

OCL brainstorming meeting, Feb. 4, 2014

Meeting held at Gifford Foundation, 126 N. Salina Street, Syracuse

Co-chair: Barbara Carranti

Attendees: Kimberly Armani, Patty Bevans, Laurie Black, James Branche, Ginny Carmody, Jessica Cohen, Casey Crabill, Jeff Craig, Karen DeJarnette, Marion Ervin, Suzanne Gilmour, Carol Hill, Heidi Holtz, Howie Hollander, Phil Jakes-Johnson, Ava Kerznowski, Robert Leslie, Jenn Locke, Phil Mazza, Cathleen McColgin, Sarah Merrick, Laura Miller, Brian Nolan, Tim Penix, Dominic Robinson, Lenore Sealy, Olive Sephuma, Jai Subedi, Mary Thompson, Elaine Walter

OCL: Sandra Barrett and Renée K. Gadoua

Goal: Identify focus and relevant issues of 2014 study on the employment skills gap.

Group addressed these questions:

A. What do we mean by employee skills gap?

Many gaps exist.

Gap can refer to career path and progression.

Do changes and training opportunities fill needs?

Employers say they can't find people for jobs.

Disconnect between people and employers.

Limited education and skills.

Low literacy either because of poverty, etc, or refugee status.

Soft skills: teamwork, getting along with a group, following directions, ability to learn, problem-solving

Many children are already behind by kindergarten and will be behind their whole lives.

(A call for universal pre-k and pre-school emotional/social training?)

Cultural competency.

Living wage/reasonable compensation.

Work readiness/soft skills.

Lack of industry-specific skills.

Mismatch between employer's expectations and what employee expects to do.

Inappropriate job paths for refugees to transfer skills to new community

Term itself is nebulous and needs clear definition.

B. How do we know that we have one?

Lack of connection between layoffs and available jobs.

Lies with employers.

Persistent unmet job demands and high turnover.

Persistent unemployment (what are the trends/what industries in employment stats?)

Restricted labor growth due to low labor capacity.

Low pay exacerbates problem.

Refugee experience highlights literacy, cultural and credentialing problems

Anecdotal evidence – what is different today than in our parents’ day? (One job for life vs. many jobs? Decline of manufacturing community?)

Need better mechanisms to move people from entry-level to mid-level jobs.

Employees awaiting “perfect” job

C. What’s happening now?

New program to start in March 2014:

CenterState CEO to administer National Fund for Workforce Solutions partner site. Will identify industries will skills gap and align with needs. Focus on employer demand to streamline workforce.

Green Train/Health Train at Northside Up.

Connection between layoffs and available jobs (?)

Eds talking to business, e.g. ESM career program

Central Tech/ITT

BOCES welding program reborn to fill need.

Internships

New technical high schools/project-based learning

NFWS

OCC/SCSD career pathway

STEM activities

Looking to future and getting paralyzed by fear/projections.

OnPoint

D. Who’s not here that should be?

More employers, especially health care

Circles program

Unemployed/underemployed

MACNY

Under 40

OnPoint

Labor organizations

Students

Refugees

Developmentally disabled/their advocates

CNY SHRM

West Side Learning Center

Syracuse Women’s Opportunity Center

Jobs Plus

What should the study accomplish?

Tell the truth to each other.

Help existing organizations create programs to address problems.

Fill some of the gaps.

Articulate clearly what we mean by “skill” and other terms/help create common language.

Concrete understanding of personal responsibility in filling the gap (including schools, higher education, labor groups, unemployment services and others).

Explore things that are complex, but appear to be simple: variety of experiences affect this problem (refugee status, age, life experience, layoffs, retraining concerns).

Highlight best practices elsewhere in the country.

Identify/challenge changing regulations that slow progress in this area.

Understand issue from a community/quality of life/underserved/city vs. county

Role of substance abuse or other barriers

Other issues to consider:

Growth of temp agencies/outsourcing.

How well do employers recruit?

How are stakeholders sharing information/data/training and job opportunities.

Credentials issues.

How does the emerging regional vision (i.e., CenterState report) fit in?

Local impact of issues raised in SOTU: Launching new manufacturing institutes, government-wide review of federal training programs to help Americans gain skills in demand for good jobs; partnering with leading CEOs to help long-term unemployed; expanding apprenticeships by mobilizing business, community colleges and labor.

Next step: Convene study committee and develop focus areas for study

Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer