

M E M O R A N U M

TO: Western Virginia Workforce Development Board Members
FROM: Doloris Vest
DATE: June 1, 2010
RE: Summary of Board member survey

In February 2010, Western Virginia Workforce Development Board members were asked to complete a survey about the board's current role and future direction. Fifty-eight (58) percent of board members responded (14 of 24). Among the results were"

- A majority of respondents thought the workforce board should be the driving force in workforce development in the region; one third thought that it currently plays that role.
- The board's major challenges are it is too little know and a lack of resources
- The highest priority is coordination of efforts among major workforce partners

The survey results and respondents' comments are attached.

Board member survey
Response Summary

INTRO

1. In our region (Allegheny Highlands, Roanoke Valley, Franklin County), who IS THE DRIVING FORCE in creating and ensuring we have a trained workforce for today and the future?

a. Workforce development board	35.70%
b. Economic development organizations	42.90%
c. Government	28.60%
d. Community colleges	50.00%
e. Other education and training providers	14.30%
f. Other (please specify)	21.40%
• corporations	
• Goodwill Industries	
• No driving force	

2. If you did not select the Workforce Board as a leader in workforce development, do you think the board SHOULD lead workforce development efforts in the area? Why or Why not?

Yes	57.10%
No	42.90%

Why or Why not?

- corporations and educators should lead collaboratively
- I think we should look workforce development as a collaborative venture. Every entity has a role to play and the Board is the facilitator.
- In my opinion the WDB is tasked with being the leader in coordinating efforts to build a better trained and job-ready workforce. Therefore, I would call that the "driving force".
- The board has the ability to direct fed dollars to a small segment of the valley
- Must have a broader scope with less handcuffs
- Government controls funding. Board turnover prevents strength from the WIB. When one learns more, they rotate off.
- I think the entire approach to workforce development needs to be reevaluated. Until it is reconstructed, gains consensus across and is potentially merged with all of those entities listed in question #1, and is funded by those entities, I don't see workforce development in the greater region ever reaching its full potential.
- The board's reason for being is to administer WIA funds in an area. WIA funds are only a small part of the overall workforce development effort. The board contributes to the effort by bringing business involvement in the process but does not have the lead role.
- There is a leadership void. We have the centers, the data and tools to make it happen.
- It has to be a team effort. Econ Deve[lopment] organizations attract, WIB trains

3. What are the BIGGEST CHALLENGES facing organizations dealing with workforce development?

	Workforce Board	Workforce Partners	Economic Development	Government	Educational Institutions
a. Understanding what workforce development is and is not	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%	81.8%	36.4%
b. Understanding the quality and abilities of existing workforce	50.0%	50.0%	80.0%	70.0%	30.0%
c. Understanding where the workforce needs to be in the future	66.7%	58.3%	41.7%	50.0%	41.7%
d. understanding the resources currently available	45.5%	27.3%	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%
e. Understanding what resources are needed	46.2%	46.2%	38.5%	53.8%	46.2%

Comments:

- We need a Board and Executive that see this as a partnership that work together to best benefit those that we serve.
- Most don't realize when WIB funds can and cannot be used. Most also don't realize how long it can take to upgrade skills if someone is low literacy. Transportation and financial aid still remain a barrier.

4. Rate what priority the workforce board should give each of the following:

	Low priority		High Priority			Rating
a. Area wide policy and guidance	0.0%	15.4%	15.4%	30.8%	38.5%	3.92
b. Operating WIA programs	7.7%	7.7%	15.4%	15.4%	53.8%	4
c. Operating Workforce Centers	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%	15.4%	46.2%	3.69
d. Coordination of workforce efforts among major organizations	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	7.7%	69.2%	4.38
e. Developing new programs	0.0%	7.7%	23.1%	46.2%	23.1%	3.85
f. Developing financial and other resources for programs and services	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	38.5%	53.8%	4.46

Comments:

- We need to have an Executive that looks at the big picture and allows the providers, training organizations, the centers to do their job without interference.
- With the budget issues, services are in a critical state right now, unless McDonald's budget changes when it comes to a vote. Grants and other funding resources must be secured.

5. What do you see as challenges to the board being a successful leader for area workforce efforts?

a. Lack of resources	61.50%
b. Too little known and understood	84.60%
c. Lack of authority	46.20%
d. Other (please specify)	38.50%

- The Board needs a strong Executive that can bring the organizations together working as a change agent to bring better community awareness and support.
- Until the economy rebounds and more jobs are created the Board's best intentions and efforts will more often meet with less than desired outcomes.
- Lack of local government direction and confidence
- Some business members are clueless to the barriers some customers face.
- Lack of consensus!
- Lack of vision

6. What can the workforce development board do to ensure a well-trained, well-paid workforce that meets the current needs of business and will help attract new business?

