



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences
Worker Training Program

FALL 2021 WORKSHOP REPORT

Advancing Partnerships to Improve Worker Health and Safety





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Executive Summary

On October 20-21, 2021, the NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) hosted a virtual workshop to share how [worker health and safety benefits from strategic partnerships](#).

The virtual forum, hosted via the ZoomGov platform, provided an opportunity for program staff, awardee organizations, and partners to engage in discussions about partnerships on a local and national scale. Panelists and workshop participants shared best practices that are integral to forming successful partnerships among WTP stakeholders, including awardee organizations, community-based organizations, and state and federal agencies. Participants also shared their lessons learned from various partnerships and offered suggestions related to conducting outreach, defining expectations, making agreements, and tracking metrics and outcomes.

More information about the agenda and presentations can be found on the [workshop website](#). A recording of the entire workshop is also available online. The following are key themes from the workshop:

- **Partnerships are a foundational pillar of WTP's evolution and success.** They support the advancement of the program's mission in many ways at the local and national level.
- **Leverage partnerships across various levels.** In more than 30 years, WTP (at the awardee and Institute level) has developed and leveraged partnerships with various types of organizations, corporations, companies, and agencies.
- **Partnerships vary in scope, timing, and the nature of agreements.** The basis of a partnership may be formal, requiring contracts and documentation, or informal, requiring little to no documentation. Some partnerships last for a long period of time (e.g., more than 20 years), while others are short-lived (e.g., 6 months).

- **Identify barriers to partnerships.** There are various challenges or barriers to consider when building and sustaining partnerships. Many of these challenges are related to programmatic issues, staff turnover, lack of communication, or limited resources.
- **Focus on best practices to build partnerships.** Over time, WTP has implemented strategies and best practices to build and sustain successful partnerships. This includes building trust, defining expectations upfront, and maintaining frequent communication, among many others.
- **Disasters and public health emergencies present challenging, yet opportune moments to leverage partnerships.** WTP continues to nurture partnerships that will help put boots on the ground in the event of disaster or emergency. It is important to be proactive and form these partnerships before a disaster or emergency occurs.
- **Evaluate partnership metrics and outcomes.** For example, it is important to assess the following: How did the partnership engage workers or the community? Did it have economic benefits? Did it have impacts on workplace safety culture or standards? Were there any improvements to policies, processes, or agreements due to the partnership?
- **Track lessons learned from partnerships.** It is important to track lessons learned over the duration of any partnership. These lessons come in handy when considering various strategies to build and sustain future partnerships.



Setting the Stage for Partnerships

“Partnerships take various forms and are critical to the success of the program,” said WTP Director Sharon Beard. “WTP would not be what it is today without partnerships.”

Partnerships have proven to be a foundational pillar for WTP since its inception in 1987. One aspect of WTP’s success with partnerships is linked to its infrastructure and consortium model.

A consortium is a collaborative network made up of one WTP-funded parent organization (awardees) and training organizations or partners. Currently, WTP has more than 20 [awardees](#). While some awardees develop health and safety training for workers engaged in hazardous materials activities or emergency response, others develop e-learning products to support the training of these workers. Awardees establish partnerships with other entities – federal and state agencies, universities, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other groups – that share a common goal. These partnerships help support the advancement of WTP’s mission in many ways.

Partnerships help support the advancement of WTP’s mission – to protect workers and their communities by delivering high-quality, peer-reviewed safety and health curricula to hazardous waste workers and emergency responders.

For example, partnerships help WTP awardees assess the needs of their target populations and fill critical gaps in health and safety. This has been very evident in circumstances surrounding the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and natural disasters, where awardees have had to work with nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of communities and provide on-the-

ground support for response and recovery. Because community-based and nonprofit organizations have close ties with communities in their locale, they bring an awareness of community risks, needs, and barriers that WTP awardees otherwise would not be privy to.

Partnerships allow WTP awardees to connect with experts from other disciplines and gain insight on ways to adapt and improve training delivery. Awardees collaborate with other funded organizations within the WTP network, including those within the [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) E-Learning for HAZMAT Program](#) who help brainstorm and implement innovative and virtual tools to deliver training. These collaborations, as well as others among awardees with specialties in diverse [training program areas](#), inspire creativity and help expand WTP’s reach.

Janelle Rios, principal investigator of the [Prevention, Preparedness, and Response \(P2R\) Consortium](#), and Montgomery Proffit, director of pre-employment education and training for [OAI, Inc.](#), shared lessons learned based on their experience with partnerships. Rios shared her experience within the scope of the NIEHS [Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program](#) (HWWTP) and [HAZMAT Disaster Preparedness Training Program](#) (HDPTP), while Proffit shared insights within the scope of the NIEHS [Environmental Career Worker Training Program](#) (ECWTP).

Rios and Proffit elaborated on the difference between formal and informal partnerships. Formal partnerships require written contracts or agreements, and there is a process in drafting the logistics of and executing these agreements. In this case, it is important for each party to spend time defining roles and responsibilities, determining level of engagement, sharing desired outcomes, discussing the allotted budget, and negotiating on what is most feasible. However, informal partnerships typically do not require this level of documentation. An informal partnership may be focused on a specific event, like a conference or workshop, or help meet a need for a short period of time, like distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) to communities following a disaster.



Rios noted the importance of maintaining realistic expectations when building partnerships, because not all of them will be successful. In her experience at P2R, she has learned not to take it personally and to capitalize on opportunities to resolve issues and reconnect for potential collaborations in the future. These lessons have helped Rios and her colleagues be intentional with communication and defining expectations upfront.

“Starting a partnership is one thing but maintaining one (or many) is another thing,” Rios said. “Partnerships are a lot like puppies – they need to be cultivated and nurtured.” She added that the most successful partnerships are those that are built on trust and symbiotic. Rios shared examples of P2R’s partnerships with local government, like the [Harris County Department of Public Health](#), and nonprofit organizations, like [World Cares Center](#).

Many partnerships are formed organically. This may occur during a conference or networking event, and organic conversations help individuals recognize similarities and the value that their organization can bring to the other. Proffit elaborated on his experience with developing organic partnerships, which have resulted in long-term

partnerships for their organizations. OAI has formed long-term partnerships with agencies like the [United States Department of Labor](#) and the [Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#). Additionally, OAI has established partnerships with state agencies that provide connections to residents in [empowerment zones](#) which are designated areas of high poverty and unemployment.

Not all partnerships are created equal; some take more time to identify and develop. Proffit described OAI’s iterative process to identify and select potential partners. OAI staff have several conversations with the other organization’s leaders about mission alignment and invite them to participate in site visits so they can see how the EWTP works.

“Partnerships take time to build, but believe in them,” Proffit said. “They save time, increase creativity, and expand our network.”



Flavors of Partnerships Across WTP Network

“Partnerships come in different flavors,” said Kenneth (Kenny) Oldfield, principal investigator for the Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training program (AFC WST). “Some partnerships are informal while others are formal. Some partnerships are organic, while others are intentional. Some partnerships are short-term or seasonal, while others are long-term. Regardless of the type of partnership, each partner brings something unique to the WTP network and adds value to the program.”

The graphic below demonstrates the diversity of partners across WTP, some of which happen at the awardee-level and others at the institute-level (i.e., NIEHS and program staff). The graphic is intended to be an overview of the types of partnerships across WTP along with examples; it is not a comprehensive list of all of partnerships ever formed within the scope of the program. The following pages include examples and quotes submitted by principal investigators or program contacts from various awardee organizations prior to the workshop.





Inter-Awardee & SBIRs

Includes partnerships between awardees and SBIRs.

