

Southern West Virginia
Workforce Development Roundtable
Summary Report



Wednesday, June 20, 2012
Beckley, West Virginia

Table Number: 1

Facilitators: John Barnette / Ron Witt
Recorder: Pam Farris

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

1. Drug problem – cross cutting theme.
2. Hopelessness and giving up – acceptance of status quo. Need to break the cycle of dependence. This requires a long term initiative.
3. Infrastructure and education need to be redefined.

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia's educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- Once one understands – is aware of the problem we can begin to leverage our collective resources. How do we go through our daily lives on the job in the community doing our volunteer work not being aware of or understanding the issues of what is being offered? Becoming aware needs to be a collaborative effort.
- Emphasize the civic portion of the education curriculum.
- Encourage awareness throughout the central locations like schools and libraries. Consider redefining the missions of schools to create good citizens in a community not just a school-book education.
- As an example, engage students in 9th grade to 'see and touch' the work of real jobs -(to do real work with real workers).

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

- Communication – Do employers know what community colleges can provide? (services, training) Need for greater outreach
- Programs' delivery methods (increase online, distance education opportunities)
- Do employers communicate their needs effectively? If not, how can we help?
- Collaboration – Make a conscious and unified investment in our workforce.

Question 4:

How can local, regional and state stakeholders facilitate connections between employers, students and faculty to:

- Better prepare the available workforce to meet the current and future needs of West Virginia and tri-state employers, and
- Be responsive to growth opportunities, and
- Attract new business to the state?

1. Find and determine “service learning opportunities” for students in the community. For example:
 - a. Boy Scouts have a commitment to and adult support for completing community service projects
 - b. Students in Free Enterprise “SIFE” – (students teaching students, peer mentors) do community surveys, etc.
2. Build a coalition among the various parties/stakeholders to create student activities using schools as a focal point and facility to house activities. (i.e. Engage youth in; government, education, business, industry, health care, etc.)
3. Conduct outreach to civic groups (Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis) and church groups as a base to discuss opportunities to create awareness as well as to create projects involving students and community.

Table Number: 2
Facilitator: Karen Bowling

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

1. Entitlement
 - A lack of work ethic – There is no model at home or parents won't give their children what they didn't have (for example, travel or higher education)
 - A lack of motivation - [Sometimes you have to leave your community or WV to find work]
2. K-12 Education
 - Students are not prepared after high school for higher education nor are they ready for work
 - There is not a system to match the needs of employers to individuals' levels of understanding and interest
3. Drugs

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia's educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- Coordinate better between higher education, K-12 and businesses in WV.
- Higher education and business should start earlier to discuss resources, opportunities, and needs.
- Find out what K-12 needs to teach for WV's labor force.
- Find out what K-12 is not teaching.
- Where is the guidance and counseling? Support K-12 schools by providing guidance and career counselors that focus on full year, full day work doing nothing but providing guidance and career counseling to students.
- Teach basic life skills in grades K-12.
- Drugs – Develop constructive community opportunities for children and youth so that their free time isn't spent finding and doing drugs.
- Implement mentorship programs that engage community members and educators with children and youth.
- Develop and support more substance abuse prevention and other assistance for youth.
- Our education, community and business system is what it is – we need innovation.

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

- Time
- Priorities – who sets them and what are they?
- Money – Small colleges, Community and Technical Colleges and nonprofits don't have large budgets
- The education system moves slowly. It is slow to adapt to needs of employers and businesses. It takes a year to develop a new program. CTCs are faster but still need equipment, etc.
- Higher education institutions and nonprofits may not feel they are in a position to take risks.

Question 4:

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- There are too many people and institutions doing the same thing. Consolidate services – Develop one regionalized school and one regionalized nonprofit with a focused mission.
 - Develop Direction and Focus – Hire a community liaison to serve as a communicator between higher education and business - to communicate what schools offer and match curriculum development and teaching to business needs.
 - Politics and the business climate make attracting business difficult.

Table Number: 3

Facilitator: Ruth Wylie
Recorder: Cindy Woodworth

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

- Substance abuse problems
- Workplace ethics
- Preparation for jobs which are not obvious
- Aging workforce – replacing retirees
- Expectations of salary – reluctance to start at a minimum wage
- Training time is ‘off the clock’ for employees – companies may pay employees, but not give release time
- Lack of role models for children and youth make it difficult to do effective ‘soft skills’ training
- Reluctance of WV residents to relocate for work or even drive a long distance
- Many WV residents lack confidence to take risks as entrepreneurs
- Single parents face challenges to keep a job after gaining skills and getting a job. There is a need for community support.
- Drug use
- Hopelessness and an attitude of having given up
- Acceptance of status quo
- Lack of road, water, sewer and technological infrastructure
- Feeling of entitlement, no role models, no motivation, kids not prepared to work
- Unrealistic expectations of job, income, and life demands by youth
- Unwillingness of many WV residents to relocate
- There is little emphasis on stressing value of education and preparing for a future
- There is little to no public transportation and there is a lack of reliable car ownership by many WV residents
- Many WV residents have no cell phone service
- Employers’ pay scales can’t compete with government services and supports. (There is a belief that it is more lucrative not to work)
- Money is moving out of coal mining. WV will need to replace opportunities for that workforce.
- There is a perceived or actual lack of employment opportunities.
- Education is perceived as a threat to the family in Appalachian culture. There is an unspoken belief that excelling in academics is a bad thing.
- West Virginians overall have poor health. This has a negative impact on our workforce.

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia’s educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- There is a territorial attitude around funding sources. We need to combine resources to create excellent marketing pieces. Partnerships are necessary to obtain many grants.
- Volunteerism could be more utilized and promoted as an entry into the workforce

- Teachers and counselors don't know what is going on in the industries in their areas
- Communication needs to take place on a regular basis about what is occurring in industry in order to plan for and know where the maximum number of students can be reached and trained.
- Relying on grants for funding is time consuming and decreases flexibility in education and nonprofits. There are constraints in carrying out grantor expectations expressed in funding guidelines.
- Leverage community resources to assist with workplace problems.
- Establish and implement mentoring programs.
- We, as West Virginians, need an attitude adjustment – we are each influential
- Commitment and follow through with training is needed.
- Early involvement with children connecting them to real work is essential.
- Take a holistic view of funding.
- Make connections with those who have an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Create awareness.
- Redefine mission of schools to emphasize citizenship and early engagement of students with real work and real workers across many industries.

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

- Employers may be turned off by competing schools – or perceive competition; competing for their time, attention, and resources
- Companies do their own internal training. Is there a duplication of efforts?
- We need to build in assurances of quality for all training.
- There may be a lack of commitment by employers to hire trainees.
- 'Soft skills' training is very challenging to document.
- How do we establish training requirements?
- Employers do not connect the dots
- Currently schools do not reach out to employers and employers do not reach out to schools.
- Do employers really know about schools' training programs? Do schools know about workforce needs?
- Retention of students and student completion of coursework is a challenge.

Question 4:

How can local, regional and state stakeholders facilitate connections between employers, students and faculty to:

- Better prepare the available workforce to meet the current and future needs of West Virginia and tri-state employers, and
 - Be responsive to growth opportunities, and
 - Attract new business to the state?
- Who: Parent involvement in encouraging and supporting student success is crucial
 - How: Parental facilitators are needed in all schools
It takes a village... connecting the value of school with Little League with church programs, with workplaces, etc.
 - Foster a global perspective of work and learning.
 - Place and emphasis on citizenship.
 - Engage businesses with children in camps. Increase the opportunities for children to get engaged.
 - Identify, cultivate and support service learning opportunities for youth.
 - Establish and implement wide-spread peer mentoring programming related to real work.
 - Use the SYTHE survey.

- Establish a position for a Community Liaison that functions as a communicator between businesses, the community and higher education.
- Increase communication. Identify, target, and create workforces for a variety of industries. Promote this communication and 'sell' positions through Economic Development Authorities.
- Focus on the employment and jobs macrocosm instead of the microcosm
- Broaden the scope of learning available to students of all ages.
- Offer a weekly/biweekly/monthly webinar for information about workforce employment and training opportunities and needs.
- Cultivate basic skills, including a positive attitude
 - Identify and implement a competency -based curriculum for training on 'soft skills'.
 - Teach for and cultivate emotional intelligence in students of all ages.
- Talk to the customer.
- Ask the same questions of job seekers (MD study). Include the question, 'Why not go to a community college?'
- Explore, document and address why employees are not promotable.
- How do we connect early home visiting child development programs such as Birth to Three and others with workforce development. (Talk with TEAM for WV's Children, Laurie McKeown)
- Promote getting involved to mentor children and youth.
- Promote Involvement of whole families.



