



# How to Market Your Workforce Development Program

The Top Strategies, Channels, and Tools to Amplify Awareness and Enrollment



Everyone knows that if you want to borrow a book, you head to your local library. But if you need job training or career services, most don't know where to turn.

Workforce development programs are one of the best public services available—but they're also one of the best-kept secrets. According to the [Brookings Institute](#), effective programs positively impact employment rates, earnings, and job satisfaction. Programs can also [cut hiring and training costs](#) for employers, but only if they know how to take advantage of them.

Whether you offer a self-serve training program or in-person cohort-based job-readiness training, getting the word out to job-seekers is a must. A marketing strategy can make all the difference in your enrollment rates and program outcomes. Use this guide to create a winning marketing strategy for your job-readiness program.



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## Step 1: Understand Your Target Audience and Their Motivations

Understanding your audience is the foundation for every good marketing plan. Don't simply assume that you know what your audience wants or needs. Instead, put on your researcher hat to uncover information such as:

- Typical age, gender, and other demographics
- Goals and objectives (e.g., secure a job with a living wage)
- Motivations (e.g., provide for their family)
- Challenges (e.g., lacking a college degree)
- Where and how they look for information (e.g., social media)

Within your audience, you may have multiple segments you want to target. For instance, recent high school graduates have different motivations than adults impacted by a manufacturing plant closing.

Workforce development audiences can be very diverse, so try to look for common denominators or consider creating targeted communications for different segments.

It's also helpful to go through this exercise for local employers. What motivations will incentivize an employer to work with you, for instance?

If you need insights, here are two ways to learn more about your audience.

### 1. User Research

Surveying your audience is a great way to ask for information and collect data. You can use a simple tool like Google Forms or a social media poll to collect input or hire a market research firm to handle more advanced research.

### 2. A Focus Group or Advisory Panel

Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on data, qualitative research is simply talking to your audience to seek feedback and deepen your understanding. With a focus group, you can ask open-ended and follow-up questions to learn more in an hour than you might with 100 survey responses.

Consider forming an advisory panel of employers to keep your finger on the pulse of hiring needs and challenges.





## Step 2:

# Develop a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy

Once you have a picture of your target audience, it's time to lay out your strategy. Here are the steps you can follow to develop that strategy.

### 1. Identify Your Goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

First, outline how you will define success for your marketing efforts. List which key performance indicators (KPIs) you will track for each goal to monitor progress. Setting goals upfront ensures you stay strategic, tie every activity to a goal, and measure your performance.

### Example Marketing Goals and KPIs for Workforce Development

Goal	KPIs to Monitor
Increase program awareness	Website visits, social media impressions
Grow job-seeker engagement	Email opens and clicks, social media engagement, attendance at info sessions
Increase enrollment	Number of program participants
Grow partnerships	Number of community and employer partners, referrals from partners

### 2. Define Your Messaging

Next, develop key messages that will serve as the foundation for how you talk about your programs. Start with your key value proposition, which is the top benefit you offer.

#### Key Value Proposition

**What it is** ➤ The key benefit you promise to deliver to your audience.

**Example** ➤ Create a thriving community by connecting job seekers with in-demand skills to local employers with job opportunities.

Next, write bullet points that outline the benefits you provide to job-seekers and employers, for example:

- Find a career that you love
- Job training that works around your schedule
- Connect with qualified, job-ready candidates

With a clear messaging framework, you can easily adapt your messaging for different pieces of marketing collateral while staying consistent across channels.





### 3. Identify Your Core Marketing Channels

A marketing channel is simply a space your audience goes to look for information, like social media or community events.

The user research you performed will come into play here. It can help illuminate which marketing channels your audience values the most and where to focus your efforts and budget for maximum impact.

Here are seven channels you should consider adding to your marketing mix.

#### Out-of-Home Advertising

Out-of-home (OOH) advertising is exactly what it sounds like: ads that reach people outside of their homes. Examples include bus or subway ads, billboards, and ads in retail spaces. The benefit of OOH advertising is high visibility and the ability to target people by physical location.

#### Digital Advertising

Digital ads, like those on a website or social media feed, are one of the most effective and affordable marketing channels today. With digital ads, you can target those who are shown the ads by their demographics, interests, and behaviors. You can assess, adjust, or pause your campaigns at any time, making it easy to optimize your ads for maximum impact and ROI.

- **Display ads** use text, images, and a call-to-action to drive viewers toward an action.
- **Native ads** engage viewers by sharing content that mimics beloved content formats on the site.
- **Video ads** capture viewers' attention and tell a story in a multimedia format.
- **Retargeting ads** use tracking to serve personalized ads to website visitors across the web.