Partnership: Rutgers School of Public Health, Atlantic Center for Occupational Safety and Health and Cell Podium, LLC

“This partnership is a part of our organization’s WTP SBIR efforts in developing and deploying training technologies that initially serve the [awardee] WTP community, and subsequently the broader safety training market. The Cell Podium-Rutgers partnership has been indispensable in Cell Podium meeting the Congressional objectives of the SBIR program, namely the development and commercialization of technological innovation by small U.S. businesses. The most frequent reason for failure among small technology-centric ventures is that, while the innovation works in the technical sense, the business model does not, e.g., the innovation is not sufficiently attractive in the eyes of the customer to warrant adoption. The WTP SBIR program helps small businesses avoid the aforementioned ‘Valley of Death’ by encouraging partnerships within the WTP training community, such as the Cell Podium-Rutgers partnership, that validate the value proposition, provide minimum viable product specifications, and accelerate adoption.”

“The collaboration has been valuable for Rutgers as well, and has helped its HAZMAT courses achieve greater realism in field exercises including chemical hazard detection and classification, and the delineation of exclusion and safety zones. It has also allowed Rutgers to reach new audiences during the pandemic through mobile just-in-time essential worker training.”

– Cesar Bandera, principal investigator for Cell Podium, LLC



CBOs, Non-Profits, & Local Community Members

Includes partnerships with CBOs, tribal organizations, faith-based organizations, Worker Centers, immigrant communities, and communities impacted by public health emergencies and disasters.

Partnership: Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training Program (AFC WST) and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

“[The partnership] has resulted in many lessons learned for our organization. This includes the importance of clear expectations and communication with all partners. We anticipate that this partnership will continue in the future, helping AFC [WST] achieve increased outreach to Native American tribal response agencies with important training that helps their responders protect their communities.”

– Kenneth Oldfield, principal investigator for AFC WST



Partnership: Sustainable Workplace Alliance and the Evans Center

“By working with the Evans Center, Sustainable Workplace Alliance brings the added feature of job training and placement services to a neighborhood often overlooked and forgotten. Services like these are critical for the success of the Center, especially since it is early in its existence.”

– David Casavant, principal investigator for Sustainable Workplace Alliance



Professional Organizations & Societies

Includes partnerships with professional-based organizations and societies.

Partnership: University of California Los Angeles Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (UCLA LOSH) and the Service Employees International Union Nurse Alliance of California

“The partnership has subsequently expanded to encompass ongoing training for nurses affiliated with SEIU locals throughout California. This partnership has also recently led to a new collaboration with the Watts Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) program, an innovative community-based initiative in South Los Angeles led by two public health nurse leaders affiliated with SEIU and the Nurse Alliance. This partnership has been valuable in maintaining WRUC’s efforts to provide infectious disease training to healthcare workers. It has enabled us to develop new curricula and to reach an audience of healthcare workers that would otherwise be inaccessible to our consortium. The partnership also proved critical in us being able to quickly roll out a series of courses on the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that nurses in acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and correctional facilities were fully aware of how the standard applied to this novel pathogen and what measures employers were required to follow.”

– Kevin Riley, director of UCLA LOSH, principal investigator for the Western Region Universities Consortium



Corporations, Companies, & Businesses

Includes partnerships with corporations, companies, facilities, businesses, or employers.

Partnership: OAI, Inc. and Mendez Environmental

“The partnership between OAI, Inc. and Mendez Environmental has been valuable in our organization’s WTP focused initiatives with construction workers and lower literacy/limited English proficient custodial, environmental remediation, manufacturing and oil and gas workers who are imperiled by workplace specific hazards and/or infectious disease exposures. The strong relationship we have developed over the years enables us to plan strategically and form further partnerships which, ultimately, allows us to serve more workers. The value added is mutual for [Mendez Environmental] and has helped them reach a variety of underserved communities and enabled them to gain employment through training.”

– Trish Davies, director of business and worker training at OAI

Partnership: International Chemical Workers Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education (ICWUC) and Afton Chemical

“This partnership has been valuable in resolving more than 100 health and safety concerns and streamlined the process to identify and resolve new safety concerns as they arise. The collaboration of hourly and salaried employees continues through the Safety Liaison Team. All employees have a say in the authorization for all capital expenditures, alternative solutions, and trust between the decision-makers and the workers. The value added is mutual for Afton Chemical and ICWUC Local Union Leadership and has helped them achieve cooperative effort which has reaped incredible rewards and is expected to be a model for many other facilities.”

– Shari Glines-Allen, principal investigator for ICWUC



Labor Organizations & Unions

Includes partnerships with labor-based organizations and unions.

Partnership: The New England Consortium (TNEC) and the four New England COSH groups (MassCOSH, ConnectiCOSH, NHCOSH, and RICOSH)

“The value added is mutual for the COSHes and has helped them continue providing vital health and safety and workers’ rights education, advocacy, and technical assistance to worker populations in their respective states. The Consortium’s base at UMass Lowell has provided each COSH with access to occupational health and safety expertise in various research and education programs at the university.”

– Tom Estabrook at TNEC



Universities & Community Colleges

Includes partnerships with academic institutions, universities, and community colleges.

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Partnership: Community Colleges Consortium for Health and Safety Training, National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE) and Barton Community College

“[The partnership] will continue in the future with NIEHS funding, helping PETE and Barton Community College reach out to more and more bases across the country and world-side, helping our military and their families transition to private life with the health and safety skills required to obtain training-related jobs, protect the environment, and keep the workplace safe. Before they transition, it helps current military personnel be the best in their EHS-related jobs.”

– Kirk Laflin, principal investigator for the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training



Local & State Government

Includes partnerships with local and state government agencies like public health departments, state government offices, etc.

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Partnership: Migrant Clinicians Network, Atlantic Center for Occupational Safety and Health and Migrant Clinicians Network and Municipal System of Case Investigation and Contact Tracing (SMICRC by Spanish initials) in the Puerto Rico Department of Health

“This partnership has been valuable in supporting the health and safety of essential workers in Puerto Rico. This partnership aided in the development of COVID-19 protocols in schools, as well as in training delivery to protocol enforcement staff. The value added is mutual for the SMICRC and has helped them achieve a better understanding of workers health and safety and the best practices to evaluate risk and implement controls. Monitors and other enforcement staff were able to provide technical assistance to schools and business to comply with COVID-19 restrictions while protecting their workers.”

– Marysel Pagán Santana, Migrant Clinicians Network



Federal Government

Includes partnerships with federal government offices and agencies.

Partnership: LIUNA Training and Education Fund and Fluor Marine Propulsion, Idaho National Laboratory DOE Site

“While the partnership is informal, it has proven advantageous for both our workforce and for the employer in ensuring that all workers receive high-quality training that meets the specific safety and specialized certification requirements for employees at the Idaho National Laboratory site. Maintaining updated training ensures a higher level of skills and knowledge which optimizes worker health and safety. It was created and established by forming a partnership between both parties over 20 years ago and has been a successful endeavor ever since.”

– Aida Aranda, LIUNA Training and Education Fund





Challenges to Consider in Various Partnerships

The following includes a list of common challenges that workshop panelists and participants shared.

Programmatic Issues

- **Programmatic and contract issues.** Some awardees experience challenges when it comes to the nuts and bolts of contracts. For example, some awardees are based at universities, and these academic institutions are not always swift when it comes to developing contracts. If left unresolved, this can create a difficult dynamic within the partnership.

Infrastructure and Resources

- **Turnover, staff changes, and new leadership.** Some awardees experience challenges when there is a staff change that involves new points of contact. This can create barriers in communication if left unresolved or unaddressed. When new people are brought on staff, lots of meetings are required to orient people to the history and nature of the partnership.
- **Lack of resources.** There is a lack of resources to accommodate partnership needs or deliver necessary training.

Disasters and Emergencies

- **Challenges during disasters and emergencies (e.g., COVID-19).** Unexpected circumstances arise during disasters or public health emergencies. Some partner organizations are not able to adapt or pivot in these circumstances.

Training Content or Products

- **Building something that no one wants (e.g., building something after people no longer want it).** In the case of Ebola, awardees found themselves with funding and expectations for training that the training population had moved on from. It was a real challenge to bring that in, take it, and use it.

