two secondary courses with a minimum of two post-secondary courses to create an education sequence for students (*The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998*, 1998). While the sequence included the integration of academic and vocational education, it also included work-based learning as part of the course sequence (Gordon, 2014; *The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998*, 1998).

Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220).

This legislation, enacted in 1998, updated the *Job Training Partnership Act*. Sections of the Act define how state and local workforce investment boards should operate (*Workforce Investment Act*, 1998). The Act also includes guidance on how one-stop delivery systems should be established and operated. "Applicable one-stop center" is defined as a one-stop customer service center that provides services, such as referral, intake, recruitment, and placement, to a Job Corps center (*Workforce Investment Act*, 1998, Subtitle C, Sec. 142, p. 1006). Significant to work-based learning, the Act gives greater guidance on how Job Corps programs are "carried out in partnership with States and local communities, to assist eligible youth who need and can benefit from an intensive program" (*Workforce Investment Act*, 1998, Subtitle C, Sec. 141, p. 1006). Although this Act was a revision of earlier legislation, the focus remained on providing work-based learning options, specifically pre-apprenticeships, to youth (*Workforce Investment Act*, 1998).

Policy and Legislation (2000 – 2021)***The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act (P.L. 109-270).***

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, also known as Perkin IV (Public Law 109-270), was enacted on August 12, 2006, under President George W. Bush. The act focused on the themes of accountability and program improvement; secondary and post-secondary connections; the link to rigorous academics; and a stronger focus on business and industry (Gordon, 2014). The legislation still included Tech Prep as a program to support students as they move into post-secondary opportunities. Significant to this study, the wording in the Tech Prep section mentions pre-apprenticeships specifically as part of a technical program. Under Title II, Section 203, the contents of a Tech Prep program should “(6) provide equal access, to the full range of technical preparation programs (including pre-apprenticeship programs), to individuals who are members of special populations, including the development of tech prep program services appropriate to the needs of special populations;” (*The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act*, 2006, p. 740). While apprenticeships are included throughout the law, it is notable that pre-apprenticeships are also mentioned as a work-based learning opportunity for students (*The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act*, 2006, p. 740).

Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (P.L. 105-220)

Sponsored by Virginia Foxx, a Representative from North Carolina, this legislation amended the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. Significant to work-based learning, this legislation continues to guide the operation of Job Corps, the federal pre-apprenticeship program for youth ages sixteen to twenty-one (*Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act*, 2014). The legislation also gives strong directives on how Job Corps Centers are established and managed.

Activities provided include “English language acquisition programs, Career and Technical Education and training, work experience, work-based learning, recreational activities, physical rehabilitation and development, driver's education, and counseling, which may include information about financial literacy” (*Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act*, 2014, Subtitle C, Section 148, p. 123). This legislation acknowledges that wrap-around services are essential to each job seeker's success.

Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (P.L. 115-224).

On July 31, 2018, President Trump signed the *Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, also known as Perkins V. This legislation took effect on July 1, 2019, and created the strongest tie to date between workforce education and work-based learning. While previous versions of the legislation mentioned support for apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, Perkins V specifically includes work-based learning as a program quality measure (ACTE, 2018). The legislation allows states to decide how to prove program quality. One of the quality indicators is "the percentage of C.T.E. concentrators graduating from high school having participated in work-based learning" (ACTE, 2018, p. 18). While earlier versions of federal workforce education legislation and apprenticeship legislation were separate entities, they are now closely tied together in Perkins V (*Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, 2018).

Literature Review Summary

When reviewing the literature concerning work-based learning options, public and private organizations provide guidelines for starting apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs (ApprenticeshipNC, 2019). Most give instructions on developing partnerships and aligning programs with existing industry needs (USDOL, 2018; JFF, 2020). Federal legislation

also gives directives concerning support for apprenticeship programs, with pre-apprenticeships included in the verbiage (*Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, 2018). In June 2017, President Trump joined several previous presidents by signing an executive order to expand apprenticeship programs (Executive Order 13801). With the increased focus on providing more work-based learning options for youth and adults, there are still opportunities for improvement in establishing a quality program.

Gaps in the Literature

With guidance from the State Department of Education about developing a quality pre-apprenticeship program, several points still need clarification. The definition of a pre-apprenticeship in the industry differs from that of education. Conway and Gerber (2009) specifically address this disparity. They question whether the term “pre-apprenticeship” should be used at all since most of these employees do not enter a Registered Apprenticeship program. Education leaders and state and federal legislators see the pre-apprenticeship as a program that must be aligned with a Registered Apprenticeship program. In contrast, industry leaders recognize that there must be more opportunities for each pre-apprentice to move into a Registered Apprenticeship (Conway, Gerber, 2009). Conway et al. (2010) further address this topic by stating, “Apprenticeship opportunities may not always be available, or, in some cases, such opportunities may not be a good match for a participant at that particular point in time” (Conway et al., 2010, p. 13). The definition of a pre-apprenticeship needs to be standardized (JFF, n.d.).

A gap in the literature is a gap in data. Helmer and Altstadt (2013) address the need for better data as a deficiency in program development. They state that the U.S. Department of Labor does not keep data on pre-apprenticeship programs (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). They also

state that data for Registered Apprenticeship programs are incomplete because many apprenticeships are never registered (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). With gaps in data, there are gaps in the literature. More data is needed to show how partnership projects are making an impact (vanTulder, Seitanidi et al., 2016). Future studies should focus on data collection from agencies working to remove barriers when establishing pre-apprenticeship programs.

Ownership is a challenge for communities that desire to begin a pre-apprenticeship program. One significant gap in the literature is a thorough study of the need for a champion and a team of partners passionate about owning the program's establishment. Bridgman (2003) states there must be one person or a group of persons who believe in the program with a passion for what it can do for their community. Educators cannot manage a pre-apprenticeship program from strictly an education perspective. Business leaders cannot manage pre-apprenticeship programs as strictly a workforce development initiative. Both segments must work together to achieve success. The example Bridgman (2003) used is Eva's Phoenix in Toronto, Canada. Eva Maud Smith was the champion, and her passion for helping the homeless youth of Toronto fueled her accomplishments and the program's success. For a program to be established and thrive, there must be a champion and a team of leaders who desire to make the pre-apprenticeship program a success. This gap in the literature is the focus of this research study.

Link to Existing Literature

One area of study that needs to be included in the literature is a review of the roles and responsibilities of key partners needed to help pre-apprenticeship programs move from passion to progress. Several questions concerning key partners' roles, responsibilities, skills, and traits must be addressed at the onset of establishing a pre-apprenticeship.

- How are potential business partners identified and onboarded to the leadership team?

- Who reaches out to potential business partners to develop the leadership team?
- Who meets with the business community to design the pre-apprenticeship?
- Who counsels clients, and how are they qualified and trained?
- How are curriculum and training activities modified with changes in the industry?
- What business functions are needed to manage the organization designed to support the pre-apprenticeship program?

Answers to these questions are essential to the development of quality pre-apprenticeship programs. Therefore, further study is needed. Conway and Gerber (2009) mention the need to study key partnerships. “How these partnerships operate, and the key roles played by the various agencies should be part of further research into effective program practice” (Conway, Gerber, 2009, p. 39). A thorough study of the roles, skills, and traits needed to establish a pre-apprenticeship program would help close this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

For this research, a qualitative multiple-case study methodology compared three youth pre-apprenticeship programs established by community-based organizations. The study examined the key partnership roles needed to establish a pre-apprenticeship program, the processes needed to sustain the program, and the evaluation process needed to measure the program's effectiveness.

“The primary purpose for undertaking a case study is to explore the particularity, the uniqueness, of the single case” (Simons, 2009, p. 3). Case studies “are different from other types in that they are intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time” (Algozzine & Hancock, 2017, p. 9). While several researchers use case studies to review a single case, others have used a multiple-case study method allowing for cross-case analysis of data points (Gillham, 2000). Herriott and Firestone (1983) affirm that evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling and robust. Zainal (2007) also states that using multiple case study methods allows the researcher to go beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the participants’ behavior. This research focuses on the behavior of the key partnerships within each case.

Research Design

Gillham (2000) states that case study research allows a researcher to "get under the skin" of a group or organization to see what happens (Gillham, 2000, p. 11). The research design for this study is a qualitative multiple-case approach that defines key partners’ roles in forming and sustaining a youth pre-apprenticeship program. Researchers have varied opinions on when and why to use case study analysis. While some researchers see the case study as the exploration of a single unit, others agree that the multiple-case study analysis is a solid form of research (Yin,

2018). For this study, the views of Yin (2018) and his thoughts on multiple-case study analysis are the forerunners to lead the research design. Other authors included in the research design are Helen Simons (2009), Dawson Hancock (2017), and Bob Algozzine (2017).

Rationale for Cases and Multiple-Case Study Design

Three community-based organizations focused on developing a pre-apprenticeship program served as the cases for the study. Community-based organizations are non-profits organized around a neighborhood's interest or need (Worthen, Haynes, 2009). They can include social-service providers, cultural organizations, local civic clubs, and community groups (Leroux, 2007). Many CBOs are formed to support workforce development initiatives in a community, pre-apprenticeship programs being one of those initiatives (Zainal, 2007). When researching key partnership roles, using one case as the focus will not provide a broad overview of the many partnerships needed to make a program successful. The supposition for this research is that each community-based organization could focus on similar social initiatives, like pre-apprenticeships, but they may be structured very differently. They may all use a different operational model. The multiple-case design can be used to study real-life events and reveal numerous sources of evidence (Zainal, 2007). For this reason, a multiple-case study analysis was used to investigate the skills each key partner brings to the community-based organization and the process used to evaluate the program's success.

Rationale for Case Study Type

According to Yin (2018), three research methods are used in case study research. Exploratory case studies focus on the "what" question but are usually used to establish the groundwork for further research. Hancock and Algozzine (2017) suggest that "exploratory designs seek to define research questions of a subsequent study or to determine the feasibility of

research procedures” (Hancock, Algozzine, 2017, p. 39). They posit further that exploratory design may give substance to a larger body of study. A pilot study is an exploratory study that helps develop research questions from which further research can be built (Yin, 1984; McDonough, McDonough, 1997).

Descriptive case studies are used when researching a specific phenomenon and its characteristics. The goal is to explain the components of the phenomenon in its context (Hancock, Algozzine, 2017). A researcher uses descriptive observations with this type of case study to identify the procedures used within a process or the techniques someone would use to accomplish a task (Simons, 2009).

The third type of case study mentioned by Yin (2018) is the explanatory case study. This type of study is used to define a specific phenomenon or event by asking “why” or “how” something happened. Hancock and Algozzine (2017) state further that “explanatory designs seek to establish cause-and-effect relationships” (Hancock, Algozzine, 2017, p. 39).

Many researchers debate whether the three types complement each other as a hierarchical structure or if they stand alone as independent methods. Yin (2018) debates that a “common misconception is that the various research methods should be arrayed hierarchically” (Yin, 2018, p. 6). This view proposes that exploratory studies are the only form of authentic case study research, while several descriptive and explanatory case studies have yielded valuable data for research (Simons, 2009).

This study used the exploratory method to establish the key partnership roles and the collective impact strategies used to develop high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs. The study explored three cases, each a community-based organization specializing in youth pre-apprenticeships. The research focused on the contributions key partners made to the development

of the program and the specific strategies, skills, and traits they provided to sustain the pre-apprenticeship program.

Participants

Three individual cases were studied to create a cross-case analysis of the data. The participants in the three cases were either employees or volunteers of the K-12 public school system, the community college, or a local business. All participants were leaders from youth pre-apprenticeship programs in North Carolina. In Case One, there were two participants, both of whom worked for the community college. Case Two had three participants, all from the business community. Case Three had two participants—one from the local K-12 school system and one from the business community.

The participants were selected for their variety of organizational models. Case One, referred to as the community college model, operates as a department within the college. The two participants interviewed are employees of the college. Case Two, referred to as the business consortium model, is a business consortium run by business leaders from the community. One participant is employed by the community foundation that supports the program. The others are from local businesses in the area interested in pre-apprenticeships. Case Three, referred to as the K-12 model, is supported through the K-12 school system. One participant is the Career & Technical Education Director, and one is employed by one of the businesses supporting the program. The variety of organizational structures allowed for a rich comparison of data on partnerships and the roles they play in the development and sustainability of the pre-apprenticeship program.

The three cases were selected through referrals from the staff at Apprenticeship NC, the organization in North Carolina charged with helping employers establish Registered

Apprenticeships. The staff at ApprenticeshipNC recommended the three cases because they all were identified as exceptional models for supporting pre-apprenticeships. They all are established programs that have shown consistent growth in the number of youths entering and completing the program. They also show strong continued support from the business community.

