



Workforce Working Group

TELECONFERENCE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2004 ♦ 10:00 – 11:30 AM EST

Meeting Summary

Linda Cooke began the meeting at 10:00 a.m. by welcoming everyone and asking for self-introductions.

Andra Cornelius then reviewed the discussion items developed at the first meeting on December 2, 2003:

- I. **RESOURCE MATERIALS** – Develop a standard education package for economic developers and manufacturers regarding incentives, training and other programs available to Florida manufacturers.

It was suggested that regional workforce board business liaisons (aka employer representatives) also be included for receipt of the education package. The addition of testimonials from businesses, specifically manufacturers, which have benefited from state/local incentives, training or other programs was also suggested.

- II. **UTILIZE RETIREES AS A RESOURCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES** – Develop a plan to utilize retired skilled workers as resources for small businesses (the majority of Florida's businesses). Retirees could provide mentoring, training, and/or fill experienced positions.

Ms. Cooke shared that in her business, she uses two paid retirees on the manufacturing floor and finds them quite valuable. Both paid and volunteer retirees should be utilized. Retirees can be used both as mentors and trainers. Discussion ensued regarding how to track/find these individuals. Suggestions included utilizing established groups like Service Corporations of Retired Executives (SCORE) and to consider the use of specialized recruitment efforts used in Florida or other states. A repository needs to be developed with listings of retirees and on-line skills matching system could be built using existing technology. In the short-term, a web crawler built on existing platforms might be most expeditious to gain access to this skilled population.

Mr. Steve Mayberry, Enterprise Florida, was asked about the availability of using the FMAC Public Relations subcommittee to assist in this endeavor. Mr. Mayberry explained the focus of the PR subcommittee was to improve the image of manufacturing and economic impact in Florida, but they may be able to offer some assistance in helping us look for models.

- III. **BETTER UTILIZATION OF GOVERNMENT TRAINING FUNDS** – Invest in more “business related” training (e.g., teamwork, communication skills, entrepreneurship, problem solving) at the K-20 level versus welfare to work programs. If we train them in school we will not have to use taxpayers' money to train them again.

General discussion reiterated that Florida students need to be exposed to business/manufacturing. The target group should be K-12, rather than K-20. Ms. Cornelius shared with the work group a best practice established in Okaloosa County, as shared with Workforce Florida's First Jobs/First Wages Council and other agencies at a recent meeting in Tallahassee. The Okaloosa County School Board Superintendent, Don Gaetz, has established the CHOICE program (Community High-Okaloosa Institutes for Career Education). [Information on the program is attached. Mr. Gaetz's recommendations to the Florida Legislature to further enable these creative partnerships are also included in the attachment.] Related to the notion of obtaining work ready job candidates, Ms. Cornelius shared information on a national pilot project in which Workforce Florida is participating to develop a work readiness credential. Ms. Cooke asked for this information to be made a part of this summary. Additional information on the work readiness credential pilot is attached.

- IV. TARGETED MARKETING TO STUDENTS/START TRAINING AT K-12 LEVEL –
Develop a marketing campaign targeted to high school students that informs them of the benefits the manufacturing industry has to offer: tuition reimbursement, benefits (health, 401K, ESOP, et al), and job availability (wide variety).

Discussion revolved around ways to accomplish this task as well as issues V. and VI. following below. Students and parents need to be provided information that manufacturing jobs are high-paying jobs. Heather Lockland with the EDC of Florida's Space Coast shared information about the interactive video used in Brevard County to expose students to the world of manufacturing work. Ms. Cooke asked if she would share the video with members of the work group. It was asked if data is available regarding manufacturing wages in Florida. Ms. Cornelius stated that Workforce Florida, through the Agency for Workforce Innovation, has access to this occupational wage information. She also offered to contact Phyllis Eisen with the National Association of Manufacturers to determine other sources of student career exposure materials. It was discussed that a team should be formed to further discuss promotional recruiting, to identify the types of occupations in Florida's manufacturing industry, Florida-specific wages in the manufacturing industry, in-house training programs offered to employees, and the most common training requirements of Florida manufacturers. Discussion was held on the need for a survey of the FMAC to undercover information related to training needs (e.g., specific skill sets) and existing in-house training programs. Staff agreed to assist with the construction of such a survey. The draft survey should be introduced to the other FMAC subcommittees by Ms. Cooke on January 28th before distribution, in the event that other subcommittees may also be suggesting a survey, thus avoiding multiple or duplicative surveys.