Communication

- **Lack of communication and transparency.** Certain challenges occur when a partner organization does not communicate about changes to their infrastructure, scope, or focus.



Best Practices to Consider in Partnerships

The following includes a list of common best practices that workshop panelists and participants shared.

Building Partnerships

- **Partnerships are usually established when organizations share a similar goal or mission, and usually happen to fulfill a gap or need to accomplish the goal or mission or to augment the output.** It can happen organically, such as during a conversation, or organizations can seek out partners. Partners with a similar mission can help operationalize the mission to make an impact.
 - **Partnerships must be symbiotic.** All parties in the partnership need to be getting something from the partnership to make it viable and built for longevity.
 - **Agreements between the organizations of the partnership can be informal or formal.** Formal partnerships have a written agreement that usually details the roles and responsibilities for each partner. Informal partnerships are usually verbal agreements between the partners.
 - **Trust is key in a relationship.** Mutual trust and respect from all involved partners are essential for partnerships to succeed. When there is trust amongst the partners, they know that they will not be taken advantage of by the other partners.
 - **The roles in the partnership agreement, whether informal or formal, don't have to be equal.** Partners bring different resources to the table, and they have certain strengths. That said, the agreement should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
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- **Partners should bring resources that are helpful to the organization that you want to partner with.** These resources could include other programs, additional funds, and other items. Give them something they need that you can provide, but that others do not have.
 - **Ensure that the partnership agreement is transparent.** The goals, missions, roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes for each partner should be stated up front. Other processes, such as metrics, input, and framework, should also be identified. This will make completing the agreement much easier.
 - **Define expectations at the onset of the partnership.** It is important for organizations to know what they want from the partnership, as well as what they can provide to the partnership. This helps set expectations, and provides a way for organizations to evaluate if the partnership is meeting its purpose.
 - **Consider partnering with different types of partners, such as worker centers.** Different partners bring different expertise and may have insight to systems that the other partner may not be aware of. They can also help overcome barriers, such as trust or language.
 - **Consider building partnerships within the WTP awardee network.** The WTP community and consortium model provides a built-in partnership network for awardees. Look to build these partnerships first and as often as possible, then expand outside of the network as needed.
 - **Form relationships before disasters happen.** Awardees noted that building partnerships prior to disasters has enabled support for the impacted organizations. Forming partnerships during or after a disaster is not ideal as impacted organizations may be busy trying to recover.



Sustaining Partnerships

- **Regardless of whether the partnership is short-term or long-term, all partnerships take nurturing and time to build and maintain.** All partners need to play the role that they are responsible for and keep the lines of communication open.
- **Build partnerships with the whole organization, not just one person.** For a partnership to be effective, the relationship needs to move beyond the individual connection to the whole organization. Getting organizational buy-in can help keep the partnership thriving when organizational structures change, or people leave positions. Awardees noted that some partners even have a corporate history.
- **Being flexible and patient during a partnership is essential.** Unforeseen circumstances and barriers (e.g., COVID-19) may challenge the partnership, but for a partnership to last, all parties must be willing to adapt to situations that are outside of their control. All parties must and adapt to continue with the plan as best as possible to meet benchmarks.
- **Clear and frequent communication and transparency between partners are necessary for the success of any partnership.** It helps build trust and collaborative chemistry, and makes sure that all partners are on the same page. Consider different platforms to maintain communication (e.g., COVID-19 and the need for virtual meetings and communication).

- **It may be helpful to designate one “go-to” person for each partner to minimize miscommunication.** Assumptions that people talk to each other in a partner agency or organization should not be made and depended upon.
- **Decisions should be made together with all parties of a partnership.** Regardless of how big or small an organization is, no partner should act alone without the consent and knowledge of the other partner(s). This can cause mistrust and damage the relationship between the partners and hinder objectives or goals.

Partnership Evaluation

- **Develop metrics that can help measure the success of the partnership.** This can be economic benefits, number of students with jobs, or injury rates. Partners should have a way that they can visibly track the metrics set to see if the partnership is accomplishing the goals that they set out to accomplish or if roles and responsibilities need to be adjusted.
- **All partners should be held accountable.** Partners need to be held responsible for the accomplishing the work that they are responsible for and make sure they have held to their end of the bargain. Frequent communication and check-ins can help ensure that progress towards the deliverable is made.
- **Part of frequent communication is to ensure that regular feedback is given and received from all partners.** It is important that issues and concerns are brought up as soon as they occur so that solutions can be implemented as soon as possible to avoid larger issues in the future.



Defining Partnership Structure, Expectations, and Agreements

Panelists shared their experiences on defining partnership structure, expectations, and agreements. Each panelist elaborated on how these factors have contributed to the success of a specific partnership.

Working to Target New Populations and Stabilize Program Efforts

Greater Cincinnati Occupational Health Center and Great Oaks Career Campuses

Brian Griffin, the director of communication and technology and program manager for the [Greater Cincinnati Occupational Health Center](#) (GCOHC), shared more about a partnership between the GCOHC and [Great Oaks Career Campuses](#).

A member of the [Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training](#), the GCOHC is a training center that partners with industry and community leaders to provide training necessary to respond to and reduce hazardous threats for workers and communities. Great Oaks offers educational and innovative career development programs to empower individuals and communities.

Griffin said when he joined the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Labor Council in 2017, the GCOHC was struggling with training numbers and reporting was not in compliance. In restructuring the center, he and colleagues looked for partners with similar interests, access to students, and the operational capacity and efficiency to help reduce organizational costs. They identified Great Oaks as a feasible partner for these efforts.

In their recruiting efforts, GCOHC and Great Oaks targeted younger and older adult student populations who were interested in technical programs, apprenticeships, and career transitions. Griffin said the common interests and goals helped bring the two organizations together, where they were able to leverage each other's crafts, trades, and skills. This partnership expanded recruitment opportunities and helped members and workers advance their careers goals.

"The partnership is a win-win," Griffin said. "It helped stabilize our program in a very short period of time."

A Potential Guide for Outlining Partnership Structure and Agreements

The Construction Research to Practice (r2p) Partnership Toolkit provides guidance for stakeholders interested in establishing or enhancing research to practice partnerships within the context of the construction industry.

A research to action partnership is defined by [CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training](#) as a collaborative effort among stakeholders to identify and solve safety and health problems by promoting the use of available research-based solutions and identifying new research needs. For CPWR, these partnerships aim to reduce injuries and illnesses in the construction industry.

While the r2p toolkit is targeted to the construction industry, CPWR Principal Investigator Christina Cain offered it as a useful tool for other awardees to use in outlining the structure, expectations, and agreements within their partnerships. The toolkit includes step-by-step considerations and advice on each element of the partnership, including the identification of key partners, communication and engagement, and evaluation of the partnership. The toolkit also contains tools, case studies, and partnership models that serve as best practices and examples of successful partnerships.

Partnering with Site Leaders and Workers to Deliver Training at Paducah

United Steelworkers Tony Mazzocchi Center and Site Leaders and Workers at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant

Ashlee Fitch, principal investigator for the [United Steelworkers' Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety, and Environmental Education](#) (USW-TMC), shared the importance of communication and how this facilitated a successful partnership with leadership at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (Paducah).

As the training body for the [Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization](#), USW-TMC brings together several organizations to provide workers and community residents with health and safety training. One area of training provided by USW-TMC is through the [NIEHS/U.S. Department of Energy \(DOE\) Nuclear Worker Training Program](#), where they facilitate training for cleanup, waste management, and emergency response at DOE sites like Paducah.

The [United Steelworkers](#) (USW) represents many workers at the Paducah Site. On an annual basis, USW-TMC conducts more than 850 hours of training at or around Paducah. Recently, USW-TMC received a request from Paducah workers (who are members of the local union) for a training curriculum on the Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA). To develop the curriculum, Fitch and her colleagues met with site leadership to identify training needs. They also held several meetings with waste and environmental teams onsite to ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements for initial and refresher training.