Measurement

The research measure used for this study was a group interview protocol using open-ended informal questions. The three main research questions served as the outline, including several follow-up questions. Many of the questions in the interview were from a historical perspective to gather data on how the program started. The full interview protocol is included in Appendix B. The goal of the interview was divided into three parts. First, the goal was to discover the key partnership roles needed to begin the program. Second, the researcher wanted to discover the specific skills and traits needed to sustain the program. Third, the study focused on evaluating the program. Some questions were biographical since some participants were the organization's founding members. To protect each participant's privacy, a coding process was used to identify each case and the participants within each case.

Data Collection Strategy

Simons (2009) states that “group interviews are economical and have several advantages: they can be less threatening to any one individual; they enable you to get a sense of the degree of agreement on issues, and they provide a cross-check on the consistency of perspectives and statements of certain individuals” (Simons, 2009, p. 49). A group interview protocol was used to discover the consistency between each community-based organization's start-up processes and its current sustainability processes. Informed consent forms were collected from each participant, and interviews were conducted through Zoom. The meetings were recorded, and the discussion

was transcribed. After the interviews were transcribed, each participant was given two weeks to review the transcripts and make any edits. Only Case One made edits to their original transcript.

Data Analysis Strategy

When analyzing data from a case study, Yin (2018) suggests five specific analytic techniques; Logic Models, Cross-Case Synthesis, Pattern Matching, Explanation Building, and Time-Series Analysis. For this study, data analysis focused on Cross-Case Synthesis.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Simon (2009) states that a cross-case analysis is essential to determine the interconnectedness of each case and the common themes. Key to the findings from the research is the application of themes and patterns that can be seen across multiple cases. Triangulating data from each case will support the validity and reliability of the themes and patterns (Gillham, 2000; Creswell, 2014).

The researcher used a cross-case synthesis to analyze data to look for similarities and differences in organizational structure. The researcher also looked for variety in how the leadership team was developed with key partnership roles. A comparison was also made between evaluation processes and data sharing. The cross-case synthesis revealed differences and rival explanations for the success of the partnerships. Careful consideration was given to what Yin (2018) calls “postulating subtle patterns.” These patterns lean too close to subjective interpretation and are not gross matches. Gross matches, whether supporting the presupposition or abandoning the presupposition, should stand as they are without being lenient one way or the other (Yin, 2018). Participants were given time to review and edit a transcript of the interview to remove a subjective view of the data. Data was collected and synthesized through a deductive and inductive coding process.

Deductive and Inductive Coding

The coding process for the data was a tiered system. The top-level coding process was based on themes for the research and aligned with the research questions for the study. Three main themes used in the deductive coding process were Partnerships, Start-Up, and Evaluation. Using this data analysis strategy, data about the research were grouped, while data not necessary to the research were placed aside. The top-level coding process functioned as the outline for reporting the study findings. Table 1 is a sample of the coding process showing all three tiers.

Table 1

Tiered Coding Process

Theme	Deductive Code	Inductive Code	Case #	Page #
Start-Up	Structure	Organizational Chart	1	1
Partnership	Roles	Community	1	1
Partnership	Roles	Advisory Boards	1	2
Partnership	Relationships	Community College	1	2
Evaluation	Goals	Growth	1	3

Note: Combining all three cases, the researcher collected 230 specific codes.

The second tier in the data analysis strategy used a deductive coding process. Deductive coding is a process where the researcher selects codes based on an anticipated theme within the data. The codes are predetermined and used to segment data based on the identified themes. These codes also aligned with the research questions and became subheadings for the research.

The final tier in the hierarchy used an inductive coding process. An inductive coding process uses codes that come out of the data itself. It is an organic form of data coding that lets the data speak to the researcher as the analysis progresses. There are no predetermined terms

used to code data. This type of coding provided the most granular form of collection that gave the researcher a deeper understanding of how each program operated. Some activities were similar, and some were very different.

Ethical Considerations

To minimize risk or harm to the participants, the research questions and theme of the dissertation were communicated at the first substantial contact with the participants. The premise behind sharing research questions and themes at the beginning is to build a trusting relationship that can provide trustworthy responses (Gillham, 2000). After relationships are built, and trust is obtained, it is vital to give participants a voice in how the data is presented. To reach this end, transcripts of data were given to each participant before any public communication of the data. As Simons (2009) states, the goal should be to “positively acknowledge an intention to research *with* people rather than avoid doing harm *to* them” (Simons, 2009, p. 97).

To minimize harm to the participants, they were asked to provide formal consent through an agreement with the researcher. The agreement states they understand they are participating in a research study. It is a formal request to solicit the participants as volunteers in the study. It was also designed to share with them the nature of the study and how data will be used (Yin, 2018). The full interview protocol was shared with the participants before the interview to avoid deceptive practices throughout the interview process. The participants will also be debriefed on the research outcome after completing the study (Hancock, Algozzine, 2017).

The names and locations of the participants are not required for the study. Part of the consent agreement states that the identity of participants will be disguised and not included in the final report. The researcher’s goal is for the participants to understand that they are providing feedback for this study and will not be contacted through other organizations or research entities

for additional studies (Yin, 2018). To protect data and participant identification, the database housing notes, documents, benchmark survey data, and narrative data from interviews will be kept electronically by the researcher. The collective data will be stored on an external hard drive in a password-protected folder.

Chapter Summary

The research methodology used for this study was an exploratory multiple-case study analysis. This methodology is appropriate for finding commonalities and differences between successful youth pre-apprenticeship programs. Data from the study was triangulated to present the findings using the three main themes as the outline. During the research collection phase, every effort was established to protect the participants and maintain confidentiality. As Baxter and Jack (2008) state, case study research “facilitates reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (Baxter, Jack, 2008, p. 554). Using the multiple-case study methodology, the researcher gained a solid understanding of the key partnership roles needed to develop and sustain a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

A case study methodology is the research design used to understand collaborations, roles, and evaluation in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs. The study identifies the people and organizational alliances that created successful youth pre-apprenticeship programs. The study also examined the roles necessary to launch a youth pre-apprenticeship program and create a sustainable model for future growth and expansion. The study delves into the expertise partners offer to develop youth pre-apprenticeship programs and identifies the methods used to assess the programs over time. One purpose of the study is to give practitioners launching youth pre-apprenticeship programs a view from the beginning to full implementation. This study addresses the following research questions, and findings will be presented to provide practitioners with an outline of best practices needed to start a program in their community.

- What are the key partnership roles and responsibilities in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs?
- What skills and traits are needed by partners to successfully contribute to the development and sustainability of youth pre-apprenticeship programs?
- How are high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs evaluated?

Findings from this study are presented using a framework of partnerships to identify skills and traits needed for start-up, sustainability, and program evaluation. This framework provides context to understand the partnership roles before launching the youth pre-apprenticeship program, during early implementation, during operation, and throughout the program evaluation. This framework provides context and meaning to present the findings using a cross-case analysis, a type of embedded case study analysis (Yin, 2018). The findings from the cases will show how they relate to each other and contribute to understanding the research

questions. The format for presenting data is a cross-case synthesis of the data, with an overview of each case embedded within the dialog. Therefore, the data are triangulated with examples from each case embedded in the discussion. This format allows for a greater emphasis on the themes around partnerships, partner skills and training, and evaluation of the programs rather than on individual cases.

Overview of Case Studies

The cases of youth pre-apprenticeship programs studied for this research are all successful in providing positive outcomes for their communities. Apprenticeship leaders identify them as high-quality examples. The first case is a community college acting as a hub for the partners who support the youth pre-apprenticeship program. The community college is a Registered Apprenticeship with the Department of Labor and serves as this program's business and student liaison.

The second case is a consortium of companies that saw the need in their community to provide a youth pre-apprenticeship program to develop a quality workforce. This consortium of businesses has expanded its youth pre-apprenticeship program to serve businesses in a four-county region. This program has gained financial support from the North Carolina General Assembly in the amount of \$3,200,000 to support the program designed to develop a talented workforce. The youth pre-apprenticeship program from Case Two was the largest and most structured of the three cases studied. This youth pre-apprenticeship program was more formal, with specific roles assigned to people operating in each area of the organization.

The third case is a smaller consortium that runs through the K-12 school system. This program was different in that those participating in the study all wore multiple hats to achieve the program's goals. The career and technical education director leads from the student side, while a

local business leader is the association's president and supports the business side. This youth pre-apprenticeship program also has a support person in the school system who reaches out to students, provides career counseling, and acts as a liaison between the school, students, and the business community.

While all three cases were identified as successful youth pre-apprenticeships by the staff at ApprenticeshipNC, they all used different models to structure their organization and work. All three focused on developing partnerships and ensuring they engage critical partners in the decision-making process at start-up and throughout the program's growth. All three cases have goals for the future and recognize the opportunity for growth and expansion of pre-apprenticeship programs. This study explored best practices from each case that allowed them to become successful. The findings answered the three research questions by addressing partner engagement, partner skills and traits, and program evaluation.

Partnerships

To address the first research question on key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs, the partnerships that participants identified from each case were examined. When viewing the partnerships, some defined roles for a youth pre-apprenticeship program emerged from the study. Some roles were uniform across all their cases, and some of the partnerships were specific depending on the industry focus or needs of the pre-apprenticeship program. Also, the size of the pre-apprenticeship program, and the organization leading the effort, were identified by participants as characteristics that influenced the role partners needed for the operation. Depending on the organization's size, traditional business functions, such as finance, marketing, and recruiting, were outsourced or delegated to business leaders with that

skill. Like small or start-up companies, people in each case played multiple roles until the program grew.

This study uncovered specific roles and responsibilities that support the creation and sustainability of a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program. The roles that emerged were program champion, human resources, planning (transition and succession), sales and marketing, finance and budgeting, customer service, and general operations management. The needed relationships that emerged include the K-12 school system, the community college, the business community, and workforce development entities.

The Role of the Champion

While many roles help establish and support a youth pre-apprenticeship program, none were identified through the research to be as vital as the role of the champion. In these cases, the champion would be seen as the Chief Executive Officer of the youth pre-apprenticeship program. The champions identified in each case were described as those who see the pre-apprenticeship program as a benefit to the community and are willing to assume the leadership responsibility of guiding the program's progress. In one case, this champion role was not one individual but a team that acted together as the champion. These individuals often were described as leaders who understood the importance of apprenticeships as a source of future talent. In all three cases, the champion was the driving force for the program and worked diligently to provide quality services for students and affiliated businesses. All three cases mentioned that the champion was so valuable that they would not have been part of this study without them. The champion was described as the heart and soul of the program.

In the community college model, the champion was an Associate Dean from the college with the vision and desire to provide a community-based program focused on workforce

development. From his position as an Associate Dean, he envisioned how the community college would lead in developing pre-apprenticeships. He formed a committee to begin discussing the need to create a pre-apprenticeship program and applied for a grant to help with start-up costs. He was the leader with a vision of how a pre-apprenticeship program could impact students' success.

The participants in the business consortium model shared the most feedback on the role of a champion. In this pre-apprenticeship program, the champion was a well-connected person who worked in the business community. When describing the champion, it was indicated that several local business leaders knew her character and her work ethic. She even described herself as the champion. She said, "I can tell you to start the program; what we needed was someone with a thick skin, and that happened to be me, but it could have been anybody who would not take no for an answer and who believed in the concept of apprenticeships." She also stated, "whoever would be bringing this together would have to have such passion for the project that they just moved forward regardless of the negativity." In her view, a champion possesses a passion for the program and shares that passion with others. Her goal was to get one business to commit to the program and be its cheerleader. She saw one success as something that could be celebrated and shared with others in the community. This drive and determination made her a successful champion for their program.

When speaking with the other participants from the business consortium model, they shared several accolades for the champion. They described her as a humble person and someone of high integrity. This individual was very driven. One unique aspect of this champion was that she mentors others in their organization who are learning about pre-apprenticeships and how they support the community. One participant described this individual as "a mentor and an

unbelievable friend to both of us, and someone we talked to so often." Another individual describes the main characteristic of the champion as leadership. They said, "It's leadership. It's leadership and integrity. You must have the right person." It was stated that the champion is "the right person for us." All the participants, in this case, had great respect and admiration for their champion.

In the K-12 model, the champion did not emerge as one person. In this case, a team approach was used to champion the program. The career and technical education director, the president of the pre-apprenticeship, the career development coordinator, and two business partners made up the five-person champion team. The title of career development coordinator has now been changed to work-based learning coordinator to align with the goals of this team. One participant from this case stated, "I think it's a combination of all of us that started it. I think it was me, the Work-Based Learning coordinator, Participant One, someone from company one and company two who's no longer with that company. The five of us, really, we came together. And the Work-Based Learning coordinator did all the work behind the scenes, you know, with the students, but we all wanted this." Each of those from the initial core team was a champion from their positions on the team. Each team member wanted to see the program be successful and worked to remove obstacles to help the program grow. As their program continues to grow, they remain steadfast in their vision. They all remain firm in their commitment to seeing the program expand. As the champion, they saw the need for program expansion and developed their structure to replicate the program in other cities.

