

NVRC Workforce Task Force

WIB – Non-profit – Faith-based “Listening Session”

January 31, 2014

Main themes:

Overview:

Northern Virginia is home to a number of workforce organizations that have delivered mission-specific service to thousands of citizens of Northern Virginia over many years. A wide variety of job seekers have been served by innovative programs developed according to specific funding sources or directives. Accordingly, these programs often exist without integration or coordination with other programs.

Collaboration and coordination is more highly valued than ever, especially in these resource constrained times. Currently, the Department of Labor/Employment & Training Administration is searching for ways to better invest its grant funding. DOL is looking to support regional efforts that more broadly address a demonstrable cultural shift in the approach to current or prospective employees, not just a narrow focus on specific skill-set deficits, but in encouraging small-medium size organizations to place a greater emphasis on human capital.

This focus presents a challenge and an opportunity for local governments across the region, and to the NVRC as it considers its role in supporting workforce stakeholders (government, business, education, NGOs) to renew emphasis on what really drives our region: the people who live and work here.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were provided by representatives of regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), non-profit training and job-placement organizations, and faith-based programs supporting job seekers.

Workforce Investment Boards:

- Achieve greater collaboration among workforce providers throughout the national capital region, promoting a tri-state approach to program delivery and marketing strategies plus central repository of information for workers and businesses;
- Understand that the FY2014 SkillSource budget is reallocating existing Federal funding from a variety of grant sources into the training line; nearly \$250K more than in prior years and reflects current demand;
- Develop an NVRC position on the House of Representatives 2013 WIA Reauthorization which proposes block grants to each of the 50 Governors;
- Develop NVRC position on Virginia’s centralized approach to workforce top-down-funding vs. Florida/Texas models of pushing money/authority down to the sub-state level where spending strategy is locally crafted to meet regional needs;
- Develop more/better workforce analytics from which to shape policy and strategic decision making (Massachusetts and NJ mentioned as best practices).
- Recognize the importance of preparing youth for career readiness:
 - Establish a workforce readiness program starting at K:
 - Stress the 4 C’s of: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical thinking,
 - Further stress the top 5 of 50 Most Commonly Required Skills found on Online Job Sites: oral & written communication skills; detail oriented; Microsoft office, problem solving; self-starting/self-motivated,

- Change the *everyone-goes-to-college* dynamic as the definition of success, instead creating a program that will inform and persuade students-parents-administrators to adopt a mindset that the educational process is the preparation *for career and/or college*.
- Match jobs and skills better. The whole workforce system needs to be analyzed and coordinated. Middle-skill workers (those with more than a GED, less than an advanced degree) need the *right* kind of tech training and certifications. Today there are more middle-skill workers in Arlington and Alexandria than middle-skill jobs.
- Ensure that the full spectrum of workers can live and work in our communities, recognizing that cost of living and quality of life are important to everyone.

Non-profit – Northern Virginia Family Service:

NVFS launched Training Futures in 1996 and has trained over 1,500 people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Comments that follow are based on NVFS's innovative partnership with the Northern Virginia Community College and locally-based businesses in an effort to move people from low-paying retail and service jobs to white-collar careers:

- Impress on the region that immigrants are a significant part of Northern Virginia's increasingly diverse population, that they choose to live here and that they endure great hardships to find meaningful work here:
 - Many immigrants are educated in their own country but because of language barriers and other challenges it's hard to find the right kind of help;
 - Without assistance many immigrants are caught in an endless cycle of working 3-4 low skill jobs with no upward mobility and therefore the dignity of work is elusive.
- Increase the number of new business partners that actively support Training Futures and other non-profit internship and apprenticeship goals, and strengthen existing business partnerships;
- Establish a common strategy of business engagement to more comprehensively include: feedback, funding, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, hiring;
- Overcome/Resolve constant workforce challenges:
 - Transportation;
 - Child care;
 - Background checks revealing benign "youthful" mistakes;
 - Screening sites for resumes that are based on inflexible algorithms rather than a flexible human perspective; and
 - Internship rules need clarity after recent policy changes concerning academic credit and stipends.

Faith-based – Career Network Ministry (CNM):

A number of faith-based programs exist in our region supporting individuals during work-life transitions. CNM has opened its doors every Tuesday night for over twenty years and provides consultation and training for skill development. More specific job search assistance includes: resume development, job search techniques, networking and interviewing techniques. The Faith-based delivery perspective is that the whole recruitment system is broken and tangible game changers need to be pursued.

- Establish the vigorous partnership needed to change the conversation and change the culture;
- Establish a dialogue, perhaps initiated by local governments along with the business community, especially targeting small-mid size companies to understand what it means to be a great company, an *Employer of Choice* and a *Learning Organization* that actively values and builds human capital;
- Prepare a well thought out regional plan of action that engages various stakeholders and submit a proposal to Department of Labor.

Participants:

David Remick – Executive Director, Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Investment Board

David Hunn – Pres&CEO, Skillsource Group *and* ExecDir, NoVA Workforce Investment Board (Fairfax, Loudoun and PW)

Julie Mullen – Dir. of Strategic Partnerships and Business Development, Northern Virginia Family Service/Training Futures

Mal Owen – Volunteer Leader, Career Network Ministry

Observers:

Jim Egenrieder – Chair of Arlington Chamber of Commerce Education and Workforce Committee
Co-chair of NVTC Education and Workforce Committee

Task Force Members (present):

Bob Lazaro – Task Force Chair

Janet Clarke

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Staff:

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