Photo courtesy of USW-TMC.

Management representatives from the plant reported that the RCRA courses enabled participants to discuss issues they had previously not reported and allowed managers to take actions to create a healthier and safer workplace, such as by providing better-fitting PPE.

Additionally, the collaboration led to the expansion of the training program to include respiratory courses and other trainings. USW-TMC was also able to reach out to other contractors at the site to talk about potential future training programs.



Establishing Community-Benefits Agreements

Jobs to Move America and United Steelworkers

Larry Hodge, community engagement coordinator for [Jobs to Move America](#), shared insights about establishing community benefits agreements (CBA).

A CBA is designed to bring collective power to a community. It is a legally enforceable agreement between a community and corporations that come into the area. The agreement is designed to have employers make commitments to ensure that a community gains benefits, and it includes a special focus on recruiting people from marginalized groups.

Hodge explained how Jobs to Move America helped form the [Alabama Coalition for Community Benefits](#) – a coalition of labor, community, civil rights, faith, and environmental justice groups working to hold corporations that do business in the South accountable to workers and communities. All coalition partners have a say in what they would like to see happening in their community. The coalition includes partners like USW, the National Black Worker Center, the AFL-CIO, and many others. Notably, the coalition has facilitated partnerships with faith-based organizations like Greater Birmingham Ministries. Hodge said that they currently have eight pastors on board who are planning to host a town hall meeting soon.

Hodge said coalition partners work together to perform outreach and recruit people for the Alabama Workers' Rights Training Program (not funded by NIEHS). As part of the program, monthly training sessions are held that feature topics on safety and workers' rights. He said an attorney is involved in conversations that are specific to workers' rights. Although all training is remote right now (due to COVID-19), they are working on developing in-person training modules. They continue to receive

positive feedback from workers and the community on the training.

Although health and safety training are not part of the CBA, Hodge said they help build safety committees within the corporations and plants so the workers can run their own safety program. They also help facilitate getting the certifications to bring Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour training to the workers.

Meeting the Need for COVID-19 Training in Puerto Rico

International Chemical Workers Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education and Sustainable Workplace Alliance

Joel Alvarez, an instructor with the [International Chemical Workers Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education](#) (ICWUC), and Bryan Heard, outreach and training director for [Sustainable Workplace Alliance](#) (SWA), shared how their organizations established an informal, inter-awardee partnership to meet a need for a COVID-19 train-the-trainer in Puerto Rico.

This partnership was the result of a Zoom discussion and emails to prepare for COVID-19 trainings in Puerto Rico. While SWA trainers were well-versed on OSHA safety protocol and emergency response, they needed guidance from ICWUC on infectious disease training. SWA and ICWUC worked together to enroll trainers (mostly from Puerto Rico) to deliver train-the-trainers on infectious disease and COVID-19.

As a result of the partnership, the trainers were able to share what they learned with other trainees and community members and distribute handouts and fact sheets for underserved communities who were more vulnerable to misinformation.

Addressing COVID-19 and Serving Low-Income Communities in Connecticut

ConnectiCOSH and National Valley Project

A successful partnership can often be attributed to an existing relationship between the involved parties. This is the case for a partnership between [ConnectiCOSH](#), a member of [The New England Consortium-Civil Employees Association](#) (TNEC), and the [Naugatuck Valley Project Inc.](#) Their collaborative efforts have been valuable in supporting activities for a COVID-19 recovery center in Waterbury, Connecticut called the [ConnectiCOSH/Naugatuck Valley Project Recovery Center](#). The center is a multi-pronged community-based recovery center that assists low-income residents, working families, and people of color in Connecticut's Naugatuck Valley region.

Pamela Puchalski, project coordinator for ConnectiCOSH, and Thomas Estabrook, project director for TNEC, credited the success of this partnership to the similar focus between the two organizations. ConnectiCOSH is a worker-based advocacy and nonprofit organization whose mission is to support workers through education and training. The Naugatuck Valley Project is a network of 24 local labor unions and housing cooperative initiatives located in Naugatuck Valley in central Connecticut; the project is led by low-income working families and people of color.

By working together, the capabilities of both organizations have improved, and they have provided COVID-19 health and safety and vaccine information to a wide range of audiences. While Naugatuck Valley Project works to provide food for the community, ConnectiCOSH interacts with individuals to provide safety and health information, resources, and training.

Together, the organizations have been able to overcome challenges, such as recruitment for training during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of adjusting message

delivery and offering incentives to trainees, they have been successful in engaging workers and received positive feedback about the value of trainings.

Providing Training for Military Members and Veterans

Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training and Barton Community College

The [Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training](#) (CCCHST), administered by the [National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education](#) (PETE), has member organizations and partners representing more than 100 community and tribal colleges.

William (Bill) Nash, project coordinator for PETE's Hazardous Waste Worker Training Initiative, shared more about PETE's partnership with the [Barton Community College \(BCC\) Fort Riley Campus](#) in Kansas. The partnership allows PETE to leverage Barton's reputation and knowledge of working with the military. BCC brings to the partnership over 40 years of experience working with the military, both at the national and local levels, and is also an OSHA Education Center. Together, PETE and BCC's training efforts make up the Military Initiative.



Trainees pictured at BCC Fort Riley Campus. (Photo courtesy Bill Nash, PETE).



Funded through the NIEHS HWWTP, the Military Initiative aims to provide training and marketable skill sets to transitioning service members, including the National Guard and veterans. Nash noted that this training is important for military members as it provides them with a new skill sets and enhances the employability of the service members. The Military Initiative has been in operation for roughly seven years, and PETE and BCC continue to provide HAZWOPER and OSHA training courses, including respiratory protection, industrial hygiene, and lockout tagout to military members that are transitioning from active duty. Trainees receive OSHA certificate of training and college credits that help the participants get a head start on a degree.

Nash noted that the partnership with BCC is a symbiotic relationship. While BCC is able to conduct the training and gain a new cadre of students, PETE brings health and safety experts and trainers to the table.

Nash briefly shared more about PETE's partnership with [Guam Community College](#), and national and local veteran organizations, such as [Disabled American Veterans](#) and [Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center](#) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. These partnerships help market PETE's training programs and help the veterans look for employment locally.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most of these trainings are conducted over Zoom. However, this has allowed PETE to expand their training to various locations, including Guam, Japan, Korea, and Hawaii. He noted that participation has increased over 25% due to fewer constraints or barriers to virtual training. Nash credited the program's success to the partnership with BCC.

Leveraging Partnerships for Outreach and Disaster Preparedness

Panelists shared best practices to leverage and sustain partnerships for outreach and disaster preparedness efforts.

Applying a Communiversality Model to Enhance Local Reach

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Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and Community and Faith-Based Organizations

The [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#) (DSCEJ) embraces a communiversality model, which emphasizes collaborative partnerships between CBOs and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Kim Dunn, DSCEJ training director, shared how pre-disaster outreach efforts have helped them build community partnerships. These partnerships have proven to be useful in the wake of COVID-19, Hurricane Ida, and other disasters in the Gulf Coast region.



People standing in line waiting for food provided by CBOs following muck and gut training sessions held by DSCEJ in September 2021. (Photo courtesy of DSCEJ).

DSCEJ is part of the WTP-funded HBCU-CBO Gulf Coast Equity Consortium (formerly known as the [Historically Black Colleges and Universities Consortium](#)). The Consortium was launched to build partnerships between CBOs and HBCU faculty mentors in the five Gulf Coast states to improve the lives of children and families who are vulnerable to pollution and climate change.

Within the Consortium, CBOs are supported in building their organizational capacities, such as hiring staff, providing outreach, conducting research, and purchasing computers or other equipment. DSCEJ convened and facilitated environmental justice forums hosted by CBO partners that had an average attendance of 100 community members. Community members developed research-to-action agendas on their priority issues related to air pollution and flood risks.