- enhance existing programs and collaborate to develop new programs
- Many people in our community are becoming close to unemployable because they do not have both the hard skills and soft skills needed by employers. This group of citizens, maybe 25% or more, are in danger of becoming "obsolete." There must be a better match of persons with the ability to learn new skills with the training programs available, all driven by needs clearly defined by local employers.
- The Board needs to be better trained and informed of the key issues. Communication is lacking at times and the information that the Board receives is not timely. We can better retain and attract business if we understand their business needs and are more aware of the workforce environment.
- work more with providers
- educate area business leaders on what the board is and how they can educate the board in what their workforce needs for the future are.
- Press for standards that actually reward effort and commitment. For example, if a person works to get a GED or completes training and/or apprenticeship programs then they should have a reasonable expectation of securing employment that pays more than minimum wage. An employer who receives the benefit of this effort or one that is awarded a government contract should pay a living wage with benefits.
- Accumulate data from business and government input that will direct skill set needs for the jobs expected in the next ten years
- Financial benefits to clients should be sanctioned if they don't meet their part of the agreement-- attending class, satisfactory grades, etc... They should also be required to "work" as a work study to earn the money they receive for training.

- Meet with all stakeholders (Local ED, Regional ED, Chambers, Community Colleges, governments, key community leaders) to reinvent the approach needed to be effective and relevant. Then construct a plan of work (including how to be funded = create a foundation perhaps) and present to WIB officials at state level to consider. If new approach is not acceptable, then work within constraints as a subset to the new approach regardless.
- Take a pro-active role to make sure the business/private sector viewpoint regarding what is needed in the local area is heard by all others involved in the workforce development effort
- Stay on top of all current demand, issues.
- Good question!
- Keep communication going between all organizations listed previously in this survey

7. What skills do you see missing in your current or potential workforce?

	Percent
a. Soft/Workplace readiness skills	100.00%
b. Basic Skills (math, reading etc.)	75.00%
c. Basic technology skills (computer literacy etc.)	75.00%
d. Specific occupational or industry-related skills	58.30%
e. Ability and/or willingness to grow in their occupation, organization or industry (career ladders)	33.30%
f. Other (please specify)	33.30%

- Customer service, communication skills, flexibility
- Financial management, definitely soft skills
- Trade skills
- Older workers possess 2 & 4 above. The young lack 1, 2, 4 and 5 above

8. What workforce long term issues and challenges do you think will impact workforce development in the next 2 to 10 years

- higher retirement rates
- Obsolete skills of an aging workforce. Technology will continue to play a major role in all jobs and a focus should be given to drive skills to higher competency level.
- Continuing economic conditions negatively impact the need for new positions and individuals are hanging on to any position they have. Working closely with those in position to bring in new products/services into the area will impact the future of our workforce and will show us where to place priorities.
- ability to adapt
- One of the biggest challenges is the revenue shortfall that is leading to the drastic and desperate proposals coming out of Richmond these days. Without revenue the Commonwealth and the Federal

government cannot address the infrastructure problems we're facing as one example. If the finances were available to address this need then many workers would be employed which in turn would lead to more job creation.

- Data is needed to direct efforts in creating skill sets that will be needed for economic development in the next ten years
- Declining budgets, fewer people to accomplish the task, more clients who want to ride the system (UI) instead of taking a job they don't want until they can find one.
- Our government and workforce-oriented (and economic development-oriented) organizations inability to comprehend that WE are on our own and need to self-fund our efforts to improve. Federal and State funds are shrinking and too restrictive, so we need to have control over our own sources of funding to be effective. Without this understanding that we must do this on our own and by ourselves it will never be done well.
- Funding shortfalls will affect employment and training providers at all levels including the public school systems. The effects of the recession will continue to be felt long-term. Many of jobs being lost now will never return and employers will be more cautious about expanding in the short-term.
- Retraining to new skills and dealing with less overall employment
- Shortage of qualified people that want to work.
- The US doesn't manufacture any more. We must reverse that.

9. Please share any other thoughts, comments, concerns or suggestions not discussed above

- Refer to my earlier response regarding supply and demand of job skills.
- I think that the Board can be more effective if all the members are more prepared. They can rise to the occasion in an environment that is more open and inclusive. I want to be involved at the Board level and at present it seems that many of the members we are not fully engaged. We need to improve in their development and training on the issues.
- Having referenced it above, the drastic budget cuts will lead to more people needing the services of the WDB and its partners. We need to brace ourselves and prepare for the worst.
- Board membership needs to be strengthened and directed by the vision of the governments served
- With waning budgets, we need to depend more on distance learning options, go to meetings, etc... both for Board meetings, customer services (less gas money to travel), etc... Benefits should be linked to "working", OJT, work study programs, etc... Customers need to be accountable and work for benefits.