#### Example of a Paid Social Media Ad



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#### Social Media

According to [Data Reportal](#), people spend nearly two and a half hours daily on social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Beyond entertainment, consumers look to social media for information and recommendations.

To bolster your brand reputation, create a social media presence that includes thoughtful profile pages, regular posts, and engaging multimedia content. An organic social media strategy is essential for any paid social media campaign to be successful.

Organic Social Media	Paid Social Media
Free to post	Either pay per click or cost per thousand impressions
Seen by followers and others based on algorithms	Seen by those matching the audience parameters you choose
Good for building relationships and promoting brand awareness	Good for reaching new potential job seekers and partners



## Email Marketing

Email is one of the most effective methods to get your message across. Consider creating one monthly newsletter for job-seekers and another for employers to share program highlights, success stories, and other news.

Another alternative is an automated email journey, also known as a drip campaign, for people who complete an action. For instance, everyone who attends a job training webinar would receive five pre-written emails over the next month to convince them to enroll in your program.

## Media Relations

Local media is a powerful way to spread the word about your programs and doesn't require an ad budget. Send out a press release announcing new programs as they launch, or send an impact report at the end of a year. Invite local media to join a class or to interview a recent graduate.

For a better chance of media pickup, tie your media alerts to current trends, local news, or employment data.

## Webinars and Virtual Events

Webinars and other virtual events allow people to learn about a program without the barriers of location and scheduling. Host regular webinars or events like Facebook Live to give people a chance to ask questions about your job-training programs and even showcase the technology you use. Share and post recordings for those who may have missed the original event.



## Community Outreach

As a public service, one of the best ways to market your workforce development program is through community outreach. Partnering with nonprofits, libraries, and veterans' organizations offers a mutual benefit for like-minded organizations.

Once you've initiated these relationships, ask your partners to cross-promote your programs in their newsletters, websites, or physical spaces like bulletin boards.

Getting out in the community is also valuable so you can speak with potential participants directly. Look for opportunities like guest speaking at a local event or hosting a booth at a job fair or festival.

### Print Collateral for a Community Event

To make a community event a success, make your booth visually distinctive and engaging with knowledgeable staff. Bring print collateral like flyers and brochures with information about your program's benefits.

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## 4. Plan for Implementation

Finally, shape your marketing plan with details about how you will bring your plan together. Make sure to address:

- Who is responsible for each marketing tactic
- A budget for ad placements, printing, or creative services
- Where you may need outside support, like an agency or contractor
- A timeline for implementation
- How you plan to assess the results

Starting a new marketing campaign can be overwhelming for many people. Part of your implementation plan should also include setting realistic expectations and goals. Select one target audience (such as high school students), outline the messaging for that audience, and then pick 2-3 marketing channels to try. Give it a few months to get comfortable with that, and then add more channels or pick another audience to try.

It's much more effective to implement a couple of marketing strategies than a dozen strategies for a week or two and then stop. You may see results pretty quickly once you start marketing, but remember that most marketing is a long-term strategy. Being patient, consistent, and always reviewing and adjusting your results is going to be your recipe for success!



# 4 Proven Tactics to Promote Your Workforce Development Program

One of the joys and challenges of marketing is that there is an unlimited amount of content and strategies that you can use. Seeing what has worked for similar organizations is often a good place to start, so here are a few ideas that other workforce development organizations have used to promote their programs successfully.

## 1. Share Success Stories

Before embracing a new opportunity, people need to see examples they can relate to. Instead of only sharing program details, build campaigns around stories. Interview program participants about why they enrolled in the program, what it was like, and how it changed their lives. Use testimonial quotes, photos, videos, and data to tell a powerful story.

Ask a program participant to write a guest article for your newsletter to share their experience in their own words. You can also celebrate standout students, program completions, and job placements through callouts.

While these stories are powerful for distributing on your channels, encourage alums to share with their networks to reach new audiences. Share a hashtag and templated posts for learners to share their stories!

## 2. Focus on Skills

Another tactic is to highlight the importance of a skill for certain careers and share how you help learners build that skill through courses and programs. These could be technical skills like HVAC or plumbing, or soft skills like teamwork or communication. Focusing on skills helps your audience understand both the value and the marketability of the skills they will gain.

Share this type of content in your emails, newsletters, or via other channels, depending on the audience and channels you decide to work on first.