Dunn said prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DSCEJ held quarterly in-person meetings with CBOs and other Consortium members that focused on skills training, progress on research-to-action agendas, and evaluation.

They also held monthly conference calls to convene on these efforts.

As a result of these and other outreach efforts, DSCEJ has leveraged partnerships with CBOs to respond to recent disasters like Hurricane Ida. Dunn described DSCEJ's partnerships with faith-based organizations like Mt. Horeb to deliver muck and gut training.

"Whenever we held a training session, we also cooked fish and jambalaya for people," Dunn said. "There was a lot of devastation in the area [following Hurricane Ida], so being able to get a hot meal meant a lot to people."

DSCEJ also held other training sessions, including a PPE workshop, in Smith Ridge. During the workshop Dunn and Bruce McClue, DSCEJ training manager, showed participants how to properly don and doff PPE. The workshop was also used to assess the community's needs and donate PPE.



Dunn (pictured at front) delivers muck and gut training for participants in Smith Ridge, Louisiana in September 2021. (Photo courtesy of DSCEJ).

Using Pre-Disaster Outreach to Establish Training Partnerships

National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Central American Resource Center and Familias Unidas

A longtime partner affiliated with the USW TMC, the [National Day Laborers Organization](#) (NDLON), has connections to several CBOs across the nation.

Debora Gonzales, national health and safety coordinator for NDLON, described their partnership with several CBOs, including the [Central American Resource Center](#) (CRECEN) in Houston, Texas, and Familias Unidas (United Families) in New Orleans, Louisiana. She shared how these partnerships enabled them to respond quickly and more efficiently to community needs following Hurricane Ida in fall 2021.

Gonzales said NDLON has been working with the [Central American Resource Center](#) (CRECEN) over the past year. By establishing the partnership early on, Gonzales and her team were able to understand CRECEN's needs and the communities they serve before the disaster hit.

CRECEN was established in 1984, and is an organization that advocates for the rights, economic, and social justice of immigrants. Establishing partnerships with organizations early on (before a disaster) is a best practice, as it allows WTP awardees to have boots on the ground that can help speed up the response and recovery efforts in a community.

NDLON is also working with Second Responder Workers Brigade and Mano a Mano to send more than 1,000 care packages for affected families, as well as PPE that will be distributed to workers in the workshops.

PRIMEROS AUXILIOS EMOCIONALES



Example of NDLON educational materials. (Photo courtesy of NDLON).

Gonzales emphasized the importance of addressing the mental health of day laborers, especially in the training that they provide.

“When we get to know the organization, we also get to know their needs and limitations,” said Gonzales. “Only the people can help the people.”

Supporting Climate Resiliency Efforts

Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training

One goal of the [Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training](#) (Midwest Consortium) is to develop health and safety training and resources to support climate change resilience. The Consortium's training centers include a variety of labor-affiliated programs, universities, community colleges, a tribal nation, and several CBOs.



The Consortium aims to deploy tools and resources to increase resilience among workers and their families, and to decrease hazards during weather-related events. This aim was established during the Consortium's previous funding cycle (2015 to 2020), when each training center was expected to develop its own resilience project.

Peter Raynor, Ph.D., principal investigator for the Midwest Consortium, said to date, the resilience projects that have been most successful are a result of well-defined partnerships. He highlighted a few of the Consortium's most successful resilience projects.

In partnership with [Three Affiliated Tribes](#), the Consortium developed and led several trainings on emergency response and community awareness and preparedness for large fuel releases in New Town.

A collaboration between the University of Minnesota and the community organization [Citizens Acting for Rail Safety – Twin Cities](#) led to an increase in community awareness and knowledge about oil transport. This training gave members of the organization access to a 40-hour training, which helped them better understand HAZMAT and emergency team response in case a derailment occurs in the area.

In Michigan, a partnership with [Green Door Initiative](#) facilitated increased access to water testing kits in response to the Flint drinking water crisis. Training was delivered to community activists so they could go door-to-door; this activity garnered a great deal of attention in the state and pointed to the organization becoming a source of credible information for the community. Raynor said that a toxicologist recently joined the local advisory board.

In Tennessee, collaboration with Robert Wingfield Jr., Ph.D., and others at [Fisk University](#) helped with the creation of a course called "Family and Community Emergency Preparedness." The training course includes a focus on tornadoes and flooding and has since been delivered to local CBOs and faith-based organizations. One trainee said because of the training, she knew a safe place to go and take cover in her home during a tornado and survived.

Raynor said in the coming years, the training centers will continue to strengthen their resilience projects and build upon current programming to reach a broader audience.

Partnership Outcomes, Metrics, and Evaluation

Panelists discussed various metrics and how partnerships are evaluated within the context of their organization. They also shared how evaluation has led to successful outcomes.

Improving Facility Safety through a Joint Union Company Team

International Chemical Workers Union Council and Afton Chemical Corporation

Reggie Maclin, senior operations specialist, and Randy Schwartzkopf, an E&I technician, shared more about a successful labor-management partnership between ICWUC and the [Afton Chemical Corporation](#) plant in Sauget, Illinois (Afton-Sauget plant). As part of the [NewMarket Corporation](#) family of companies, Afton Chemical produces specialty chemicals, like fuels and lubricants, to help customers reduce emissions, extend equipment life, and improve operator satisfaction.

Maclin and Schwartzkopf serve in leadership roles for the Afton Safety Liaison Team. The team oversees the creation of a sustainable culture of safety and environmental excellence for the Afton Chemical facility. Notably, the team has trained hundreds of Afton employees, presented at both regional and national conferences, and mentored other companies in the pursuit of reducing worker illness and injuries.

Beginning in August 2012, management at the [Afton-Sauget plant worked with the ICWUC](#) in Cincinnati, Ohio to establish baseline health and safety knowledge across the plant. This was done by requiring all employees –

from hourly workers to management – to complete an OSHA 10-hour outreach training course. ICWUC delivered the training courses, and used a train-the-trainer model, creating in-house capacity to continue the training over time. Employees enrolled in the training included a mix of hourly workers (represented by the ICWUC Local 871C), salaried workers, and contractors.

ICWUC staff developed and customized the initial OSHA 10-hour training modules to fit the site- and operations-specific needs of the Afton-Sauget plant. The training used interactive methods, such as small group activities and hands-on demonstrations of PPE. At the conclusion of the OSHA 10-hour training, participants documented, compiled, and prioritized safety concerns observed in their workplace. Participants collaboratively assigned each concern to an employee, who then monitored progress to address the concern, and reported back during four quarterly follow-up sessions.



Schwartzkopf, Maclin, and Rick Ramirez (pictured from left to right) are the OSHA 10-hour and 30-hour instructors at the Afton-Sauget plant. (Photo courtesy of NIEHS WTP [success story](#)).

A recent [study](#) demonstrates the significant improvements in workplace safety resulting from the ICWUC and Afton-Sauget partnership. The study shows the importance of engaging workers that are closest to production, and how this leads to more cost-efficient solutions than top-down decision making. It also shows how trust among management and union leadership can create new opportunities, and how OSHA 10-hour training for the entire workforce can help reinforce health and safety goals. Together, Sauget’s management team and ICWUC identified and [resolved 104 safety concerns](#) throughout the plant.



Maclin and Schwartzkopf said the partnership with ICWUC helped leadership shift from a sole focus on compliance to sustainable approaches to improve safety. The plant has since maintained a below average injury rate and embraced many new initiatives to educate, engage, and empower workers.

The iterative process of training, evaluation, and communication [continues to benefit the Afton-Sauget plant](#) in many ways. The OSHA 10-hour training and train-the-trainer model has helped increase the pool of instructors. Afton-Sauget employees continue to participate in training and provide their input on health and safety concerns across the plant. They also have an opportunity to share their concerns each month with their plant manager who then reports to the supervisor.

