

**Western Virginia Workforce Development Board  
Retreat Notes  
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## **Purpose**

The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board met at the Higher Ed Center on an icy December 7, 2007 for a planning retreat. The purpose of the meeting was to set the agenda for the next 18 months (through June 2009) by identifying the issues and actions that will best support the organization's vision.

## **Vision** *(as established by the Board in 2004)*

**To cultivate a dynamic workforce development system that stimulates economic development in Virginia's Local Workforce Investment Area III (the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem, and the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin and Roanoke)**

## **Participants**

In attendance were:

- ◆ Joyce Kessinger, Boxley Materials Company (*Vice Chairperson*)
- ◆ Tim Tobin, Alleghany Regional Hospital (*Secretary/Treasurer*)
- ◆ Wayne Flippen, John C. Nordt Company (*Immediate Past Chair*)
- ◆ Barbara Winstead, Five Star Personal Chef Service
- ◆ Jane Conlin, City of Roanoke
- ◆ Lew Bishop, National College
- ◆ Carroll Gentry, Virginia Western Community College, retired
- ◆ Roger Johnson, Roanoke County Schools
- ◆ Paul Paradzinski, U.S. Forestry Service, retired
- ◆ Melody Stoval, Roanoke Redevelopment & Housing Authority
- ◆ Bruce Johannessen, VEC
- ◆ Kathy Hodges, Franklin County Workforce Development Consortium
- ◆ Doloris Vest, Western Virginia Workforce Development Board

## **Executive Summary**

The Board believes that to deliver on the Vision of the organization it needs to evolve from a body focused largely on Operational Issues to one more engaged in developing initiatives that will contribute to economic development in the region.

There were three aspects that were discussed and determined to be critical to that process:

- Improve the image of Career and Technical Education programs in the region by looking at creative and effective ways to engage students and adults;
- Determine how we should focus our future offerings so they support the needs and ongoing efforts of other economic development organizations in the region;
- Develop a plan for additional funding, if necessary, to deliver those initiatives.

At the end of the meeting, it was agreed to form three ad hoc committees that will be responsible for taking the discussion points from the retreat and forming recommendations for implementation that will be presented to the entire Board for approval by the April Board Meeting.

The following pages will capture the highlights of the discussions in each of those three areas:

- Career and Technical Education – [page 4](#)
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## **Career and Technical Education**

***Issue: Improve the image of Career and Technical Education programs in the region by looking at creative and effective ways to engage students and adults.***

Roger Johnson with Roanoke County Schools presented some context for this discussion and posed some possible directions for consideration.

### **Background**

We are in a tight job market, which will worsen as a result of the aging baby boomers leaving the workforce. More workers are and will continue to be needed in the trades; however parents don't want to hear that "college is not for everyone". Consequently, there is a stigma attached to encouraging students to pursue career and technical education and what we're doing and have been doing as a school system, as a workforce development system and as a society is not changing that attitude.

Adding to the "image problem" is the location of many of the Tech Centers. Students don't want to go special tech schools which some consider places where kids go who don't fit in at a "regular" school. Rather, it would be preferable to have tech centers in all the schools and those classes available and encouraged as part of the regular curriculum.

### **Options**

In looking at how this Board could focus its efforts to address this issue, several possible approaches were suggested through the discussions...

- Look at what they are already doing in Franklin County, since they have been successful with their approach/partnership with their education partners.
- Identify the demand occupations and explore a partnership campaign with those occupations to increase interest, awareness and training.
- Bring all the partners together who have a vested interest in this topic to share information and begin a dialogue.
- Conduct focus group meetings with local business owners.
- Develop an outreach program targeted to those floundering after high school/community college. Perhaps develop a recruiting program similar to that used by the military to increase awareness and sell the benefits.
- Clean up the image of the professions. Work with several targeted in-demand trades who have "less than professional" images to clean it up through a local "industry-wide" focused effort and PR campaign. Could include media and in-school educational talks.
- Create a Business Expo targeted to high school students to showcase the opportunities in CTE.
- Work with Community Colleges to get Career Coaches to help follow-up with interest from the Expo and to help students find their passion.

## **Economic Development**

***Issue: Determine how we should focus our future offerings so they support the needs and ongoing efforts of other economic development organizations in the region***

Doloris Vest presented some context for this discussion and posed some possible directions for consideration.

### **Background**

To attract new business we need a pool of appropriately trained individuals. A snapshot of our workforce right now shows...

- Unemployed (Have skills/can't find job) - 3.75% or 5,405 people
- Underemployed (Have skills/don't match needs) - 7.85% or 12,659 people
- Never employed (Don't have entry-level skills)

Obviously, there is a need for a significant pool of appropriately trained workers to attract companies to our region.

When this Board met in April, 2005 it set three goals in the area of economic development:

1. Develop a seamless partnership, formalized and coordinated with economic development organizations;
2. Be the information source on local workforce resources;
3. Have and maintain appealing and attractive physical sites for "show and tell" to prospective businesses.

The Action Plan developed to achieve these goals met with mixed results, as outlined below...

Recommended Actions	Status
Restructure the CLEO to align with ED Partnership Board	Attempted
Develop an annual event that brings together WIB, ED, businesses, etc.	Not addressed
Develop an annual report on DVD or CD Rom that describes resources and the WIB as the place for information for job seekers and for companies considering locating here.	2005
Link our website to VEC/LMI data. Include information about how to use that data.	In progress
Distribute good news and information	Limited
Create one big, beautiful workforce center that eliminates duplication and maximizes collaboration and is efficient and effective.	Started?