### Technical Skills Focus Example in a Newsletter

#### A Day in the Life: HVAC

Take HVAC for example. With an HVAC diploma, you could be:

1. **Residential HVAC Technician:** Keeping homes cozy and cool.
2. **Commercial/Industrial HVAC Technician:** Working on large-scale heating and cooling systems.
3. **Controls Technician:** Mastering the systems that keep buildings running smoothly.

Electrical and plumbing offer similar branching paths. With electrical skills, you could focus on residential wiring or step up to commercial projects. Plumbers can specialize in residential repairs or tackle the intricate systems of commercial buildings.

### Soft Skills Focus Example in a Newsletter

#### On-Demand Practice

To grow your teamwork skills beyond the job, prioritize on-demand development training so you can practice and enhance your professional skills at any time.

- 5. **Teamwork:** For those of you enrolled in the Utility Maintenance Track, you'll be taking courses like "Working on a Team" and "Effective Communication in the Workplace," which are invaluable for developing your soft team skills.



### 3. Think Long-Term

While ad campaigns can help you reach new audiences quickly, they can't replace the value of a solid reputation and relationships. Invest time in building connections with community partners, employers, and communities. It takes time to build momentum, but if you continue to show up and deliver on your promises, you'll demonstrate the value you bring. Over time, you can build a robust referral pipeline with relationships.

### 4. Automate (Almost) Everything

If you are on a small team, embracing marketing automation can maximize your time and impact. While your team should always take the reigns in shaping the messaging, you can save time with tools that build and optimize marketing campaigns. Here are a few examples of ways to use automation in your marketing:

- **Create automated email campaigns** to reach potential participants.
- **Schedule social media posts** to publish at the optimal time.
- **A/B test different ad versions**, then set your campaign to put more budget behind the more effective one.
- **Leverage generative AI** to brainstorm ideas or create a first draft of an email or social media post.
- **Create a custom chatbot** to answer questions about your program when your team isn't available.





# Essential Tools to Market Your Workforce Development Program

All good marketing campaigns depend on good tools to create, manage, and distribute content. Set yourself up for success by choosing the right tools to manage your activities and lighten your workload. Here's what every good marketer needs in their toolbox.



## Customer Relationships Management (CRM) Platform

A customer relationship management platform (CRM) is a database where you can store all your audience information and contact details in one place. With a CRM, you can segment your audience by categories like lead, current participant, alumni, or community partner and send out customized communications. Free and low-cost CRMs popular with nonprofits include HubSpot, MailChimp, and Zoho CRM.



## Email Marketing

To harness the power of email marketing, you need a platform to manage email lists, build attractive HTML emails, and distribute emails at scale. Many email marketing tools come with a CRM like HubSpot, so consolidate your tools by looking for one that includes both.



## Social Media Management Platform

A social media management platform helps you run campaigns, access analytics, and create a content calendar. First, sign up for a business account on any social media channels you use, like Meta Business Manager for Facebook and Instagram. These accounts are free and necessary to manage paid campaigns and access analytics.

Third-party platforms like Buffer are also beneficial for scheduling social content in advance and engaging with follower comments and questions all in one place.



## Design Tool

Gone are the days when you need a professional designer and expensive software to create professional visual marketing content. With a free design tool like Canva, it's easy to create branded social media content, print collateral, and even videos.



## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative AI is making it possible to draft marketing content when you don't know where to start. You can prompt an AI tool to write ad content, give you email subject line ideas, or rewrite your content to make it better. ChatGPT is a good starting tool, but many marketing tools are building generative AI into their platforms so you can write and distribute your content all in one place.

Keep in mind that AI tools don't always get it right—always edit AI-generated material to ensure it's on-brand, accurate, and free of bias.



# Maximize Your Reach and Impact with an Out-of-the-Box Training Program

An out-of-the box training program is a powerful asset to boost skills and employment in your area. With a provider like [Interplay Learning](#), you gain access to flexible online programs, cutting-edge technology, and industry-recognized certifications. When you choose Interplay Learning, you can spend less time building the program and more time marketing the program—and bringing the right people in the door.

To maximize the reach and impact of your job-readiness program, market it using best practices.



## Know your audience inside and out

Conduct surveys and focus groups to learn more about your stakeholders. Segment your audience to tailor communications to each group, such as job seekers and employers.



## Create a strong marketing strategy with clear goals and KPIs

Identify specific goals, like increasing enrollment or expanding partnerships, and establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure your success.



## Leverage multiple marketing channels for broader reach

Start with three or four key marketing channels that you can target to increase visibility for your program. Once you're doing those well, test other channels to expand your reach.



## Share success stories

Build a compelling narrative around participant testimonials, success stories, and highlights to build credibility and engagement.

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