Furthermore, leaders like Maclin and Schwartzkopf have mentored other facilities on the process and shared it with others at regional and national safety conferences. “Employees now feel more empowered – they become safety ambassadors and help make changes in their facility and community,” they said.

Building Connections to Train Underserved Communities

Sustainable Workplace Alliance, Ready for Life, Elevate Brevard, and Other Organizations

[Sustainable Workplace Alliance](#) (SWA) is a [new awardee](#) within the WTP network. SWA Principal Investigator David Casavant shared how developing and evaluating partnerships fosters success within their ECWTP. SWA targets disadvantaged and underserved communities in Orlando and Brevard County, Florida and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Casavant described SWA’s partnerships with organizations for outreach and recruitment in Brevard County, Florida. He mentioned partners like the Housing Authority of Brevard County, Elevate Brevard, and Ready for Life.

While each partner has a unique mission, they all bring something to the table to benefit the ECWTP. The [Housing Authority of Brevard County](#) works with individuals who live in [Section 8 housing](#), and their goal is to help them succeed financially. [Elevate Brevard](#) is a collaboration of community partners that aims to increase individuals’ access to postsecondary educational opportunities and sustainable employment. [Ready for Life](#) provides guidance and support for young adults who are transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood.

Casavant said they have created an outreach and recruitment formula to help them meet their desired ECWTP cohort outcomes. He explained how they use the desired outcomes and work backwards to define outreach and recruitment numbers. “For example, if our ultimate goal is to graduate 13 students, then we need to get at least 15 students in,” Casavant said. “This means we need to knock on hundreds of doors, process 45 applications, and have at least 30 people come to the orientation.” While the formula is variable, he said it helps SWA meet their overall goals for each cohort.

SWA has also networked and built connections with several employers in Brevard County. These connections are valuable for SWA because it gives them access to job placement opportunities for trainees. Likewise, these connections are valuable for employers because they get first dibs on ECWTP trainees and graduates. Casavant said SWA recently started hosting lunch and learns where employers present and share more about their company with ECWTP trainees. “This gets the trainees excited because they have a chance to meet and network with employers,” Casavant said.

Sustaining Partnerships for the Long-Term

Panelists from awardee organizations shared their experiences in sustaining long-term partnerships, some of which have lasted for more than 20 years.

Integrating E-Learning Technologies in HAZMAT Training

Atlantic Center for Occupational Health and Safety and Cell Podium, LLC

Mitchel Rosen, Ph.D., principal investigator for the [Atlantic Center for Occupational Health and Safety](#) (Atlantic Center), and Cesar Bandera, Ph.D., principal investigator for Cell Podium, LLC, described key factors that have contributed to the sustainability of their partnership. The two organizations have been working together since 2005.

Bandera expressed the significance of WTP's network for small businesses, specifically those with a [WTP Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) E-Learning for HAZMAT](#) award. "The WTP SBIR community is very unique," Bandera said. "There are very few agencies that offer a cohort of potential collaborators like this for SBIR awards."



The partnership between the Atlantic Center and Cell Podium has enabled integration of new E-Learning technologies in HAZMAT training. In the photo above, trainees assess a simulated hazard using an augmented reality sensor simulation system developed by Cell Podium. (Photo courtesy of Mitchel Rosen, Ph.D.)

He said the primary reason small business owners fail is they build a product that nobody wants. The risk for failure becomes even greater for innovative business owners. "Collaborations are key for small businesses to respond to a legitimate market," Bandera said. "It is important to listen to the client's needs to learn what innovations are needed most. The product needs to be compatible with the existing processes that the client has in place."

The long-term collaboration between Cell Podium and the Atlantic Center shows that partners must bring value to one another. While Cell Podium has the talent to develop and engineer the E-learning technologies, the Atlantic Center has the expertise to integrate the health and safety content.



The partnership has proven to be successful over time by building trust, active listening, brainstorming, and strategic planning.

“Trust must be built between partners,” Rosen said. “We know we can rely on each other, even if things don’t work out the way we expect.”

It is important for partners to provide a space to freely brainstorm and discuss ideas, no matter how absurd the ideas may seem. Rosen and Bandera agreed that a good collaboration is one that starts with initial brainstorming and has very frequent check-ins as the idea or product matures.

Strategic planning is also needed to outline the process and determine what resources and steps are needed to bring a product to fruition. Rosen said the strategic planning process helps develop self-awareness of what can and cannot be done, thereby maximizing the strengths and roles of each partner.

Bandera and Rosen offered recommendations for awardees who would like to pursue and build new partnerships with SBIRs. “Start the conversation,” Rosen said. “The conversation isn’t going to start unless you initiate it.”

Bandera agreed and added the importance of humility. “Be humble about what you think you know and what you do not know,” he said. “As soon as you respect what you do not know, you automatically start respecting the people you are collaborating with.”

Empowering Workers to Address Health and Safety Issues

The Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization and Valero Refinery

Steve Doherty with the USW-TMC, shared his experience working on the [Triangle of Prevention \(TOP\) Program](#). Doherty has been the TOP Program coordinator since 2016.



Doherty (far right) pictured with representatives from USW Local Union 9-631 who represent members at Valero Refinery in Memphis, Tennessee. (Photo courtesy of [USW TMC Facebook page](#)).

The TOP started in 1997 and it is a program led by workers. This puts the worker in the position to be successful in their field of expertise and employment. Union leadership is the foundation of the TOP, which is led by a team composed of the TOP representative, representative alternate, local union president, and the union’s safety chairperson.

Doherty explained that the partnership is the product of a three-party agreement. He said a great deal of bargaining goes on within the scope of the partnership.

Because USW is a part of the oil bargaining agenda, they can build relationships and respect needed to pursue a healthy workforce.

The goal of the TOP is to find and address hazards, unsafe conditions, and failed safety systems that cause workplace injury and illness. The TOP consists of three essential elements: union leadership; the USW Systems of Safety approach and incident investigation; and measuring and tracking incidents and near-misses.

The TOP has been successful in [improving health and safety](#) across several worksites, especially the Valero Memphis Refinery in Memphis, Tennessee. Doherty shared more about the partnership between USW-TMC and Valero, which began in 2007. The partnership has facilitated greater worker engagement to improve safety culture.



Representatives from Valero Refinery pictured during a ceremony where the Tennessee OSHA recognized the company for earning its second Volunteer Safety Through Accountability and Recognition (STAR) award. (Photo courtesy of the [Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development](#)).

Doherty described many challenges they have encountered in the partnership, such as changing union leadership and management. He also mentioned challenges with sustaining worker engagement and the continuous evolution of the program at the site. Amidst these challenges, Doherty said they have found that trust, communication, and creativity are important. The program fosters an environment where workers communicate and collaborate towards one common goal of health and safety.

Many USW members live in areas nearby or surrounding refineries, also known as fenceline communities. Refineries can pose a hazard to these communities, especially in the wake of a chemical spill, explosion, or other emergencies. Doherty said the USW-TMC offers OSHA 10-hour training for USW members and their families to ensure that they are well-informed about health and safety. These trainings are often hosted through community groups and churches.

“We try to be a part of the community to empower them with information,” Doherty said. “We want people to feel safe and secure around these sites.”

Providing Training for Native American and Alaska Native Tribes

Alabama Fire College and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

Kenneth Oldfield, principal investigator for the [Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training program](#) (AFC WST), described a longstanding partnership with the [Native American Fish and Wildlife Society](#) (NAFWS). This partnership has been going strong since 2000. Notably, this is AFC WST's longest running partnership.



The partnership between AFC WST and NAFWS helps build the capacity for Native Americans in hazardous chemical safety and awareness. In the picture above, Oldfield (right) demonstrates the use of a chlorine containment kit to Native American hazardous materials response technicians. (Photo courtesy of Kenneth Oldfield).

NAFWS is a non-profit organization that assists Native American and Alaska Native Tribes with the conservation, protection, and enhancement of their fish and wildlife

resources. The organization represents more than 200 [member tribes](#) across the nation.