All three cases had a champion. All three cases have a team that exemplifies how successful programs operate, and they all have a person or people who possess the characteristics of a leader. From the cases, several commonalities emerged in relation to leadership and the role

of the champion. A high-quality leader passionate about their work for the community is the most predominant predictor of success. Each leader took a different pathway to start the program, but the commonality was the passion they brought to their work. Each champion mentioned settling for nothing less than success for the program. Multiple times the phrase, "we will not take no for an answer," came into the discussion. In the business consortium model, one participant said, "everyone loves each other, and it's because everyone's working so hard, but it's because everyone's kind of moving in the same direction, and they are champions." Their passion for their community has helped them forge through setbacks and times of uncertainty. Personal leadership characteristics identified by the participants as essential to the success of the champion include:

- attitude
- buy-in
- collaboration
- confidence
- grit
- flexibility
- humility
- integrity
- patience

The professional characteristics of the champion include:

- commitment
- communication
- connections

- culture
- leader/mentor
- visionary

Other Roles and Responsibilities

Traditional business functions aligned partner roles and responsibilities and provided structure for the organization. Each case in the study has roles and responsibilities within the organization that align with the functions of a traditional business model. The roles presented will include human resources, sales and marketing, finance, customer service, and general management. While all have roles that keep the program operating, smaller programs must multitask to complete all the work effectively. For the business consortium model, since it is larger, each partner may manage one business function. In smaller organizations, many people carry dual roles. Throughout the study, it was clear that the responsibilities needed to operate a community-based organization align with the functions of a for-profit organization.

Human Resources

All three cases studied have operations that mirror the human resources department in a company. The community college model has two roles that provide direct support throughout the recruiting process for the business and the student. The Director of Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning is responsible for recruiting business partners into the program and providing support once they are a partner. The Success Coach is responsible for reaching out to students who expressed an interest in a pre-apprenticeship position. Both positions are responsible for the placement of students at a business partner's location. Additional human resource support is provided through resume writing, mock interviews, and career coaching.

Since Case One is a community college model, they market apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships to current students by partnering internally with the college career advising office. As the career advising office meets students who could benefit from a pre-apprenticeship, they refer them to the director or the success coach. The director's primary responsibility is to connect the business and the student. She says, "Sometimes we get referrals through marketing. Our College Central work-based learning department, they send out job openings every week, so I'll go look on that, and if there are job openings for pathways that we have, I'll reach out to the company. Therefore, we solicit companies, and then they hear about our program and solicit us. So, it kind of goes both ways."

The K-12 model vets interested business partners through a process like how a job applicant would interview for an open position. Along with existing business partners, the president assesses each business, based on pre-determined criteria, before they are allowed to take on students. The criteria are a screening process for entry. She thinks, "The businesses had to come with a good reputation. They had a drug test, and they had to have background checks. And now we've grown so that if we are going to add businesses, they have to be recommended by other businesses that are existing members." She states, "I think having the businesses vet them, not the school system is important. We know because we are in the industry, so we really know what's going on behind the scenes, where they're going to put their best foot forward with the school system because they want the students." She believes that businesses should evaluate other businesses because they understand the working environment where each student will be. The best partnership candidates can be selected by managing the onboarding process through a structured interview. This process has been a major success for their program because businesses enter it knowing what is expected.

Transition Plans and Succession Planning

A major part of an effective human resource department is succession planning. As an organization grows, not only do the leaders need to consider the growth of the program, but also who will continue to guide it and lead it into the future. As the business consortium model grew, the champion planned to retire. To prepare for this transition, the team created a plan to get the most qualified person as their director. Concerning the new director position, Participant One stated, "Participant Two came on, and she was absolutely the right person at the right time because had I retired and she had not been there, this program would not exist. She had the needed educational background. She had the business acumen. She had the guts to stand up to people and to work like a trojan to get things done, and she was the perfect person to take over the leadership." They found a leader paid through the community foundation that could take the reins and keep the ship moving forward. Today, the director is the liaison between the students and their business partners. She is the local school system liaison. She is also the liaison to businesses that want a pre-apprentice. In her role, she partners with the career development coordinators or the work-based learning coordinators within the K-12 school system to create community night events for students to meet the business community. Her role is the hub of the organization.

Sales and Marketing

All three cases studied have a process for marketing their program to the public. The business consortium model markets their program through a partner on their leadership team. After their program started, additional partners were needed to help with its growth. One of the first was a marketing director interested in apprenticeships. She worked for a company that had become involved with the program by taking on several pre-apprentices. Her marketing skills

were vital to the increased awareness of the program. She brought her employment experience to the team and helped to promote the program to potential business partners.

The community college model is fortunate that its internal marketing team helps promote its program. Marketing is a business function within the community college, so their pre-apprenticeship program can tap into those resources when communicating with students and employers.

The K-12 model is unique in that they have a captive audience. They are based in the school system, so they market internally to each high school student. The Career Development Coordinator at each school shares information about the pre-apprenticeship program with students in their building. To promote business partnerships, they also present at various community organizations. The organization's President shares information about the program with other businesses. Through these conversations, several companies are interested in participating. Marketing the program has only been by word-of-mouth.

For the K-12 model, the Career and Technical Education Director acts as the community leader, like how the Director of Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning works for the community college model. Her responsibilities are similar to a sales representative in a company and include customer service functions to develop additional partnerships for the program. She is also the cheerleader for the program before the school board, the chamber, the workforce development board, and other community-based workforce development organizations. She is the face of the program to the business community.

Finance

A financial leader was one of the significant roles needed in the business consortium model. Participant One, the champion, stated, "In taking the lead on this, I don't know what I

would've done if Participant Three had not stepped up and volunteered, particularly after we started getting money. He volunteered to take over the accounting aspects of the operation. Well, we didn't even realize when we started this that we were going to need that. The thought was, well, we'll do this all within the employers and so forth, but as it turned out, we didn't. We got millions of dollars from the state and Participant Three stepped up and he was like my right arm. I mean Participant Three and I were attached to the hip." He provided much-needed financial support and filled a role for the pre-apprenticeship program based on the work with his full-time employer.

In the community college model, again, they could use the internal resources of the community college to manage their funding. They worked to submit grants, but the college managed their funding. With the community college as the hub for this structural model, their team is fortunate to have several business functions, including financial needs, managed by the college.

The K-12 model is incorporated as a Limited Liability Company (LLC). Participant Two stated, "With the top 3 (companies), the first 3 (companies), we actually formed an LLC, and we trademarked our name, so, it is a nice little group that we funnel our money through, and our partners actually pay dues every year. That kind of helped do things for our students." Unique to this model is that partners pay dues. Those dues are then funneled through their educational foundation. They also have a small checking account for incidentals. This type of model forces the director and the president to act as the finance officers for the organization. Together, they control the funding through the organization's accounts.

All three cases have a process to manage finances. The community college model can use the existing Finance Department within the college. While they still pursue grants and other

funding opportunities, the community college helps to manage those funds for the pre-apprenticeship program. For the business consortium model, funding is managed internally. They have a finance officer who helps manage grants and funds received. Being so large, they employ a lobbyist to solicit funds through the North Carolina General Assembly. This has been a very successful process to gain funds for their program, but it requires someone to be a finance officer who can own that responsibility for managing the funds. For the K-12 model, funds are received through grants and membership dues. They also keep a checking account for smaller purchases. The champions manage their finance process since their organization is smaller.

Customer Service

The Success Coach for the community college model has a master's degree in social work; therefore, her support for students comes from that experience. She is very customer service-focused. With this background, she helps with interview skills and resume writing. If students have domestic or financial issues, she is their guidance counselor who may refer them to other support personnel. She helps with wrap-around services that give students the support they need to be successful. When discussing the importance of Participant Two's role in the organization, the director stated, "It is a really neat dynamic that we have, and it is ironic when you were asking about wrap-around services like Participant Two is a wrap-around service, you know, and she is like also a bridge to these other services that these students have." Students know they will be supported as a pre-apprentice because they have someone to come to when there are challenges. Participant Two states, "I have met with students in other apprenticeships, and they said they felt alone, like if they had an issue, a problem at the college, they didn't know how to handle it, they didn't know whom to turn to. So, it made me feel good that they knew they could talk to me. I mean, they would come to me with everything." She states, "I think if you're

going to have an apprenticeship, a person should definitely have some type of Success Coach, if it's not full-time at least part time." Her role has become the backbone of success for the community college model. The director added, "What makes our program unique is that we have a Success Coach. Not every program has that, and I think it's brilliant that they designed that program with her role." Their organization's development structure included a focus on customer services. This type of focus could come in the form of career counseling.

The K-12 model uses career counseling as a customer service function. They have a Career Development Coordinator at a local high school that students know they can talk with about their career plans. The coordinator helps guide them through the career planning process. A pre-apprenticeship option is discussed as part of that plan. Participant One, who is the president of the program and a business owner, responded, "I would reach out to the Work-Based Learning Coordinator around January to say, hey, I need another one, or I need another two because I picked up in the summer and now, they've progressed, and now they're riding with other people, so I have open slots in the entry-level." She reaches out to the Work-Based Learning coordinator because she sees that person as the connection between their business and the students. Business partners see her in that role as well. They will call the Career Development Coordinator for help when issues come up with a pre-apprentice. The coordinator acts as a call center for business leaders to contact when they need an additional pre-apprentice or support with a current pre-apprentice.

In the business consortium model, the director plays the role of a customer service representative. She works with the local school system to support students who want to enter or have already entered the program. She partners with the local Career Development Coordinators to make sure students know they and their parents have support through the process. She is also

vital in supporting the business community. She works to connect the student to the business, so maintaining a quality relationship with business leaders is essential. She meets with them to discuss taking on a pre-apprentice or expanding their number of pre-apprentices. The main responsibility of a customer service representative is to maintain high-quality relationships with all partners. In the business consortium model, the director assumes this role for all parties.

General Management

Another leader emerged from company two. Their vice-president became the taskmaster and kept the team focused on the goal. His managerial skills became essential in how the organization manages day-to-day activities. Participant Two states, "So, we had a contact at company one who was great at marketing and getting other businesses to listen to the message. But then we also had someone who was the VP at company two, and he could really listen and kind of cut to the chase and also look for the betterment of the whole community instead of looking out for just what company two needed, and sort of always stated that whenever we have the heated discussions, that one, we need the students to win, and two, we need the companies to win." The people in both roles became leaders, filling roles that came naturally to them. They supported the pre-apprenticeship program using skills already provided by their full-time employer.

In the community college model, the director manages the program. Responsibilities include evaluating the program's effectiveness based on key performance indicators and overseeing the program's operation. The director works internally with other departments at the college to support the program. She keeps her eye on each function within the program to make sure it is operating efficiently. The K-12 model is very similar in that the director must monitor all operational functions. Although they have the support of the K-12 system, when there is a

need, the director must manage the program. The director acts as the visionary leader and the manager for the day-to-day operations.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities in a pre-apprenticeship program can vary depending on the size of the program and the level of support available from the community. When reviewing the roles and responsibilities of all three cases as a group, it becomes evident that different organizational models can work to develop the pre-apprenticeship program. However, all require similar business functions that keep the program operating. The business functions may be filled by one person, or outsourced entirely, but all are vital to the organization's operation., public agencies, and workforce development entities.

Quality Relationships

While evaluating roles and responsibilities is essential to discover how to get the right skills and traits to the table, evaluating attitudes is essential to get the right relationships. Participants highlighted that getting the right people to the table is vital when developing a high-functioning pre-apprenticeship program. More importantly, getting the right mindset to the table is essential.

Relationships with key partners from the K-12 school system, the community college, companies from various industries, and public community-based organizations were present in the cases examined for this study and are important for the pre-apprenticeship program to move forward. The relationships highlighted in this section were not all positive. Some cases studied did not have a positive relationship with all partners. Sometimes, one or more partners recruited to be participants would not come to the table, and relationships needed to be built. This valuable

data can help identify the partnerships and relationships absent from the table and the relationships and attitudes needed at the table.

The K-12 School System

When the pre-apprenticeship program from the community college model started, the first person they met was their school system's Career and Technical Education Director. The goal of the meeting was to gauge the level of interest from the K-12 system to start a pre-apprenticeship program. From that first meeting, the school system became a partner. The relationship between the leaders in the pre-apprenticeship program and the leaders from the K-12 system has been very positive. The Success Coach from the community college visited high schools and talked with students, teachers, and staff about the pre-apprenticeship program. The attitude of the school system leadership, including principals, staff, and students, was positive and provided a culture of support for the pre-apprenticeship program. This positive relationship has been beneficial in increasing enrollment and support.

Case Three is a K-12 model that operates as the hub within the school system. The Career and Technical Education Director is the champion for the program, so the relationship with the school system is evident to the business community. Business leaders are gradually learning that the school system is the hub. When someone is interested in the pre-apprenticeship program, they can call the work-based learning coordinator at the high school to learn more. A business leader approached the career and technical education director, asking how they could help students with pre-apprenticeships. She stated, "I connected him with our Career Development Coordinator, and then the relationship she had with the company grew." The relationship started with an introduction and has become a very beneficial partnership.