Several factors impacted what we accomplished. Reduced funding, reformatting the Board, and lack of cooperation by the CLEO hampered some of our efforts. **What is the role of workforce development today as it relates to Economic development?**

- What can we do?
- How can we have a stronger voice in the regional strategy?

### **Partner with other ED Organizations**

Right now, there is no comprehensive effort by all economic development partners to address the issue of having an appropriately trained workforce. The landscape is changing at the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership. It will have a new CEO, a new structure and a new focus. Rob Ledger, Director of Business Development at the Partnership is on our workforce Board.

Examples of successful partnerships can be found...

- Region 2000
- Macon, GA (Joint WIB-ED workforce analysis project)
- Santa Cruz, CA (WIB serves as CEDS committee)
- Anaheim, CA (WIB operates Small Business Assistance Center)

The Board felt that in order to begin creating synergy with the various groups working on this issue, it's important to know who they are and what their focus is. They suggested that we:

- Identify all groups involved in Economic Development (including education, chambers, and the non-profit resource board), as well as the Regional Economic Development Committee. Also, get a list of board members for each of these organizations to see who is involved in workforce issues through multiple affiliations. Doloris Vest will be responsible for creating that inventory list;
- Prioritize those with a natural tie-in to workforce development;
- Doloris and board members to meet with them one-on-one to explain what we do and how that can help them; find out what they need and what opportunities exist for synergy (similar to the Region 2000 model).

This could become the model for a bigger, ongoing conversation with key stakeholders in this issue. It was also suggested that we look into a joint meeting with the Executive Committees of both the WDB and the RVEDP when the new leadership is in place.

### **Signature Event**

One other suggestion was for the WDB to sponsor an annual signature event that demonstrates leadership on this critical issue. To be successful, this event should

- Be educational (present recent economic and employment data that is interpreted to our region)
- Include businesses, government, and other interested parties
- Have value
- Present in conjunction with other agencies, like the Partnership, to ensure reaching the biggest possible audience, and look at securing sponsorships to be able to attract a big name speaker in the field.

### **In addition to forming a closer alliance with other organizations, there are also specific programs we could develop...**

- Look at funding master technical level programs to move workers up the ladder, thus opening up spots at lower levels
- Look at creating endowments
- Help the loophole students through scholarships and loans, with the proviso that they could have their loan forgiven if they work in the region in their field for x number of years.
- Internships (similar to those offered by Southern Air)
- Marketing initiatives (i.e. Race to GED campaign)
- Focus efforts on local homegrown businesses with roots here vs. national or international companies

Finally, once we determine what the needs are, we should review how we use the funds we have now. Some options include...

- Refocusing the emphasis of WIA programs. Currently our programs serve the “hard-to-serve” (largest audience) vs. supporting economic development efforts (focus on demand occupations).
- Re-evaluate how we use the existing funds (change how we do the current programs to focus on workplace readiness; focus on specific industries; change the balance between adult and dislocated worker services so we can pool our resources to have more impact.)
- Find additional resources/funding by looking at public/private partnerships such as Career Lattices, which brings us to the last issue...

## **Alternative Funding**

*Issue: With ongoing federal WIA funding reductions, more funding is needed just to maintain current service levels, with additional dollars necessary to expand our impact (CTE and Economic Development). We need to develop a plan and funding to deliver those initiatives.*

Kathy Hodges is the Director of the Franklin County Workforce Development Consortium. The Franklin Center does not exist solely with one funding source. It is a collaborative effort, including financial support, from a variety of organizations that understand the need and the benefits of working together. The Franklin Center does special events, education programs, launched a Capital Campaign, uses grant money and does fees for services. She shared her experience and recommendations on what's available for alternative funding.

## **Grants**

While there are a number of grants available, Kathy cautioned that you focus on the following key points...

- Need to be a 501(c)3
- Need to be able to define target goals for your organization
- Have a better chance if you apply for a grant with a regional focus
- Get on the key list serves (especially the Dept. Of Labor) to learn about what's available
- Must be able to prove sustainability
- Must be able to document success
- Suggests you need a grant writer, not only to write the grant, but to manage it

## **Public/Private Partnerships**

Kathy shared how the capital campaign in Franklin County resulted in a video conferencing facility that is available to sponsors, and is a fee for service opportunity. Those partnerships could also fund tuition for community college classes in the marketable trades and fields.

## **Next Steps**

The group agreed that it is critical for the Board step up and take a more pro-active role in workforce development. They agreed that the key areas that were discussed at retreat are where their focus needs to be. The next step in moving this forward is for smaller groups to work together on each of the three issues to make a recommendation as to what initiatives the Board should support over the next 18 months.

To that end, the following ad hoc committees were formed. They are as follows:

### **Economic Development**

Rob Ledger, Chair  
Tim Tobin, Co-Chair  
Wayne Flippen  
Kathy Hodges  
Jane Conlin

### **CTE**

Roger Johnson, Chair  
Bruce Johannessen, Co-Chair  
Melody Stoval  
Joyce Kessinger  
Joe Brinley  
Walter Harper  
Barbara Winstead  
Carroll Gentry

### **Fundraising**

Kathy Hodges, Chair  
Bill Jones, Co-chair  
Lew Bishop  
Carroll Gentry  
Paul Paradzinski

It was agreed that it did not make sense for the Fundraising Committee to meet until the Board considered the recommendations of the other two committees and identified and agreed on the projects that will best support the vision. Then the Fundraising Committee will meet to determine the best options for funding them.

The Economic Development and CTE Committees are to have their first meetings no later than January 31 and are to present their recommendations to the full board at the April Board meeting.