

Portland Economic Opportunity Initiative
Elements of Best Practice in Poverty Reduction Programs
2003 Local and National Survey

The initiative is based on national and local research that demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to assisting low-income people into higher wage jobs or starting and growing their own micro-enterprises.

Best practice projects incorporate the following elements into design and delivery:

1. Serve relatively small numbers of participants so that projects can build on participants' strengths and be tailored to their individual and common needs.
2. Projects should serve groups with a common business, career track or other similarity in ethnicity, housing or personal challenges or situation. Structured opportunities for peer support should be incorporated into all projects.
3. Offer comprehensive support services to remove personal barriers to success such as transportation, limited English, child care, housing status, lack of financial education and problem work behaviors. This requires some supported referrals and purchase of goods and services.
4. Emphasize development of strong long-term mentoring and coaching relationships between project staff and participants.
5. Involve employers early in project and curriculum design and by obtaining their commitment to employ graduates of workforce projects. Use active, workplace-based training approaches when possible.
6. Use individualized, comprehensive business planning and assessment with hands-on and on-site micro-enterprise coaching in addition to structured business education and training activities.