- V. OFFER SPECIALIZED TRAINING AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL, THROUGH VO-TECH AND/OR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS.

Members discussed the great need for this type of training. Mr. Jim Davis, Dictaphone, shared that soft skills are particularly lacking and that vocational programs for electronic technicians have become virtually non-existent.

- VI. DEFINED MANUFACTURING SKILL SETS – Have manufacturers define what types of

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skill sets or training needs they will be looking for in their workforce over the next five to ten years. This information can be used to develop appropriate education/training programs.

The next meeting of the workforce subcommittee was tentatively scheduled for either February 2nd or 3rd. Members were asked to consult their calendars and let staff know their date preference.

The meeting ended at 11:45 a.m.

A. Summary of Remarks from Okaloosa County School Superintendent Don Gaetz and the CHOICE Program

As the first non-educator to serve as the Okaloosa County Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Gaetz shared a number of experiences and core beliefs with youth partners. His presentation focused primarily on his efforts to implement a new approach to developing “quality career technical programs tied to diverse economic sectors with growth potential.”

Named CHOICE (Community High – Okaloosa Institutes of Career Education), the program establishes institutes (rather than new career technical schools) that grant regular state diplomas but also award industry certifications and allow students the opportunity to earn university or college credits while in high school at no extra cost. All students will have apprenticeships that help them develop skills and good work ethics. Over the next several years, six different institutes are planned, each based on a partnership between the public school system, universities, and employers. The six institutes will focus on: health sciences, engineering, aerospace, information technology, construction technology, and hospitality/tourism. Gaetz’s goal is to decentralize career-technical programs, use existing spaces, and leverage resources from industry. Prior to launching the program, Gaetz worked with the University of West Florida to survey employers and families to determine the effectiveness of traditional vocational education. These researches, and other steps, were taken with the purpose of preemptively addressing problematic issues and concerns that might be raised by detractors later.

While the program is too new to gauge results, Gaetz reports that some achievements can already be seen. Six high school principals have signed a “covenant” that they will work together and “share” students. In addition, the program will be cash positive with 800 students involved, and currently 1,000 students have signed expression of interest statements.

Finally, Gaetz identified three things that the legislature could do to support this new approach:

1. Give K-12 systems and universities willing to partner in this program maximum flexibility to work together;
2. Make it easier for experienced business and industry workers and executives with subject area expertise to teach with adjunct faculty certification; and
3. Consider tax incentives for companies willing to provide classroom space, technical instruction, apprenticeships, or internships.

B. Information on the Work Readiness Credential – National Institute for Literacy

Purpose:

- To develop a new, computer administered tool to certify that individuals have the skills to be successful in entry-level work.
- To achieve consensus among business people and other key stakeholders on what “work readiness” means. Being certified as “*Work Ready*” would mean the same thing statewide and nationwide. This is critical to ensure the workforce system communicates a consistent message to all Florida business.

It will:

- Define, measure, and certify that jobseekers have the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to succeed in entry-level work in the 21st Century workplace.
- These basic abilities—thinking skills, work ethics, basic competencies—are determined by business (from a wide array of industries) for business use.

For Employers:

- Access to a pool of qualified, job-ready candidates
- Accessible tool to streamline hiring
- Reduced hiring costs
- Legally defensible
- Affordable

For Job Seekers:

- A portable, nationally recognized credential that signals the entry-level jobseeker has the core competencies needed in today's workplace.

State Partners thus far: Florida, New Jersey, New York and Washington

[Additional State Partners are pending]

National Business Partners thus far: National Retail Federation, National Association of Manufacturers and U.S. Chamber of Commerce

[Additional Business Business Partners are pending]

Delivery system will be in place by June 2005.

Employers from five of Florida's 24 regional workforce boards are engaged in the project.