Leaders in the business consortium model saw the value of the local K-12 school system as essential from the beginning. One of the participants interviewed in this case stated, "we got the employers, we got the chambers, schools, you know, we got the foundation. We had everybody around the table." She did state that there were turf wars in the educational system but needed to clarify if the difficulty was with the K-12 system or the community college. In further discussion, a different participant stated, "I think one big win is when you've got folks like the high school principal and career development coordinator, who are unbelievable cheerleaders for you. I mean, we have folks now at different schools that just eat and drink this Kool-Aid just about as much as we do, and then there are schools that probably don't have as much representation that need to, but we certainly have some that have tremendous pipelines here." The leaders in the business consortium model see how relationships with the school systems are valuable.

In these cases, the individuals within the K-12 system essential to the partnership include career and technical education directors, principals, counselors, career coaches, and career development coordinators. All three cases mentioned how important developing quality relationships with K-12 leaders is to the growth of the program. They also mentioned how quality relationships with each partner have helped them overcome barriers to success.

The Community College

Relationships with community college partners are as valuable as relationships with the K-12 school system as they provide the related instruction for the pre-apprentices. One case in this study struggled to develop a relationship with their community college. This challenge provided valuable feedback on the necessity of having the right people at the table. While this

data might not be seen as a favorable relationship, it provides deep insight into the roles of partners.

Case One, or the community college model, excels because they are the hub for its pre-apprenticeship program. This program's sound operational model aligns with the business community and the K-12 system. This model has also been successful because it can tap into the college's resources to fill needed roles. One participant stated, "Because we are (based) at the community college, we enhance these relationships that we have. We have our business and industry training department. They work a lot with advanced manufacturing, so they will connect us with companies they're working with, and we will reach out to them. Through our faculty, that's how our medical programs took off. Our faculty works with the different hospitals in the area and the nursing homes, and they brought us in to talk about CNA1 and CNA2. It's all so much about partnerships and working together that we couldn't do it if one were missing." Being the hub of the pre-apprenticeship program, the community college has been a very successful model for supporting the relationships needed to move the program forward. This model takes advantage of the community college's already-developed relationships, resources, and key workforce development partners.

Case Two, or the business consortium model, has a position based at a community college that supports the academic side of the pre-apprenticeship program. Participant Two mentioned this position in her comments: "When they come into our program, she helps with the paperwork for the community college, helping them with their classes, signing up for courses. If they have issues with things on the college side, she handles that. She sees the opportunity for us to work together, to kind of grow, grow it all. So, she's been a huge benefit that we didn't have

before." In this model, the community college has been an asset because they came to the table with the right attitude and willingness to help.

The third case, the K-12 model, shows how a complicated relationship with the community college can harm the program. The community college staff sees this program as a competitor to their program; therefore, they are absent from the table. They do not support the work of the team in case study three.

One participant said, "for the community college, we are not partnering well with them. So, they're not really happy with us because they feel like we're taking their students. But at the end of the day, we are trying to get students into the program to help them, but they're not seeing that picture because they're seeing that we're taking them from their classes." When discussing the community college relationship, this participant went on to state, "It's unfortunate, and I hate it because we say this all the time, if we could all get to the table and better understand how everything fits together, we probably could get a ton more students for the community college and for our program."

Business partners in the K-12 model play a much larger role since there needs to be more support from the community college. In this case, companies supporting the pre-apprenticeship program have managed the related curriculum independently. The business partners help students register for the courses they need, or they train the students themselves. Participant Two says, "Company one wants to train the students, they want to train them, whereas company two, she sends them through the community college to get there two-year. Company one, they do all their training, and so they (the community college) don't see it as a true partnership. But then company two tried to hire from the community college and has not had good success before we

started.” The lack of support in this pre-apprenticeship program from the community college did not make it impossible rather, they were innovative and found a way to work around it.

The leadership team in Case Three tried reaching a hand across the table to the community college team but has yet to be successful. The community college recently hired a new liaison to work with adult apprenticeships and grants. The person in this position has been a great resource. Participant Two was hopeful that hiring someone with an attitude favorable toward the K-12 model would bridge the gap between their organizations. When speaking of the new college liaison, Participant Two says, "She's probably only been there about six months. So, we went through a lot of challenges over there, and so we think we have a good one, and we think the relationship's going to be much better with her, and with the program, but you know we've had to build that. But you know, for that partnership, we are still working on it. It's not dead because I think the new liaison is really doing a good job." While hiring the community college liaison has been a positive step, Participant One sees how the need for a quality relationship hinders their program. She added, "It's a vital missing piece, and I hate that it's missing right now because it could make this program much, much better."

With the community college as the missing piece, they still decided that the pre-apprenticeship program was an excellent opportunity for students. They forged ahead even without the community college as a partner. Their goal is to continue working to build this relationship for the future. Since the community college is a significant player in the pre-apprenticeship arena, this relationship is one that the leadership team must continue to develop.

The Business Community

A pre-apprenticeship program can only start or be sustainable with business partners who believe in the program. All three case studies included business partners who wanted to see the

program succeed. Some had to let go of partners who did not share the organization's vision. Some did not protect the students' interests, so they were released from the program. Businesses make poor decisions; when they do, they are no longer partners. While separating from a business partner may be difficult, it is necessary. As shown in the three cases studied, successful business partnerships have led to exceptional student experiences, while some need improvement.

The community college model exemplifies how fluid a partnership with the business community can be. They flow with the community's needs and what industries are prominent in their support area. While the director serves on advisory boards for specific industries, the businesses reach out to her as needed. Concerning recruitment, the director says she will solicit a company for a student placement if needed. She also helps the business if they communicate with them first. She says, "I'll reach out to the company. So, we solicit companies, and then they hear about our program and solicit us. So, it kind of goes both ways." The business community and the pre-apprenticeship staff have learned that placing students with a company is a give-and-take process.

They also are involved with business partners to provide related instruction. The community college staff found they could tailor the instruction to the business partner's needs. The director says, "We use our already approved related instruction from the college so that when our apprentices graduate, they can get a certificate, a diploma, or an associate degree that is an educational credit. We have the flexibility that if a company does not want a very paired-down list of related instruction, we can do that for them, but they will not get that degree, and most of the companies we work with want that education credential which I love." They work to

support the business community by offering flexibility with coursework, but they still have guidelines that meet the college credential requirements.

The team in the business consortium model also mentioned flexibility regarding business partnerships. Participant Two noted, "As we are growing, there's growing pains because we're adding industry tracks. So, you know, the original companies aren't necessarily so happy about the way they had it because they had it sort of perfect for their little group. So, they must have the willingness to be flexible, but also keep the interests of the original companies at heart without losing the integrity of that. But also try to grow the program to meet the needs of these other industry tracks." Businesses need to be flexible as their organizations grow. Flexibility is needed because more pathways will be offered, and more businesses will come online. The support may look different as the organization grows, and business leaders must understand that.

Difficult conversations with this model came about because of their graduated pay scale. Manufacturing apprentices received the same wage as apprentices in the newly created IT pathway. The pay was different and had to be adjusted. This issue became a difficult conversation because the businesses needed to be flexible and understand the rationale behind the decision. Participant Two said, "We had to have those difficult conversations and that was not easy. I mean it was quite difficult, and we had to be flexible, I guess, to meet those needs and the ability to keep to our mission, but also the willingness to grow. And that's constantly a struggle because we, I try to survey the companies, the employers (and) not everyone's happy all the time and that's unfortunately how it is. You know, you can't make everyone happy, but you must do what's good for bettering the program." The desire is to support businesses in pursuing quality employees, but sometimes there is a need to break the partnership.

A challenge in dealing with community partners is addressing the stereotypes that come with pre-apprenticeships. Many partners think no one under 18 can participate in the program when that is not the case. Participant One in the business consortium model said that when recruiting employers, they had to address misconceptions about youth pre-apprenticeship programs. She said, "We had four employers who were taking apprentices, and we sat at a chamber event talking to a major manufacturing employer who did not know we had four, and as we were describing the program, he said, no manufacturer is going to let a 17-year-old on his floor, but when I said to him that we had four of them, and when I told him the names of the employers, I think he was stunned for a moment because it took him by surprise. He hesitated before he responded." One of the biggest challenges with getting the right business leaders to the table is addressing misconceptions about the program.

The K-12 model had a similar experience addressing the need for difficult conversations with business leaders. Their way of managing the business partnerships was to include existing business leaders in the vetting process. Through this process, the partners gained a clearer picture of the culture each business brings to the program. The business leaders also worked to establish criteria for entry into the program. Participant One stated, "The businesses had to come to us with a good reputation. They had to take a drug test, and they had to have background checks. Now we have grown so that if we are going to add businesses, they have to be recommended by other businesses that are existing members." The active business members became the gatekeepers for the program. The process leads to difficult conversations, but leaders succeeded with students because they held participants to a higher standard.

Relationships with business partners can be tricky. They must realize that school systems are held to a set of standards when providing work-based learning options. Businesses must

consider their culture and how students will view the inner workings of their company. These difficult conversations can cause friction, but they are necessary to provide a quality pre-apprenticeship experience for the student and the company. All three cases in this study had a set of criteria they used to evaluate business partners that helped them succeed.

Public Agencies and Workforce Development Entities

When a community wants to start a youth pre-apprenticeship program, strong partnerships can be made between government entities and workforce development cooperatives. Local chambers of commerce, the economic development commission, and the workforce development board are vested in employment growth. Legislators and local government officials also have a vested interest in workforce expansion. These entities can provide quality support for the creation and sustainability of the program.

In the community college model, the chamber and workforce development board attend the meetings held by the pre-apprenticeship program. They provide support indirectly as needed. In the K-12 model, when asked if their chamber or workforce development board participated in their program, the director stated, "No, they are not involved in this. We do partner with some of them for events that they have. So, like when I do a job shadowing event, most of our partners participate in that, but they do not necessarily help us get participating companies." For the education-based programs, either in the K-12 system or the community college, the external government and workforce development entities need a stronger relationship with the pre-apprenticeship program. The business consortium model presents a different experience.

The business consortium model has a solid partnership with several government and workforce entities. Participant One said when they started, "We needed someone with legislative contacts for lack of a better term. I will say a lobbyist with a good reputation. We needed the

chamber for the business contacts. We thought we needed the workforce development board, but to start out, they were not very participative, and we moved on without them. We needed the employers who were the key because we never could have gotten it started without the first employer. So, we brought all those people together and we set out to make a plan for the development of the program and went forth." They saw the need for all these entities to be at the table, but if they were not, in the case of the workforce development board, they moved on without them.

The pre-apprenticeship program started by the business consortium model grew so large because expansion was included in the startup plans. When they began, they partnered with their local community foundation. As they grew, that partnership became very limiting because the program expanded to include four counties and multiple chambers of commerce. Participant One stated, "We needed the chambers to add credibility to the program because it started as a community foundation program, and when we started, we developed a consortium." Their current support model needed to be improved as they continued to scale the program. She stated, "Though we were a community foundation, first of all, we had people who were pretty influential with the community foundation who thought we should not be dabbling in economic development. The current board at that time of the community foundation wanted them to do something about workforce development. So, we had these cross purposes going on, but we developed the collaborative, and I saw that it was never going to get the respect that it needed to be successful if it stayed with the foundation."

Several situations converged simultaneously, allowing them to move the program to the chamber for support. As the community foundation changed its vision, the chamber offices at City A and City B both had new leadership. Participant One saw this as her opportunity to

realign the program and gain much-needed respect. Both new leaders agreed to the transition, and the pre-apprenticeship program became a chamber initiative.

Relationships with workforce entities can provide much-needed support to a youth pre-apprenticeship program. Whether starting a program or working to sustain an existing program, a wise move is to work with the other workforce development entities within the community.

The second research question sought an understanding of the roles and responsibilities needed to start and sustain a youth pre-apprenticeship program. The question also seeks to understand the processes and procedures needed within the organization to support growth. Areas that emerged include defining a strong purpose, recruiting essential skills and traits, developing a solid organizational structure, and building clear operational processes and guidelines.

Start-Up and Sustainability

Concerning the second research question, the findings show that developing a cohesive plan for start-up and sustainability is essential to the program's success. Once key partners are established and needed roles and responsibilities are at the table, the next step is to create a plan to open the pre-apprenticeship program. This process is identical to how a business plan is put together for a new start-up company. There will be many questions about the program's direction in the beginning. However, the leadership team should work through these questions while developing an organizational plan based on their shared vision. This part is essential for a successful beginning. The leadership must review the skills and traits each partner can bring to the program. They should consider the structure of the program. Who will take the lead? The entire program runs on processes, so how will they be developed? How will the program be

funded? For the pre-apprenticeship to succeed, these questions must be answered as part of a start-up plan.

Purpose

Defining the vision, mission, and purpose is the first step in establishing a successful organization. It gives the members a north star to look to as they work to develop the program.