The partnership between AFC WST and NAFWS began out of grassroots interest from tribal conservation officers who took a 40-hour course offered as part of the Brownfields Minority Worker Training Program, which is currently known as the ECWTP. The officers were impressed with the training and shared more about it with tribal leaders.

Oldfield said NAFWS member tribes have varying needs and resources. While some tribes are doing well financially, others have limited resources and are isolated geographically. As partners, AFC WST and NAFWS realize they both have an important part to play. They recognize and respect the complementary resources that they each bring to the partnership. While AFC WST delivers the training, they receive a great deal of help reaching out and making connections that create opportunities for training. Oldfield said the NAFWS connects AFC WST with populations that they would not have otherwise been able to reach on their own. AFC WST also relies on NAFWS to help them understand cultural knowledge surrounding the tribes and areas of profession that need training.

Oldfield emphasized the importance of patience to sustain the partnership. He said they are diligent about sharing success stories that are important to one another's stakeholders. AFC WST shares success stories that demonstrate the value of the training program to their membership, and NAFWS shares stories about how the trainings impact the tribes. This is a win-win for both organizations.



Tracking Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned Working with the New York City Transit Authority

New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health and New York City Transit Authority

Lara Maldjian, associate director for the [New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health](#) (NYCOSH), described challenges and lessons learned from a 30-year partnership with the [New York City \(NYC\) Transit Authority](#). She noted that the NYC Transit Authority is the busiest and largest transit system in the country, managing more than 8 million rides daily.

As a partner of the [Atlantic Center](#) with funding from the HWWTP, NYCOSH provides more than 30 trainings per year for NYC Transit Authority workers. She said most of these trainings are reactive and based on emerging issues.

Over the years, NYCOSH has encountered several challenges in the partnership with the NYC Transit Authority. One of the major challenges is the frequent turnover of staff, which causes miscommunication and lack of clarity about the point of contact. Another challenge is the lack of resources which results in reduced outreach capacity, delayed technology advancements, and difficulty with reporting requirements.

Maldjian said while overcoming these challenges can be a lofty goal to achieve, NYCOSH and NYC Transit Authority focused on moving towards a common goal to sustain the partnership and co-exist. One strategy they have agreed upon is establishing ground rules, which includes setting and discussing expectations for the partnership regularly and developing a written rulebook detailing these expectations. She said partners should keep the

communication flowing regularly and know and confirm who is the point of contact, or the go-to person. Partners should not make assumptions that people will talk to each other in the partner's agency.

Maldjian also recommended that partners give and receive feedback on a regular basis to solve issues before they become major impediments. Partners should be flexible and have compassion and empathy, as challenges do occur.

"No matter the size of the organization there will be challenges," Maldjian said. "It just like a relationship, we can't do whatever we want, when we want to do it. Partners need to learn how to adapt and work together to solve issues."

Lessons Learned Working with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Nurse Alliance

UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program, Western Region Universities Consortium, and SEIU Nurse Alliance

Kevin Riley, Ph.D., director of the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (LOSH) at the University of California Los Angeles and principal investigator for the [Westerns Regions Universities Consortium](#) (WRUC), shared challenges and lessons learned from their partnership with the [SEIU Nurse Alliance of California](#). Based in San Francisco, California, the SEIU Nurse Alliance is a professional organization that advocates on behalf of over 35,000 registered nurses in the public and private sectors in California.

Riley said because WRUC is a university-based consortium, it does not have a built-in membership base or constituency for training. Therefore, they depend strongly on partnerships with other organizations to achieve their goals. Over the years, Riley and his colleagues have learned the importance of maintaining



long-term partnerships and being able to adapt to the relationships as needed. Additionally, they have learned how critical it is to periodically assess or evaluate the success, or lack thereof, in partnerships.

LOSH's partnership with the SEIU Nurse Alliance began during efforts to create new Cal-OSHA standards on safe patient handling and workplace violence prevention. LOSH helped pair student interns with the SEIU Nurse Alliance, and the interns helped document cases of musculoskeletal injuries and workplace violence.

Based on the data collected, LOSH developed recommendations to help the SEIU Nurse Alliance inform directions for the new Cal-OSHA standards. While this work was supported by NIEHS funding, it facilitated other opportunities to continue working with the Alliance in the future, such as on the development of a new training initiative for the California Aerosol Transmissible Disease (ATD) Standard. Nurses recognized that many employers were not complying to the standard. Based on a need to better educate and train nurses on the ATD standard, LOSH partnered with the SEIU Nurse Alliance to develop materials and train nurses and environmental service workers in Southern and Northern California.

Riley said the LOSH and SEIU Nurse Alliance partnership is complementary. The partnership has allowed them to combine firsthand accounts from nurses with the knowledge of LOSH consultants and instructors. Their collective expertise has helped them to meet the needs of nurses on the front lines, build advocacy, and promote changes in the workplaces.

The established relationship with the SEIU Nurse Alliance proved to be even more valuable when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Riley explained that LOSH and the Alliance worked together quickly to adapt the training in the context of COVID-19. Within one year, they provided 24 courses, reaching over 500 nurses and other healthcare workers. During these courses, LOSH provided current information about the pandemic, and the Alliance provided updated guidance on the vaccine rollout, protections for workers who need to quarantine, and updates to state laws.

In terms of lessons learned, Riley said it was vital that this partnership was in place before the pandemic hit. This helped ensure a quick response to COVID-19 and allowed them to pivot quickly to meet the needs of workers. Through this partnership, LOSH gained access to nurses outside of hospital settings, such as those from skilled nursing facilities, prisons, and other locations that did not have protocols or protections in place.

While the partnership has been very successful, there have been some challenges. This includes limited staff, resources, and capacity due to the small nature of the SEIU Nurse Alliance as an organization. Riley credited patience and flexibility to meet each other's needs as a strategy to overcome these challenges and further enhance the partnership. It is important for partners to understand what the incentive is for everyone, and to avoid building a partnership that no one wants.



Conclusion

“The opposite of division is not unity, it is collaboration,” said Rosen.

Successful partnerships do not come by easy – they require clear communication and equal effort by all parties involved. They are also built on equitable and fair distribution of the benefits in response to the effort put into it.

“The idea of partnerships is baked into WTP,” Oldfield said in his closing remarks. “We share, collaborate, and come together for a common interest to make the most efficient use of resources provided.”

The partnerships described during the workshop are clear examples of how collaboration can help push forward the mission and goals of WTP, to protect the health and safety of all people. They also show how collaboration between awardees and other organizations, especially CBOs, have been effective in complementing and often augmenting existing resources. These partnerships also help bring organizational self-awareness as they recognize their strengths, gaps, and needs.

Looking forward, Oldfield suggested that awardees continue to document their best practices and lessons learned in partnerships. He also recommended that awardees get to know one another better to identify more opportunities to work together, especially at the local level, where there are health and safety gaps that need to be filled. Partnerships are vital to sustain the longevity and success of WTP.

