Southern California Regional Focus Group

July 25, 2012

Rancho Community College District, District Operations Center
2323 N. Broadway
Santa Ana, CA

MEETING SUMMARY

The Southern California Regional Focus Group was the last of three held in July 2012. The purpose was to get consensus on common goals for the workforce system that are both actionable and achievable as well as solicit specific action steps for the state. In total, 50 participants attended the focus group. The participants, who were recommended by Local Workforce Investment Board Directors, represent the region's workforce and economic development, Labor, K-12 Adult Education, Community Colleges, Apprenticeships, and Non-Profits (*See July 25 Attendee document*).

Tim Rainey, Executive Director of the California Workforce Investment Board (State Board), introduced the broad outline of a shared vision based on good regional practices emerging throughout the state (*See Power Point presentation*). This vision and draft goals were developed by a working group of state partners (*See State Working Group document*). To facilitate input and response to the goals developed by the State Working Group, Tim introduced Sharon Huntsman.

The outcomes of the facilitated discussion were as follows:

Strengths

Overall Plan - Just having a plan is important. The plan has strong common goals and is clearly stated. It avoids duplication and works to leverage resources towards a common vision. It envisions an integrated strategy that combines resources and aligns workforce partners and the business community.

Youth – The plan recognizes career readiness needs, gaps between education and business, and calls out disconnected youth as a priority

Regional Focus – The plan supports regional coordination and alignment. It is designed around two-way communications between the regions and the state and engages all system partners.

Sector-Based Pathways – The plan focuses on high value industry needs and requires deep engagement with sectors. The pathways pay attention to the entire spectrum of clients including incumbent workers and consist of multiple entrance and exit points.

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Weaknesses/Concerns/Other Issues Raised

Overall - This looks good on paper but will be hard to implement. Unsure about whether the legislature or the administration can respond to the variations in regions. There is "no teeth" in the plan requiring LWIB alignment. The plan needs to spell out the tangible benefits to regions. It lacks a fiscal contribution from partners into the system (i.e. HHS).

Service Integration – The plan doesn't address how to improve service integration and more effectively leverage resources. All state partners function independently and therefore regional partners are constrained by the siloed focus of state partner agencies.

Regional Alliances – Who will lead the regional alliances? Will there be funding to do so? This takes time, money and an investment of energy.

Stakeholder Engagement – Not enough industry and employer (small and large) engagement in the plan development. Non-profits, private sector providers and others stakeholders should be involved. Also, CSU has a role in short-term advanced training. Need to more effectively engage with labor.

Best Practices – Process for sharing best practices is missing. The plan should address the use of technology and best practices to disseminate information.

Stackable Credentials – The implementation of stackable credentials is cumbersome. They are difficult to create and obtain program approval. It is also a challenge to keep up with industry needs and engage high demand and emerging industries stakeholders. A credential-related focus could eliminate other programs that lead to a job. Are we sure that credentials will lead to employment?

Accountability – The plan needs to ensure alignment of system goals to what individual agencies are accountable for. There needs to be a stronger connection between outcomes and funding. The state needs to capture contributions that are not reflected in the WIA performance measures. Data collection and sharing is difficult.

Target Populations – The plan lacks the specificity on how to respond to the diverse needs of diverse populations. There needs to be a greater emphasis on out-of-school youth, disabled, veterans, and dislocated workers.

Economic Development – There are no state incentives to retain employers (i.e., Red Team).

State Actions:

- ETPL – Ensure that all accredited education programs (CCC, adult ed, ROP, apprenticeship) are automatically on the ETPL list.
- Lead a state level conversation with business and industry to develop industry recognized credentials in high demand fields.

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- Include CSU & UC in state working group.
- Develop a focused strategy on re-employment for public sector layoffs (i.e., teachers)
- Identify industries where there will be baby boom attrition and work to prepare a pipeline for these industries/jobs.
- Focus resources on one particular issue in on region and document lessons learned.
- Work closely with state and federal elected officials. Brief state officials on state plan to help ensure program alignment. Work with feds to "loosen" WIA requirements or get similar provisions in reauthorized legislation.
- Protect programs like AEP, CTE, ROC/P.
- Focus on reemployment and skill development for veterans.
- Create an ombudsperson to receive input on specific obstacles that they can then bring to the state team to get interagency cooperation on addressing the issue.
- Develop a report that measures all customers actually served through universal access and by partners.
- Count CCC education/training that does not meet 12-unit threshold.
- Develop measures around co-location.
- Create sector intermediaries at the state level to guide regions in their sector work. Provide funds for regional intermediaries.
- Create a youth working group at the CWIB to support regional youth work.
- Promote/market the work of the system.
- Allow tips to be included as part of the placement wage – impacts hospitality placements.
- Engage the private sector in the state team. Include both large and small business.
- Identify target populations and mandate (not encourage) regional partnerships to work with these populations.
- Develop a strategy around entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Hold CWIB meeting at locations throughout the state, not just in Sacramento.
- Help regions buy, market and "roll out" work-readiness tools.

Regional expertise is essential in the development of a State Strategic Workforce Investment Plan (State Plan). The concrete input received regarding shared vision, strategy, and goals, along with a number of good suggestions on immediate, short-term steps the state can take, will help support the ongoing efforts of regional partners in meeting their workforce and economic development needs. We will integrate the input and suggestions from Southern California along with those from other regional focus groups and the State Working Group in the development of the State Plan.

The Strategic Workforce Investment Plan will outline the vision and goals for the next five years, but the plan itself will be a living document capable of being amended to reflect the needs of regional workforce and economic partners. To that end, we ask that participants from this focus group notify State Board staff if we have missed any important points in this meeting summary or if in reviewing this summary, of any new thoughts that come to mind. Please contact us by email at CWIBInfo@cwib.ca.gov.