Participant Two in the business consortium model stated, "Whenever we have the heated discussions, that one, we need the students to win, and two, we need the companies to win." Both the students and businesses need to win. This mindset is an essential part of the culture in her program. Student and business success are both defining points in their vision of success.

Participant One expanded on that thought, "Participant Five, from day one, his motto was, this has to be good for the kids. If it's not good for the kids, it's not good for us. So, we have to look at everything through the lens of what's good for the kids and the employer, not one or the other. And that has been the marching tune from day one. And I think it still is." Student and business success are needed for the program to be successful.

In the community college model, a big part of their vision and mission is to help businesses see the pre-apprenticeship program as an investment in the community and their own company. Participant One added, "The companies (need) to understand this is an investment in their people. And when I'm asked, when I meet the company, they say, well, what if we have put them in the apprenticeship program and they leave. But what if you don't train them, and they stay? So, it's a degree you are investing in your workforce, and in this day and age that is going to get them first of all, it's going to get people through your door. And it's going to get them to see that apprenticeship is very, very powerful."

Participant Two from the K-12 model alluded to the same purpose when discussing how the community college does not support its work. She said, "We didn't want that to stop us from moving forward and it didn't, because you know, this is about our students, not about their program." Although they had obstacles to overcome to make the program successful, their goal was always to do what was suitable for the students. The student and business support factors drive the purpose of each case. All three are successful because the students and the business community are at the forefront of their work. A quality vision, mission, and purpose statement, with a student and business focus, will keep the entire team on track as the organization grows.

Skills and Traits

Skills and traits are different from roles and responsibilities. We have already discussed roles and responsibilities and how the right people must be at the table to fill a role or manage a specific responsibility. Skills are the aptitude or talent needed to perform a task. Examples of skills include the ability to set goals, to manage time or projects. Traits were described as personal characteristics. Examples of traits include being trustworthy or untrustworthy, honest or dishonest, or responsible or irresponsible. Pre-apprenticeship partners must possess positive traits and skills to support the program's growth.

In the community college model, the success coach defines the program through her interpersonal skills. She has a master's degree in social work. She stated, "When I was hired, there was no blueprint of how to be a success coach. (My work) in case management and social work helped me find my way. My social work skills helped to effectively manage the apprentices and weekly data." She took it upon herself to design her job description. She created it as she went through the process, and the pre-apprenticeship program grew. Her dedication to the

students and the program helped move the students forward and helped the program become successful.

The business consortium model is an excellent example of people who came together and worked as a team. For them, teamwork was the essential skill that propelled them forward. During their interview, words like "collaboration, flexibility, and commitment" emerged. The entire team worked through differences and maintained a very high-quality team environment. They supported each other completely. Participant Two realized she was in a very different environment when she attended one of the first organizational meetings. She said, "It's the first group of people I've ever been with who when I started going to meetings, even though at that time they were meeting in person all the time, it was before COVID, everyone was always like hugging each other and giving each other high fives, and I was like, this is so weird." She quickly learned that the hugging and high-fiving were signs of the deep commitment all the members made to the success of the program and each other. They realized that they were all working in the same direction. She further stated, "But it's because there's sort of a camaraderie, you have to work so hard at it, so that when you actually get to see each other in person, everyone's so happy to see each other." The culture in this model was one of camaraderie and teamwork. One of the most remarkable skills a leader can bring to the table is creating an environment conducive to creative thinking and mutual respect.

Creating a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program is arduous work. An essential trait for building a successful pre-apprenticeship program is grit. Case Three, or the K-12 model, is a perfect example of grit. When their organization struggled to develop a relationship with the community college, their resolve to move the program forward came through clearly. Participant Two said, "We've been in this system for a really long time, so we knew the system. We knew

the community college, so it wasn't like we were coming in blind, as somebody brand new. We understood all of that, and we made it work." The team knew it would be challenging, but they decided to keep going. They believed that their work was valuable and decided to keep working. When developing a team to support a high-quality pre-apprenticeship, grit is an essential personality trait.

Many traits came to the forefront of the discussions in each case study. Below are the traits identified as essential for growth

- Collaborative.
- Committed.
- Confidence.
- Flexible.
- Grit.
- Humility.
- Integrity.
- Patience.
- Positive Attitude.
- Stability.
- Team Player.

The common trait required for each role is passion. Each team member must understand their role and responsibilities and be passionate about seeing the program succeed. They must understand that their work brings value to the community where they live and work. Participant One from the business consortium model summarized this best when asked about developing a support team. She said, "about having the right people, and I'm not sure I could easily describe

what the right people are except that they need to be interested in the whole, not themselves. And they need to be collaborative people." Her thoughts were more about the attitude with which a person comes to the table than the specific skills needed to push the program forward. They met people who had the skills but needed more desire. The desire to see the program succeed will make them move forward. When creating a team to build a pre-apprenticeship program, the goal is to find people skilled in their supporting roles but also share the same vision for student and business success. Partners can have the skill, but passion breeds success.

Structure

The organizational structure of a youth pre-apprenticeship program can vary depending on the community's needs and the relationships with each partner. The leadership team can do their best to establish a quality structure initially, but it pays to be flexible throughout the start-up phase because challenges will come. Participant Two said in the community college model, "We often said we are building the plane while flying it, because we were putting the program together while it was taking off. It was an exciting and challenging time." It can feel like riding a rollercoaster through the start-up phase; teams should move with the flow. Flexibility is essential when building a structure because everything will not go as planned.

Each pre-apprenticeship program studied has a different structure. The model for Case One had a community college as the hub. Case Two began as a consortium of business leaders who came together as a community-based organization, so their community foundation became the hub. Case Three started with the K-12 school system as the hub. When discussing this topic, it was noted that various organizations could start pre-apprenticeship programs, including faith-based organizations, unions, or individuals interested in helping others find employment. Some groups incorporate their program as 501c3 non-profit organizations or (LLC) Limited Liability

Companies to develop a solid structure. The key is to create an entity that follows the community's passion, mission, and goals.

Case One uses an organizational structure where the community college is the hub where all partners connect. This structure gives them much-needed respect from the business leaders in their community because they all know the community college is not going anywhere. They will be stable and provide quality services for years to come. Participant One said, "We are not going anywhere right, like we're going to be here. So, a company can use us every year, every semester, or every two years, every three years." With the backing of the community college, they also did not need to incorporate as a non-profit organization. The college already maintains that status. With the community college as the central hub of operations, this program has maintained support and respect from various business partners.

Case Two began as a business consortium. Several business leaders came together to develop the pre-apprenticeship program but had to realign their structure over time. They had to be flexible. The structure of this program is very similar to a traditional business model. Since local business leaders were developing a consortium, following a trusted model that most of them used in their daily activities made sense. They contacted legislators through a lobbyist to aid their funding needs. They recruited someone with an accounting and finance background to help with grants and donations. They also recruited someone with a marketing background who could help with advertising and promotion. While their funding goes through the community foundation, they have considered incorporating it as a 501c3. Their business skills helped them move the program forward very quickly. They now use their skills to share best practices with other communities developing youth pre-apprenticeship programs.

Case Three opted for a structure where the K-12 school system is the hub, with the career and technical education director as the leader. This option makes sense because the students are still in high school when they begin their pre-apprentice program. The challenge for them has been their partnership with the community college. The staff at the college do not support them because they see them as a competitor, not an ally. They did form a Limited Liability Company (LLC) to help manage the tax implications with funding. Although they differ from the others, they are still very successful at putting students into pre-apprenticeships.

Processes

When comparing all three cases to each other, all had essential processes no matter the organization's size. The difference between the three cases is that smaller organizations require participants to wear multiple hats. In contrast, a larger organization can split the responsibilities between various people. Either way, the workload is enormous and requires a commitment beyond an eight-hour day. Participants Two and Three in the business consortium model talked about how they worked so many crazy hours to finish everything that they regularly lost track of time. They were working as hard as they could. Processes can be in place, but that does not replace hard work.

Although a smaller organization, the community college model had processes that kept everything moving. The director and the success coach understood each other's job and pushed work toward who owned that process. When the students had a need, the success coach handled that process. When businesses wanted to become a partner, the director handled that onboarding process. They both still wear multiple hats but work together to manage the operations. With their size, they outsource some of their processes to the community college staff. The community college helps manage and support the funding and student recruitment processes.

The case presented as a business consortium model is a larger organization, so they have partners who support the business functions of the partnership. During the program's first six years, no one was responsible for recruitment at the community college. Participant Two stated, "I think we're blessed though, too, because we now have a really good apprenticeship coordinator at the college, which we didn't have for the first six years. So, she's added a whole new dimension. So, I feel like we have a little bit more support now." They constantly looked for how to pull in another set of hands to support the program.

In the K-12 model, the business recruitment process was one of the most successful processes implemented. Business leaders know the reputation of other businesses in the community. Based on this premise, the president of the pre-apprenticeship program, being a business leader, started a vetting process for companies who desired to enter the program. This process allows current business partners to act as evaluators for businesses wanting to enter the program. The leadership team developed a criterion to evaluate each company. If the company has a culture that is not conducive to students, they are not allowed to enter the pre-apprenticeship program. They are not allowed to enter if they have a reputation for being unethical or disrespectful. The outcome of this vetting process is that the leadership team has never had to ask a company to leave. Each one who enters knows precisely why they are there and how they should act around students. Having this process as a part of the program has paid great dividends.

Concerning processes, each case worked on processes as the need came to light. None of them entered the program with a full Policy and Procedure Manual. They built the plane as they were flying it. This strategy worked because so much of building the structure involves learning as a challenge or opportunity arises.

Funding

Funding is a process that requires a specific focus. Each case had to work through a process to develop a funding model. Although each process may be managed differently, they are all very successful.

Funding is managed through a community college in Case One. Being an extension of the college, they manage their funding through that entity. They still apply for grants and receive donations from external sources. Still, their process is managed internally through the community college, which has allowed them to efficiently manage funds.

In Case Two, which is the business consortium model, they received funds from several funding streams. They receive funding through small and large grants and use those funds to manage the program's day-to-day activities. They receive significant funding through the North Carolina General Assembly's budget. They also receive donations from the local community. Participant Three in this study is the finance officer. He works to create a solid budget and leads the process of soliciting financial supporters. While they manage funds through a community foundation, they are considering incorporating a 501c3 non-profit organization separate from the non-profit community foundation to provide a more robust funding structure.

The K-12 model is a unique funding model compared to the other two cases. Their members pay dues annually to be a member of the pre-apprenticeship program. They also created an LLC (Limited Liability Company) to funnel money through a legal entity. They also partner with their education foundation to manage funds and have a bank account for more minor needs.

All three cases have processes for managing funds. Although they each look different, they all have solid financial processes to manage the funds that come through their organization.

Each program's evaluation process was explored to understand better how youth pre-apprenticeship programs identify success and identify opportunities for improvement.

Evaluation

Concerning the third research question, the participants told the researcher that to grow a youth pre-apprenticeship program effectively, community-based organizations must have a process for evaluation. It was noted that if the program outcomes are not measured, there will not be a clear picture of the success or failure of the program. This section emerged as highly important because, with quality data, leaders will know how to plan or overcome challenges. Evaluation is a necessity for program growth. This section of the findings will discuss the program's expected outcomes, the challenges faced during start-up, and the goals for the program.

Outcomes

Leaders who support and seek to start youth pre-apprenticeship programs have reasons and goals for starting the program. Therefore, they desire to see outcomes consistent with those reasons and goals. While the apparent outcome is to help students become gainfully employed, other outcomes can be measured as the program progresses. Each case in the study had outcomes they saw as beneficial to their community. "Within the early development and maintenance stages of partnership development, feedback is critical; it helps organizational members make sense of intended and actual outcomes" (Amey et al., 2007, p. 11). While the key performance indicators may differ from case to case, they all had a plan for gathering feedback and evaluating their progress as they moved toward becoming a successful pre-apprenticeship program.

The leading performance indicator for the community college model was the national apprenticeship completion rate. This is the benchmark for their program. At the time of the

interview, the national apprenticeship completion rate was less than 30 percent. The community college completion stop-out rate for all college programs is 41 percent. Currently, the completion rate for the apprenticeship program managed through the community college model is 61 percent, several percentage points higher than the national average. For their work with apprenticeships and the success they have experienced, ApprenticeshipNC and the state Community College Systems Office honored their program by awarding them the Outstanding Apprenticeship Award for North Carolina.

For the business consortium model, they also identified outcomes for their program. When asked about evaluation methods, one of the key performance indicators they use is the "percentage of students that finish the program, not from the pre-apprenticeship, but from their signing period on." The expectation is that there will be drop-offs. They never expect 100 percent and see that as an issue with their program. There will always be students who pursue other opportunities outside the pre-apprenticeship.