Table Number: 4

Facilitator: Paul Daugherty

Recorder: Debra Elmore

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

1. Lack of reinvestments
2. Dwindling employment pool due to age or exodus
3. Perceived/actual lack of employment opportunities (Carolyn Long's comments)
 - Drug/substance abuse
 - Barriers to access financial knowledge/awareness/hope
 - Low participation of males in higher education

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia's educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- Promote local community leadership and ownership
- Commitment and follow-through to the training and empowerment of the employers
- Employers and education system set a priority to hire those with the credentials
- Long-term commitment

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

- Smaller employers are difficult to bring together due to time, financial or business commitments.

Question 4:

How can local, regional and state stakeholders facilitate connections between employers, students and faculty to:

- Better prepare the available workforce to meet the current and future needs of West Virginia and tri-state employers, and
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- Support communication
 - Promote networking
 - Regional: Identify the mutual goal (stakeholders); targeted industry(ies) – Identify the workforce – Pull in educational institutions (K-12 through higher ed) – Economic Development Authorities to “sell” (Communication and networking is key throughout)



Table Number: 5

Facilitator: John Norman
Recorder: Leighann Smigielski

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

1. Drugs
2. Work ethic/entitlement as a by-product of isolation and hopelessness
3. Stressing the value of education

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia's educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- Making sure that nonprofit organizations are included in the dialogue – not just social services
- Private/big business – building stronger relationships in smaller/rural areas including all people
- Making resources more readily available to those with an entrepreneurial spirit
 - Connections
 - Workshops

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

1. Misinformation
2. Lack of training for those who are entrepreneurial – specifically art
 - Not a priority
 - Mainly geared to those interested in working for established business – not self-employment
3. Lack of enrollment in training programs. With enrollment – there is a lack of retention.

Question 4:

How can local, regional and state stakeholders facilitate connections between employers, students and faculty to:

- Better prepare the available workforce to meet the current and future needs of West Virginia and tri-state employers, and
- Be responsive to growth opportunities, and
- Attract new business to the state
 - Ensure the WV workforce has life management skills.

Table Number: 6

Facilitator: Joan Reed
Recorder: Connie Saunders

Question 1:

As a table, what do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing workforce development efforts in southern West Virginia?

1. Drugs – prescription drugs
2. Transportation – buses
3. Communication – land lines gone/disconnected; no minutes/phone turned off; change numbers from carriers to carriers; no cell coverage
4. Unemployment benefits - become accustomed to services – how do they leave the system? Employer's wages cannot compete with government services and supports. Government services and supports are perceived as more lucrative than career wages.

Question 2:

How can we leverage West Virginia's educational, business and community resources to support workforce readiness in the state while creating a sustainable labor force?

- Address the need for employees to have a positive attitude through training. Attitude determines your altitude.
- Cultivate a strong work ethic.
- Take advantage of the opportunity (the employer or educator) to influence the future workforce
- Educate realistically – not everyone needs to get a college degree – set an example to your employers or students.
- Don't walk through life wearing two catcher's mitts
- Provide diversity and options in education and skills development.
- Influence employees and students to be involved in the community – give back.

Question 3:

Although community and technical colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, what do you see as some of the barriers to effective collaboration between employers and community colleges?

- Colleges think employers have time to talk to college students
- FTE – Challenge. Look at funding that is coming in. Accept funding for only high-demand occupations.
- Do students review and explore high demand occupations? Students are the schools' customer. They should get the training they wish to have.

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- Identify our niche
- Cultivate, within students, the willingness and flexibility to relocate for employment.
- Are the opportunities local or somewhere else?
- Get employers, colleges and students together for a community event to share how they can work together under one roof. Ask Chamber of Commerce or Economic Development Authorities(EDA) to host an event – a SUMMIT.
- Chambers and EDA should work together to attract new business.