Resources

- [American Industrial Hygiene Association, COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Disaster Rapid Response: The Experience of ICWUC, NIOSH, and Fe y Justicia in Houston, TX](#) (NIEHS Worker Training Program, 2018 Trainers’ Exchange)
- [Emergency Preparedness Training for Volunteers, Community, and Faith-Based Organizations](#) (NIEHS Worker Training Program, 2018 Trainers’ Exchange)
- [NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program, Preparing DOE Workers to Perform Work Safety](#)
- [NIEHS Environmental Factor, COVID-19 resilience and recovery for workers, communities](#) (May 2021)
- [NIEHS Environmental Factor, Floods, mold, and health — Worker Training Program answers the call](#) (October 2017)
- [NIEHS Environmental Factor, Hurricane recovery support in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands](#) (March 2018)
- [NIEHS Partnerships for Environmental Public Health Grantee Highlight, David Turcotte, Sc.D., Academic-Community Partnerships Provide Tools to Address Environmental Health](#) (June 2020)
- [NIEHS Worker Training Program, Building Capacity with Native Americans and Alaska Natives to Handle Hazardous Materials and Respond to Emergencies](#) (April 2018)
- [NIEHS Worker Training Program Technical Workshop, Setting the Stage for the Worker Training Program 2015-2020: Leveraging Program Collaborations, Strengths, and Data](#) (September 2015)
- [U.S. Agency for International Development, Indicators That Measure Organizational Partnerships](#)

Appendix: Workshop Agenda



NIH National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Worker Training Program

FALL WORKSHOP
Advancing Partnerships to Improve Worker Health and Safety
OCTOBER 20 – 21, 2021
VIRTUAL

AGENDA

All times listed are Eastern

Register to receive the ZoomGov links: <https://nih.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJltcO6trz8tHxhUaM4A2zQ3HJKmgDjBjpo>

Workshop Day 1: October 20, 2021

1:00 – 1:15 p.m. **Welcome**

- Sharon Beard, *Director, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Worker Training Program (WTP)*
- Gary Ellison, Ph.D., *Acting Director, NIEHS Division of Extramural Research and Training*

1:15 – 2:00 p.m. **Setting the Stage: Experience with Partnerships**

MODERATOR: Mitchel Rosen, Ph.D., *New Jersey/New York Hazardous Materials Worker Training Center*

- Montgomery Proffit, *OAI, Inc.*
- Janelle Rios, Ph.D., *Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Consortium*

Partnership Structures and Agreements

2:00 – 2:30 p.m. **Defining Partnership Structures and Expectations**

MODERATOR: Salvatore Cali, *OAI, Inc.*

- Chris Cain, *CPWR - The Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR)*
TOPIC: Applicability of the Construction Research to Practice Partnership Toolkit
- Tom Estabrook, Ph.D., *The New England Consortium-Civil Service Employees Association* and Pamela Puchalski, *ConnectiCOSH/Naugatuck Valley Project*
TOPIC: Recovery Center in Connecticut
- Bryan Heard, *Sustainable Workplace Alliance*, and Joel Alvarez, *International Chemical Workers Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education*
TOPIC: Cross grantee partnership for online train-the-trainer for training in Puerto Rico

2:30 – 3:00 p.m. **Partnerships: Making Agreements and Understanding the Nature of Negotiations**

MODERATOR: David Turcotte, Sc.D., *The New England Consortium-Civil Service Employees Association*

- Ashlee Fitch, *The Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization*
TOPIC: New partnership with Paducah
- Brian Griffin, *Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training*
TOPIC: Greater Cincinnati Occupational Health and Great Oaks partnership
- William "Bill" Nash, *Partnership for Environmental Technology and Education*
TOPIC: Military Training Partnership with Barton Community College



3:00 – 3:15 p.m. **Q&A and Open Discussion for Partnership Structures and Agreements**

3:15 – 3:30 p.m. **Break**

Best Practices to Sustain Long-Term Partnerships

3:30 – 4:15 p.m. **Sustaining Partnerships for the Long-Term**

MODERATOR: Kevin Riley, Ph.D., *Western Region Universities Consortium (WRUC)*

- Cesar Bandera, Ph.D., *Cell Podium* and Mitchel Rosen, Ph.D., *New Jersey/New York Hazardous Materials Worker Training Center*

TOPIC: A Small Business Innovation Research E-Learning for HAZMAT and Emergency Response Grantee and Worker Training Program Grantee Partnership

- Steve Doherty, *The Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization*

TOPIC: Partnership with Valero in Memphis, TN around the Triangle of Prevention

- Kenneth Oldfield, *Alabama Fire College*

TOPIC: Partnership with Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

4:15 – 4:30 p.m. **Q&A and Open Discussion**

Interactive Roundtables

4:30 – 5:15 p.m. **Virtual Roundtables**

MODERATOR: Kenda Freeman, *National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Training*

This session will provide participants an opportunity to explore various best practices related to partnerships. Each facilitator will spend the first 5 to 7 minutes of the breakout sharing best practices in their topic area. Then facilitators will encourage others to ask questions and share experiences from their own organizations. Attendees would then move to a different roundtable after 15 minutes.

- **Best practices for working with Worker Centers and crossing language barriers**
 - Arturo Archila, *The Labor Institute with United Steelworkers (USW)*
- **Best practices for crafting agreements – items to consider including to protect all partners.**
 - Lawrence Baldino, *The Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Training and Education Fund*
- **Best practices for developing and sustaining federal interagency partnerships (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), NIEHS, U.S. Environmental Protective Agency (EPA), Department of Energy (DOE), etc.) and why these partnerships are important**
 - Elizabeth Del Re, *International Association of Fire Fighters*
- **Best practices for partnerships and work at DOE sites**
 - Ted Giltz, *NIEHS WTP Contractor*, and Gary Gustafson, *CPWR*
- **Best practices for leveraging expertise within advisory boards and committees to build partnerships**
 - Stephen Grant, Ph.D., *Nova Southeastern University*
- **Best practices for partnerships to train workers for disaster cleanup**
 - Gene Sabitoni, *LIUNA Training and Education Fund*
- **Best practices for partnership with tribal organizations**
 - Roy Stover, *Alabama Fire College*

5:15 – 5:25 p.m. **Wrap-up and Adjourn**

- Sharon Beard, *NIEHS WTP Director*

Workshop Day 2: October 21, 2021

1:00 – 1:05 p.m. **Recap of Day 1 and Setting the Stage for Day 2 Discussions**

- Sharon Beard, *NIEHS WTP Director*

Tracking Success and Lessons Learned

1:05 – 1:35 p.m. **Tracking Success and Evaluation**

MODERATOR: Demia Wright, *NIEHS WTP*

- Larry Hodge, *Jobs to Move America with USW*

TOPIC: Establishing Community Benefits Agreements

- Reggie Maclin, *Afton Chemical Corp.*, and Randy Schwartzkopf, *International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC) Local Leadership*

TOPIC: ICWUC partnership with Afton Chemical Corp.

- David Casavant, *Sustainable Workplace Alliance*

TOPIC: Partnerships with companies that hire ECWTP graduates

1:35 – 2:05 p.m. **Tracking Lessons Learned**

MODERATOR: Jim Remington, *NIEHS WTP*

- Lara Maldjian, *New Jersey/New York Hazardous Materials Worker Training Center (NYCOSH)*

TOPIC: NYCOSH and NYC Transit (MTA) challenges

- Kevin Riley, Ph.D., *WRUC*

TOPIC: WRUC Partnership with Service Employees International Union Nurse Alliance of California

2:05 – 2:20 p.m. **Q&A and Open Discussion for Tracking Success and Lessons Learned**

Breakout Discussions

2:20 – 3:05 p.m. **Breakout Session**

MODERATOR: Kathy Ahlmark, *NIEHS WTP*

Breakout session for participants to gather and discuss various challenges and issues they have encountered with partnerships and strategies to adapt and overcome these challenges.

3:05 – 3:35 p.m. **Report Back From Breakout Session**

3:35 – 3:50 p.m. **Break**

Partnerships for Disaster Preparedness

3:50 – 4:30 p.m. **Outreach and Partnerships for Better Disaster Preparedness**

MODERATOR: Jonathan Rosen, *National Clearinghouse*

- Kim Dunn, *Deep South Center for Environmental Justice/Texas Southern University*

TOPIC: Pre-disaster outreach to establish post-disaster training partnerships

- Debora Gonzales, *The Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization/National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)*

TOPIC: Pre-disaster outreach to establish post-disaster training partnerships

- Peter Raynor, Ph.D., *Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training*

TOPIC: Overview of Midwest Consortium's resilience projects

4:30 – 4:50 p.m. **Q&A and Open Discussion**

4:50 – 5:05 p.m. **Closing Thoughts and Proposed Follow-up Actions**

- Kenneth Oldfield, *Alabama Fire College*



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National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Worker Training Program

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