Leaders in Case Two also had a goal to look like their community. Included in their key performance indicators is a metric for diversity. They actively recruit women and people of color into their program. The first class of apprentices who entered the program included 14 white males. Participant Three stated, "We are unbelievably successful now with more women, African American, Latinx and a variety of other demographic groups. It is unbelievable." Their goal was to have a diverse group of pre-apprentices that reflect their community's demographic. The metrics in their key performance indicators reflect that goal.

Another metric that reveals the program's success is the number of students and parents attending their community night events. The business consortium model hosts community nights at a central venue to share information about the pre-apprenticeship program with parents and

community leaders. Their latest event had over 1000 attendees. The attendance has grown so much that they plan to host multiple community nights throughout the school year to meet the demand.

Indirectly, they have another indicator that shows their success. It is the number of principals and counselors who bought into the program. They have become the program's cheerleaders. It is valuable data to hear feedback from the school-level staff.

For the case using the K-12 model, their program has a metric that shows the workers a company retains. Are the students leaving for other jobs or being fired? Are they underperforming? Like the program in Case Two, they never expect 100 percent, but they review the number of students leaving. This data is used with business partners to understand the issues behind the metric. Participant One, the president and a business leader, said, "I think I've hired 10 in the past three years, and I have six still with me, and that's an outstanding number." She also shared, "That's more than 50% and you think it means you're hiring a 16-year-old and trying to keep him on. So that's a good number." While they expect less than 100 percent, they evaluate the percentage of apprentices leaving and not completing the program against those who stay.

From the beginning, each case included key performance indicators in the evaluation phase of their program. They saw the evaluation as a support to their success. Programs that benchmark against indicators should know their most significant opportunities for growth.

Challenges

When discussing how to evaluate a program, part of that process is discussing the challenges the program faces. Although each case in this study was very successful, they faced challenges. Every program faces challenges that come in different forms, but overcoming them can lead to great success.

The community college model in Case One had a challenge with communication. It is essential to the success of the program to have quality communication. The success coach needed help communicating with the students in her care. She said, "I needed to see them at least twice a month. It was difficult to make contact with them. So that was a challenge. It was a big challenge. I would constantly email them, sometimes I would call, and one of my coworkers said you should go stand outside the class when they come out." She found their schedules and attended classes to ensure they completed their program requirements.

Another challenge the success coach struggled with was the soft skills of each student. Many needed assistance completing a resume and did not know how to interview. To overcome this challenge, she held mock interviews and resume writing workshops so they could prepare. She referred several students to the college writing center because they needed to develop essential literacy skills. While this was a challenge for her, her work is the very definition of a pre-apprenticeship. She took a snapshot of where they were and then pushed them in the most beneficial direction for help.

The business consortium model found in Case Two had challenges supporting existing business partners as the program's needs began to change. They needed to add additional pathways or change the pay scale, and some business leaders did not want to be flexible with the needed changes. Their team also had challenges with some companies that no longer wanted to participate. Participant Two stated, "We have had a few, I'd say "non-wins" of companies that are looking maybe for cheap labor, and that hasn't worked out, but it usually comes back. We've had a few situations where the companies just no longer will take apprentices. There's one company where I've actually moved the apprentices to another company because they just weren't really looking out for the best interests of the students. They weren't mentoring them like

they're supposed to because that's a big part of the program." With a non-compliant business partner, the best way to make progress is to address the challenge head-on. Always err on the side of protecting the students and their interests.

For the K-12 model represented in Case Three, their primary challenge was with the community college relationship. They need a quality relationship with their community college. Their work with the new apprenticeship coordinator at the college has been promising. They also need help with partners leaving the program. It is a difficult conversation to have when the relationship needs adjusting. Letting a business or a student leave the program is a complex conversation.

Goals and Plans for the Future

Throughout the data collection process, each case shared its goals for the future. The challenges they experienced guided their goals for the program's expansion. Each one saw the need for growth and had distinct views on how to make that happen.

Case One, the community college model, sees increased enrollment in the program as an opportunity to hire another success coach. The current success coach cannot fill the needs as the student count increases. There needs to be additional personnel to support the program. Part of their growth plan is to add additional employees.

Case Two, the business consortium model, has a goal for the future of maintaining their focus on diversity. They want a structured process to market the program to diverse groups. They especially want to increase the female participation rate. At 16 – 18 years old, girls are more mature and focused on their success in the program than boys. Their other goal is to increase the number of community nights to help parents, students, and business leaders understand the program since the demand is there.

Case Three, or the K-12 Model, has a clear expansion plan. Several of their business partners have multiple locations. The leadership team's goal is to continue developing their program into a model that can be replicated in other communities where their current companies operate. Their goal is to help alleviate the deficiency in trained labor that many communities face across the nation.

All three cases mentioned the need to address the challenge of stereotypes. The stereotype held by parents, educators, and community leaders that a four-year degree is the only option for students needs to be broken. This mindset is a struggle for many workforce development organizations. There are many pathways to a successful career, and a four-year degree is only one option. All three programs in this study had very defined goals for the future based on evidence of student success.

Summary of Findings

Pre-apprenticeships are a structured pathway to help young people find their career direction. By design, pre-apprenticeships help students evaluate their skill level and develop a plan to enhance those skills. For the business leader, the pre-apprenticeship helps them vet potential employees before they start work. They can evaluate the interest level of each student and gauge their interest in the industry before they begin the program. To bring these two parties together, a community-based organization must see the need to connect the student to industry. Findings from this study show how community-based organizations supporting pre-apprenticeship programs bring partners together to provide this service.

Case One is a pre-apprenticeship program based at a community college. Their structure allows the community college to manage some of the functions of the pre-apprenticeship program that other organizations must manage on their own. Internal partners manage their

finances and program promotion at the college. They also have the backing of a work-based learning department that helps with recruitment. While some organizations must rely on outside external help, the structure of having the Registered Apprenticeship program based at the community college has allowed the program to tap into much-needed resources. A significant discovery about the partnership roles identified in Case One is the role of the Success Coach. Her role is vital to the success of each student. She acts as a counselor for students enrolled in the program. Career counseling is not an afterthought in their program. It is the central theme of the program.

The youth pre-apprenticeship program examined in Case Two is a large business consortium encompassing a four-county area. They have several identifiable qualities that allow them to be successful, the most predominant being the skill and influence of their leadership team. Case Two had an influential champion to lead the program who was well-connected in the community and could get other leaders to listen to their story. They also hired a lobbyist to reach out to legislators in the North Carolina General Assembly. Their lobbyist met with legislators and successfully negotiated a financial package of several million dollars to help sustain their program. The partnerships they have developed with their chamber, the Economic Development Commission, and local business leaders have contributed to their success. Although they began as part of the community foundation, they moved operations to the local chamber and now operate under their umbrella. They have been successful because they have the right people at the table with the right skills and traits needed to push the program forward. They are also flexible in their approach and move with changes as needed.

Findings from Case Three, or the K-12 model, could be the most revealing of the three cases studied. They have a strained relationship with their community college. The college sees

the pre-apprenticeship program as a threat to its program, so the work for the leaders in Case Two is focused on mending that relationship. They are continually working to recruit businesses to host a pre-apprentice. Their challenges allowed them to develop a cleaner process for vetting businesses wanting to enter the program. Leaders from the pre-apprenticeship program decided to move forward without specific partners being at the table. With challenges, they aim to create quality partnerships with the right skills and traits needed to move forward.

When triangulating data across all three cases, the strongest finding focuses on how the community-based organization should operate. To become a successful pre-apprenticeship program, the findings show that organizational leadership must think like they are starting a business. They must consider the organization as a business entity and plan the business functions based on the overall goals for the program. The roles and responsibilities identified in the planning phase should align with major business functions such as leadership, human resources, sales and marketing, finance, customer service, and general business management. Since each role is essential for starting and sustaining a quality program, this structure can be used as a model to support community-based organizations as they develop pre-apprenticeship programs. While the organizational structure of each community-based organization can look different, the main themes identify points to consider during the start-up and sustainability phases of the program's growth. An explanation of each core business function is included in Appendix C.

This study involved three pre-apprenticeship programs that have experienced heightened success at placing students with a partner company. ApprenticeshipNC, the governing body for apprenticeships in North Carolina, recommended each program for the case study. Each program

followed a model that became the basis for the research questions in this study. The research questions are below.

- What are the key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs?
- What skills and traits are needed to successfully contribute to developing and sustaining a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program?
- How are youth pre-apprenticeship programs evaluated?

The three questions were answered through an interview with the participants in a case study research design. By answering these three questions and studying the best practices of all three cases, leaders have a model to use as they begin a pre-apprenticeship program in their community.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Pre-apprenticeship programs provide a pathway into the workforce that can help youth and adults discover their career interests and become successful employees. A pre-apprenticeship can also address the skills gap by creating opportunities in areas with employee shortages. Additionally, these programs can create a work-based learning experience that provides students with context by placing them in real-world situations where they can learn through hands-on activities. According to Apprenticeship USA, a “Pre-apprenticeship is a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals for entry into Registered Apprenticeship Programs or other job opportunities” (n.d., p. 1). These opportunities for youth can provide direction at an early age and preparation to enter additional training or the job market.

Developing a pre-apprenticeship program is a community investment and addresses several workforce development issues. However, challenges arise when developing these programs. A better understanding of the partnerships, roles, skills, and evaluation processes could help practitioners deal with the challenges. The literature has proved that creating a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program within a local community is challenging and usually involves many partners (Taylor, 2006). From the research, it became clear that the process for developing a pre-apprenticeship program includes several partners from education and the local business community. In these successful programs, partners bring their expertise to the leadership team as they work to develop a quality program. With strategic partners integrated into the process and individuals with specific skills and traits, youth pre-apprenticeship programs would be easier to start and sustain over time.

Based on the literature, when starting a youth pre-apprenticeship program, there are few places where community and educational leaders can go to find information about selecting the most effective partners (Fleming, 2017). Leaders in business or education may desire to develop a pre-apprenticeship program to support workforce development for their community but need a deeper understanding of the partners to include and the skills and traits needed for success. Additionally, there needs to be more information to specifically understand how youth pre-apprenticeship programs are evaluated and how the evaluations are being used for improvement. To start a program that is more likely to be successful, Iyer (2003) states that a partnership structure must be established where partner needs can be met, and their talents can be used to the fullest.

In the context of the youth pre-apprenticeship programs used for this study, business and educational leaders who start with a solid partnership structure will have a foundation to be more successful and achieve their goals. The research findings prove that the structures can be different but effective in creating a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program. In each case, the partnership structure had a hub or core team who acted as the command center for the program's operations. The hub could be the community college, the K-12 school system, or a non-profit organization comprised of business and community leaders. Within the cases studied, the common part was having a hub of operations.

Business participation is one aspect that is critical in a youth pre-apprenticeship. Even though this study was not addressing apprenticeship programs, it was clear that business participation is also critical to those extended partnerships. In all apprenticeship models, you must have an employer who is engaged and willing to accept students into their company. The program will not operate without them. Another significant issue with developing a pre-

apprenticeship program is that business and educational leaders must learn to work together. Business leaders must get involved in the education arena to bring the world of work into the classroom. Work-based learning opportunities are one aspect of education where business leaders can directly impact the student and the teacher. Those in the education system must learn about changes in the business community.

To meet the goal of aligning business and education, both partners need to communicate. In these cases, it was highlighted that there could be a disconnect between what is happening in the business world and what is happening in the education world. This disconnect creates a situation in which there needs to be more alignment between the needs of education and the needs of business and industry leaders. The two groups must partner to provide quality education for students aligned with workforce needs. This study found that one way to align education and business is to provide additional work-based learning opportunities, specifically pre-apprenticeship programs.

From the research, significant commitment and specific roles are needed to start and sustain the program, but none are more significant than the role of the champion. There must be a leader to start the process and serve as the cheerleader for the program. Someone must take up the mantle and get the program moving. From the interviews, the role of the champion is the most complex and challenging in the partnership. The champion must be willing to go the extra mile to see success. When others create roadblocks or barriers, the champion provides answers and solutions. In all three cases, the champion is the heart and soul of the youth pre-apprenticeship program. As the most vital role in the organization, the pre-apprenticeship program must have a champion.

This study determines the key partnership roles needed to start, sustain, and evaluate a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program. The research model is designed to discover the skills and traits of the most ideal partner. The study concludes with a review of how an organization uses key performance indicators to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The findings from this research are meant to guide communities as they start and sustain a pre-apprenticeship program. The researcher will discuss the findings, implications, and conclusions in this chapter. The chapter ends with recommendations for further study.

Summary of Study

Starting a pre-apprenticeship program that effectively supports the needs of students is a complex task. All three cases used a different model but were very successful in their endeavor. This study helps to understand the steps taken to develop a successful program and how the program is sustained and evaluated. Specifically, this study examined the role of partners in youth pre-apprenticeship programs. Each partner was examined to determine the skills and traits they bring to the table when creating a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program. When exploring these cases, the community college hub, the business consortium hub, or the K-12 hub all have issues that need to be addressed. In each case, partners had a similar perspective that pre-apprenticeship programs for youth are an effective pathway to help close the skill gap and a tool to help them successfully enter the workforce.

The research design for the study is a case study analysis of three youth pre-apprenticeship programs in North Carolina. Each case was recommended to the researcher through contacts at ApprenticeshipNC, the apprenticeship support organization in North Carolina. While each case varies in size and scope, all three have key partners who realized their

role in successfully implementing and managing their pre-apprenticeship program. All three were recommended as examples of high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs.

Review of Findings

Interviews were conducted with individuals representing each case focused on three main areas: partnerships, startup and sustainability, and evaluation. All three cases had processes for developing and supporting new and existing partnerships. They all had criteria for onboarding new partners. To initiate and sustain the program, participants in each case mentioned that they were learning as they worked. This led to the conclusion that these high-quality programs developed ways to use feedback and evaluation to improve their programs. The interviewees did not mention a manual to teach them how to develop a successful pre-apprenticeship. They worked through the challenges and developed the processes as issues began to arise. In these cases, when something did not work or a partner could not provide the needed resources, the partnerships adjusted and filled in gaps. This spoke to the determination of the partners who wanted these programs to be successful. They found ways around “roadblocks.” In all three youth pre-apprenticeship programs, plans were developed for evaluating the program. Some plans were more detailed and structured than others, but all had a process to assess the program’s effectiveness. The cases used metrics such as completion rates and the percentage of students hired into a Registered Apprenticeship program as key performance indicators. One case measured diversity among people of color and gender. Another case used the number of businesses that continue to partner with the program as an indicator. The data received during the evaluation process were used to develop their goals and greatest opportunities for improvement.

The findings from this research help program leaders understand the roles key partners play in developing a pre-apprenticeship program. They also understand the skills and traits

needed to sustain and evaluate the program. The aim is to present best practices from successful youth pre-apprenticeship programs to guide future organizations through the challenges they will face as they work to develop additional programs.

Discussion

The researcher will discuss the findings in this section and show how these can directly connect to practice. The researcher will share the interpretation of the data and show how it applies to the development and operation of a youth pre-apprenticeship program. To have a discussion based on the findings obtained through the research, the outline for this section is based on the structure of each research question.

Research Question One

Research question one was, “What are the key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs?” The first research question addresses the roles needed to develop a quality program. To bring in the right partners, the leaders could approach the development of the pre-apprenticeship program as if someone were starting a business. The roles mentioned in the findings align with business functions such as finance, sales and marketing, public relations, customer service and support, information technology, management, human resources, and talent development. The roles can be found in most organizations, no matter their size. In larger organizations, one person may fill the role, while in smaller organizations, one person may fill multiple roles.

A high-quality pre-apprenticeship program is not another pathway within a school system. It is part of a much larger program that prepares students for the workforce. The partners from each case shared that youth pre-apprenticeships are not an extension of another workforce development organization. Some see it as an extension of the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act (WIOA) career center, the local workforce development board, the economic development commission, or the chamber of commerce. These organizations indirectly supported the programs in this study through activities such as serving on advisory boards, attending community events, and helping to make business contacts. Still, the community-based organizations in this study are designed to support pre-apprenticeships on their own. They can be managed through a business consortium or embedded within a community college or K-12 school system.

As the program leaders think through how to develop the organizational structure, roles will be needed to support that structure. All roles may not be needed at the beginning but will be needed over time. One person cannot manage all the roles and responsibilities for the pre-apprenticeship program. It takes a team of leaders to make a youth pre-apprenticeship program successful.

This study found that all three pre-apprenticeship programs had a criterion for onboarding partners. These criteria helped to vet partners before they could welcome students from the program to their company. It also guided partners in understanding their responsibilities once they were onboard. Those leading youth pre-apprenticeship efforts should develop criteria for onboarding based on identified roles and responsibilities that align with the vision and mission of the organization. Partners who fill leadership roles within the organization and those who plan to take on a pre-apprentice should know the program's vision and mission. Each organization studied had a strict vetting process. The process included questions like,

- Is your work environment conducive to students?
- Do you perform routine drug tests?
- Do you perform background checks on your employees?

A vetting process is needed to ensure the right people participate in the partnership. The “right people” mentioned in the interview process are not rude, use good manners, do not use foul language, and always keep the safety of the student at the forefront of their minds.

Several times during the literature review (Nichols, Sofer, 2017; Hixon, 2016) and the interview process, the word “champion” emerged. It was mentioned in the literature review as someone who saw the need and took action to develop a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program. These people were described as having great determination in the three cases studied. They would not take no for an answer when faced with challenges. Their goal was for the program to succeed at all costs.

All three cases had someone who was their champion. In the community college model, that person was a vice president of the community college. Later, the two participants in the study, the Director of Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning and the Success Coach, became the champions as they worked to sustain the program. In the business consortium model, the champion was a respected business leader in the community. She decided they would have a pre-apprenticeship program in their community and sought people to help her with the process. Under her leadership, their program expanded into a four-county program supporting multiple communities. In the K-12 model, the champion came from the K-12 school system. The champion was approached by a business leader wanting students for an on-the-job training opportunity. From that conversation, their pre-apprenticeship was born. Four other champions came on board as the program grew. Those champions were a career development coordinator from the high school and three business partners. All three cases confirmed what was already mentioned throughout the literature review. A pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program will only be successful with a passionate champion.

As the programs began to grow, there was a need to develop structured positions with job descriptions. Based on the findings from this study, a structured organizational chart with written job descriptions for those who support the program would be a useful tool. The director and success coach in the community college model had to develop structured job descriptions since the community college hired them. In the business consortium model, there was a need for job descriptions when the new director was hired. This description provided the organization with a list of duties to perform, and the background needed to serve as the executive director. In the K-12 model, job descriptions were provided through the school system for their employees, while the president was a business leader with a job description from her company. The two cases affiliated with an educational entity had job descriptions provided through their employment.

While these cases did not present formal job descriptions for partners, there could be job descriptions as partners are onboarded to provide clarity in their roles. The participants all stated that there needed to be clear expectations and guidelines to know what was expected from each partner. These guidelines could be included in a partner orientation to show how roles and responsibilities align with the vision and mission of the program.

The interview process made it clear that each case initially needed a structure. They mentioned how having a manual or guide would have been helpful. They were creating tools and materials as they went along. In each case, they did as much upfront planning as possible, but much of their work was described as reactive rather than proactive. Participants also mentioned at the beginning that they needed to understand their roles and responsibilities. Still, as they moved further into the daily operation of the process, they naturally fell into their roles. Now that they are established programs, they have an organizational chart that can be used if they have a turnover or expand their leadership team.

Participants from each case had to be flexible from the start. For example, the participants in the business consortium model originally thought that the organization's finances could be managed by the companies where each partner worked. As more and more funds came in, they quickly realized they needed someone specifically focused on finances who could manage the entire process for the organization. Flexibility is critical. While business and industry must move with changes in the economy, a program that develops the workforce must be just as flexible. The findings from this study suggest that a high-quality pre-apprenticeship must also be flexible and move with the market or economic changes.

The study highlighted the importance of developing high-quality working relationships. When discussing roles and responsibilities, the partners' relationships were evident. They finished each other's sentences and built on each other's thoughts. Their energy showed how well they worked together. The participants described their relationships as friends, mentors, collaborators, and partners. The participants said they worked hard to find partners who thought like them and wanted to do something great for their community. They all worked very hard to maintain their relationships, both internally with each other and externally with new business partners. They commented on how they loved and respected each other. They called each other family.

When developing the leadership for a community-based organization, there will be a temptation to bring leaders to the team through an established relationship with other organizations. Being a friend or family member does not qualify someone to be on the leadership team for a pre-apprenticeship program. It also does not qualify a business partner to take on pre-apprentices. There must be a vetting process that gauges the level of passion for the vision and mission of the program.

While relationships should be the focus, there will be times when the business partners do not work out or a student relationship becomes strained. The business may want to refrain from taking future pre-apprentices, or a student may do something inappropriate. When this happened, the three cases had a process for how to close the relationship. Having a separation plan is essential to the continued success of the program. They all stated how uncomfortable it is to make that decision, but to maintain positive relationships with all partners, they cannot tolerate poor performance. Tolerating poor performance will decrease the morale and excitement of others in the program. Community-based organizations planning to start a pre-apprenticeship program should develop a written plan to separate themselves from students and businesses that do not align with their vision and goals for the program. The plan should also include how to separate from a partner or student if there are ethical or safety concerns before a problem arises.

The central theme of the interview on partnerships focuses on the partners' attitudes. All partners had diverse talents they brought to the partnership. They were also experts in their respective industries. One characteristic that stood out was the passion they all brought to their work. In psychology, there is a concept called flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), where a person is in a state of mind that they become completely immersed in an activity that brings them a sense of euphoria. An example would be when a teacher facilitates a lesson so well that students get lost in the learning and lose track of time. They become so interested in the content or the activity that time seems to stand still or is irrelevant. This experience happens in many other situations when a person is passionate about their actions. Time is irrelevant. The partners interviewed for this study all mentioned work that brought them a tremendous amount of personal satisfaction. They were very passionate about the work they were doing. They worked crazy hours, got up early, and went to bed late. Participants in each case were lost in their

passion for their work. This passion makes organizations great. Leaders working to establish a pre-apprenticeship program must look for partners who share their passion.

Research Question Two

Research question two was, “What skills and traits are needed to successfully contribute to developing and sustaining a high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship program? The second research question addresses the skills and traits needed by a partner to successfully open and operate a pre-apprenticeship program. Through the data analysis phase of this research study, several words were used in the deductive coding process to frame how programs start and are sustained. The deductive coding themes included purpose, skills, traits, structure, processes, and funding. From these words, other inductive themes came to light. Those codes include vision, mission, culture, growth, investment, buy-in, standards, stability, and collaboration. The outline for this section is based on the deductive codes used in the data analysis phase.

Organizations become successful by openly defining their purpose. Each case clearly defined its purpose and the work surrounding that purpose. Through their purpose, they worked together as one body, one organization. The purpose behind their work drove them. To successfully sustain a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program, every partner must understand the purpose behind the program. There must be partners at the table who desire to help the community and not just themselves. Hidden agendas should stay hidden. The pre-apprenticeship is an opportunity to participate in a collective impact process that will benefit many within their community. There will be challenges. Still, all partners must focus on “we,” not “me.” They must understand why they are doing what they are doing. When they lose that purpose, they cease to be a high-quality partnership. Like starting a company, leaders in a community-based organization should develop vision and mission statements that guide their purpose and work. A

leadership skill needed in any successful organization is rallying a team around a vision and mission. This skill is essential to sustain the purpose of the pre-apprenticeship program.

Skills are the talents a partner brings to the table. Skills can include managing money or marketing a product or service. Skills can be discovered as the organization grows. The success coach, in Case One, the community college model, had a background in social work. She did not realize until she was already in the position that her background would quickly come to the foreground. She became a coach and counselor to all the pre-apprentices. When they needed anything, they came to her. She became a walking wrap-around service for the students. Good leaders look for skills that can be capitalized upon as the organization grows.

Traits are the attitudes a person brings to the table. A trait mentioned indirectly in the interviews is the concept of “grit.” The word grit was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, but the concept was evident. Grit is the ability to press through a challenging situation. It’s not taking no for an answer. It is not letting setbacks deter the will to press on. Each case had a team of people who would press on through the challenges no matter the cost. Developing a quality pre-apprenticeship program takes determination and sacrifice that many do not know is required when they first begin a pre-apprenticeship program. As the work gets tough, those with grit press through the stress. In the community college model, the success coach and the director both had grit. They worked as a team to build their plane as it was flying. The success coach developed her job description because one was not provided. The director developed metrics to evaluate the program so their team could gauge their progress. They both had grit. Those with grit will press on for the good of the cause. Community-based organizations should always work to identify partners who show grit.

Organizational structure is essential to the success of the program. The leadership team must think through how the program will be structured. This concept is like creating a business plan for a new company. There must be a plan to follow that is structured according to the vision and mission. The community college model in Case One is based on the community college campus. The college is the hub of operation for its program. For Case Two, the business consortium model, a group of business leaders started their program as an extension of their community foundation. The business leaders are the hub of operations for their program. For Case Three, the K-12 school system model, their CTE director manages most of the operations. The school system is the hub. Various models can be used to develop a structure that supports pre-apprenticeships. No cookie-cutter model works for every program. Faith-based organizations and unions could also house pre-apprenticeship programs. The key is to look at the strengths within the community and go in that direction. With a stable community college, a model with the college as the hub could be very effective. If the K-12 school system is solid, it may need to be the hub for the program. The key is to consider where the champion and the leadership team are based. To sustain a pre-apprenticeship program, the community-based organization supporting it must develop a structure for effectively managing the day-to-day tasks of the program.

When developing a structure, there are no policies and procedures manual for starting a pre-apprenticeship program. Each case showed how they developed processes over time. It is a learning process from the beginning. There must be processes in every pre-apprenticeship program, like in every business. There should be a process to onboard a business partner, manage finances, support students, and communicate with the public. It pays to be prepared before issues

arise, and lean processes should be a significant part of developing and sustaining a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program.

Research Question Three

Research question three was, “How are youth pre-apprenticeship programs evaluated?”

The third research question addresses how the pre-apprenticeship program is evaluated. Essential to growth is the ability to effectively evaluate the program. Evaluation processes are essential for planning and expansion, recruiting new partners, and soliciting funding from various sources. Data collected from a program evaluation can produce reactive or proactive goals. All three cases had a process for evaluating their program that identified reactive and proactive goals. Without an evaluation plan, there is no way of knowing if the organization is effectively helping the community.

The assessed program outcomes are a mirror of what the organization values. Just as businesses assess various metrics, so should a community college organization. The literature review mentioned several times that community-based organizations traditionally do not have an evaluation process for their program since many of their leaders need proper training in evaluation methods (Carman, 2007). Collecting data is not their strength. All three cases studied for this research developed a quality evaluation process that focused on the outcomes identified as significant goals. Some were narrow, with only a few key performance indicators, while others were broad and included several indicators. People do not start and work to sustain a pre-apprenticeship program for no reason. An outcome is expected. All three cases had data to substantiate the success of their program. For a community-based organization to be sustainable, there must be an evaluation process. Leaders must design and implement an evaluation process that provides precise data on the program’s growth. Developing key performance indicators will

help the leadership identify areas of success or reveal the program's most significant opportunities for improvement.

One example of an indicator that the three cases used is the program's completion rate and how it aligns with the national average. All three cases looked at completion rates because their goal was to ensure that students finish the program. While none expected 100 percent, their goal was to beat the national average. The completion rate should be a key performance indicator for every pre-apprenticeship.

One crucial metric identified was diversity. Each case recognized diversity as a goal for their program, including completion rates for women and students of color. Nationally, women and people of color drop out at a higher rate than men (Helmer, Altstadt, 2013). Therefore, this should be a key performance indicator for all pre-apprenticeship programs.

Other examples mentioned as areas of interest include the number of students, parents, and community leaders who attend community night events. Case Two hosts community nights for parents and business leaders, so this metric has provided valuable data. On the business partner side, another metric is the number of students who remain in a business. Participant One in Case Three said that she had hired ten students, and over the past three years, six were still with her. That metric shows consistency and that the students want to stay in the program. Case Two mentioned that one indirect metric they review is how school-level staff, including principals, counselors, and teachers, support the program. They are the cheerleaders in promoting the program. While the metrics for performance evaluation will vary from program to program, the common denominator is that the metric must match the goals and outcomes identified by the leadership.

Expected Findings

The methodology used to collect data for this study allowed the researcher to discover the roles needed to establish and sustain a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program. The methodology also helped uncover best practices from the three cases. By interviewing the participants from each case as a group, they could validate each other's comments and expand on ideas as they developed. The group interview process was the correct process for collecting data.

The conceptual framework for this study is shaped like a target. The pre-apprenticeship program is the center of the target. The findings from the interview process validated the conceptual framework. Each case had a core team, including the champion and the program leadership. They are the next outer ring of the target. This group explained and expanded on each question during the interview and shared how they directly support the program. The next outer ring is the indirect supporters. They include the chamber, the workforce development board, community and faith-based organizations, government agencies, and labor unions. Community colleges and the K-12 school system can be in the inner or outer ring depending on their level of support for the program. Through the data collected, the conceptual framework was validated.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

As of this writing, more research needs to be conducted on pre-apprenticeship models. Some studies mention pre-apprenticeships included with other research about Registered Apprenticeship programs. Only a few are specific to the pre-apprenticeship model. European countries and the Australian government have undertaken several studies on pre-apprenticeships, but only a few focus on the United States' process for managing a pre-apprenticeship. The Department of Labor must keep records for pre-apprenticeships. They track data for Registered Apprenticeships, which is estimated to be only 60 percent accurate. With very little research

conducted on pre-apprenticeships in the United States, the implication of this research is a valuable addition to the body of knowledge.

The theoretical framework for this study focuses on partnership theory. The premise of the partner theory is that multiple entities can produce a more remarkable outcome than one entity alone. Two businesses can come together to solve a problem or make a product. The force they use to face the issue together is more successful than if they were working toward a goal individually. The research from this study contributes to the theory of partnerships as it is the basis for how each case in this study became a successful pre-apprenticeship program. They worked in partnership with each other to develop a high-quality program. Each case worked together as a team, and the results were evident. They shared the vision and purpose. They worked through their challenges and maintained the foundation of the partnership.

This study is a validation of the theory of partnerships. A community-based organization developed to support a pre-apprenticeship program must have partners. The entire program operates as a partnership. The study validated the theory for the community college model by discussing how business leaders and staff from the K-12 system agreed to develop and support their program. The theory was validated for the business consortium model as they explained how their program grew. They cultivated partners with specific skills needed in the program. They also had business leaders who filled needed roles and responsibilities to help move the program forward. Their program's structure validated the theory for the K-12 school system model. The champion was a business leader and CTE Director for the K-12 school system. They worked together to find other business partners and students who wanted to enter the program. None of these individuals could have started or expanded the program without each other. It took a team of partners to make the program happen.

Ellen Kibler-Jose (1995) wrote about partnerships in her dissertation and how they are needed in education to support students in their career pursuits. She also stated that more studies are needed on partnerships. The research questions in this study align with her recommendations for future research. While Mrs. Kibler-Jose's study deals explicitly with youth who are at risk, data from this study are based on programs that support a diverse population. Therefore, this study adds to this body of knowledge by validating the theory of partnerships. It adds to the body of knowledge by providing best practices that a community-based organization should use to develop a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program.

Most importantly, this study sheds light on the viewpoint that pre-apprenticeship programs operate as a business. Two of the three cases studied operate as non-profits. One uses a 501c3 organizational structure, and the other is incorporated as an LLC (Limited Liability Company). Case One is the community college model, which operates as a non-profit organization. No matter the supporting structure, community-based organizations focused on pre-apprenticeships should be developed as a business with partners from the education and business sectors.

Conclusions

Pre-apprenticeships are a structured series of workforce development activities that help students develop the necessary skills to move into a Registered Apprenticeship, the workforce, or further education and training. For the program to run successfully, there must be an organization to manage the program's operations.

Research question one specifically addresses the need for quality partnerships. Partnerships are needed to connect the right people with the right talent to create relationships between students, education leaders, and the business community. Business leaders must partner

with educational leaders to serve on an advisory board, help develop curriculum, solicit funding for the program's operation, and provide opportunities for students to participate in a pre-apprenticeship. This partnership is fundamental to the operation of the program.

Research question two concerns the start-up and sustainability of a pre-apprenticeship program. A leadership team should put together guidelines and criteria that guide the operation and growth of the program. The key to success is to be flexible as challenges arise. There will always be challenges to processes and structure, but the common thread among all cases studied is their flexibility. They flowed with the challenges they faced. Program leaders must be determined to overcome these challenges and focus on developing a quality pre-apprenticeship.

Research question three focused on evaluating the pre-apprenticeship program. Every pre-apprenticeship program must have key performance indicators that align with the program's vision, mission, and goals. Although not the same, each of the three cases includes key performance indicators in their model for evaluation. The purpose of the program and the evaluation metrics of the program must align. Developing an evaluation process based on the program's goals is essential for moving the pre-apprenticeship forward.

This study of key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs is significant to our body of knowledge. It serves to aid community leaders as they develop and support their pre-apprenticeship programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

When beginning this study, there were expectations of the research. Data from the survey validated these expectations. A quality partnership between business and education leaders must exist for a pre-apprenticeship program to become successful. There must be assigned roles and responsibilities for key partners within the organization. There also must be processes and an

organizational structure for the program to operate successfully. There must be an evaluation process to evaluate the program's success. The three cases studied substantiated the expectations.

As more research has yet to be completed in the United States concerning pre-apprenticeships, there are recommendations for further study.

- How effective are pre-apprenticeship programs in helping students complete a Registered Apprenticeship?
- What are the effects of career guidance on work-based learning opportunities?
- How effective are pre-apprenticeship programs in supporting special populations students?
- How are pre-apprenticeship programs expanded to additional occupations, not just manufacturing or the trades?
- What processes are needed to effectively remove partners who do not share the vision and mission of the program?
- How do community-based organizations manage funds to start and sustain their pre-apprenticeship program?
- How can a nationwide data collection process be implemented in the United States?

A recommendation for change concerns data. There is a tremendous need to collect data on pre-apprenticeship programs. The federal government collects data on Registered Apprenticeships but not pre-apprenticeships. While nations such as Australia, Canada, and various European nations collect data on pre-apprenticeships, the United States Department of Labor does not. There must be more research on how to effectively collect data on pre-apprenticeship programs to determine how effective these programs are in leading youth and

adults into a Registered Apprenticeship, further training, and professional development, or becoming gainfully employed in the workforce.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Summary of Jobs for the Future (JFF) – Pre-Apprenticeship Framework

Essential Principles	Design
Transparent Entry and Success Requirements	Entry requirements and prerequisites are clearly stipulated. Flags and barriers are also transparent such as the physical or educational requirements of the job.
Alignment with Skills Sought by Local Employers and High-Quality Apprenticeship Programs	Support is provided to clients that will allow them to enter an aligned workforce opportunity. The curriculum should be aligned with industry needs.
Culmination in One or More Industry-Recognized Credentials	The program will facilitate earning credentials that are recognized by local industry leaders. The credentials should align with the industry and must be embedded within the related curriculum.
Development of Skills Through Hands-On Activities and Work-Based Learning	Hands-on activities that clients will see on the job should be embedded within the curriculum. The classroom or lab space should mirror the work environment and be created with input from industry leaders.
Offering of Academic, Career Exploration, and Wrap-around Supports	Participants should have a clear career development plan that allows them to explore career paths within an industry.

	Clients should be provided wrap-around services, such as childcare, transportation, and housing.
Transition into a Registered Apprenticeship or Other High-Quality Apprenticeship Program	<p>The program should include partnerships with business and industry leaders who can sponsor new employees and provide feedback on curriculum and pathway alignment.</p> <p>They should be able to guide employees into an apprenticeship or other workforce option.</p>

<https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning/pre-apprenticeship/>

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Research Alignment	Sample Interview Questions
<p>What skills are needed to successfully contribute to the development and sustainability of the program?</p>	<p>What are the major operational functions within your organization?</p>
	<p>What are the specific skills needed to lead the major functions within your organization?</p>
	<p>What additional skills did you discover were needed after the program started?</p>
<p>What are the key partnership roles in high-quality youth pre-apprenticeship programs?</p>	<p>Based on the identified skills, what roles did key partners play in establishing the operational functions of the program? When the program was established, were all the roles filled or were there skill areas that needed more support?</p>
	<p>Based on the identified skills, what roles do the current key partners play in the continued success of the program? (I.e., Workforce Development Board, Community College, K-12 System, business leaders, etc.) Now that your program is established, are there additional skills missing from the current list of roles?</p>
	<p>Based on identified skills, how are partners recruited to participate in the program?</p>
	<p>Based on the identified skills, how do you evaluate the effectiveness of individual partners?</p>

How are youth pre-apprenticeship programs evaluated?	What were the major hurdles or challenges your organization experienced during the development of the program, and how were they overcome? (Planning, Legal, Financial, Insurance)
	How is the overall effectiveness of the program evaluated?
	Does your program have a formal organizational structure? If so, who are the players and how do they interact? (Manager, subordinate, etc.)
	In the organizational structure, explain the process for communication and how decisions are approved.
	What data is collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the program?
	What steps are taken to gauge changes in the industry?
Summary	What are your final thoughts on the roles key partners play in your youth pre-apprenticeship program?
	What are your final thoughts on the skills needed to successfully contribute to the development and sustainability of your program?
	What are your final thoughts on how your youth pre-apprenticeship program is evaluated?

Appendix C

Summary of Core Business Functions

Leadership	The role of the champion is the most important partner needed for a successful program.
Customer Service	Build positive relationships with key partners from the K-12 school system, the community college, companies from various industries, and public community-based organizations. Building quality relationships is essential for the pre-apprenticeship program to move forward.
Entrepreneurship	Develop a business plan for the program. Define the program's vision, mission, and purpose. Be flexible as the program grows.
Human Resources	Identify needed skills and traits to be included in the development of the organizational plan. Look for aptitudes and talent to perform needed tasks. Also look for traits such as, trustworthiness, honesty, responsibility, and grit.
Management	Have essential processes no matter the organization's size. Processes are essential to the management of the organization. Processes may develop over time as the program grows, so be flexible and learn from the challenges.
Evaluation of Performance	Have defined metrics for evaluation. The metrics should align with the overall goals of the program (i.e., increase the number of minority or female completion rates by 10%.)