

Business Services Redesign

Bluegrass Workforce Investment Area

Regional Input Session

October 13, 2011

NOTES

Participants represented the following organizations/ agencies:

- Bluegrass Area Development District
- Central Kentucky Career Center
- Bluegrass Workforce Investment Board/
LG&E – KU Energy, LLC
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Office of Employment and Training
- Kentucky Adult Education

There were approximately 17 participants.

Rapid Response Activities

An employer usually makes the first contact in the event of a layoff and shares information about the number of individuals expected to be affected, what kinds of services will most likely be needed and if they are willing to allow a Rapid Response Team to offer services on-site or not.

During the meeting with employees/ laid off workers, a 15 minute video is shown that provides an overview about services and what to expect. The agencies that typically are present at the employee meeting include:

- OET
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Health Department
- WIA
- Adult Education

Representatives from each agency give a presentation. Unemployment insurance information is saved for the end because it usually results in the most questions. The message of the presentations is that help is available.

Services are individualized for each Rapid Response. The team tries to customize a solution for individual needs. For example, if veterans affected, the local vet representative will be notified and will deliver services.

Elements for a successful Rapid Response:

- Timing – when the team finds out about a layoff affects organization



- Video – the video that is shared provides consistent, clear information to individuals
- Relationship with HR Manager
- Delivering presentation on-site – this shows the individuals that the employer is doing what they can to support them and that they still care

In addition to the employee survey, there is an employer survey that is conducted when the employer is contacted to set up the Rapid Response. The team tries to gage the skill levels of individuals from employers.

The only way to tell if individuals have participated in a Rapid Response when they come into a Career Center is if there is special grant or through Trade.

The team has tried to match up dislocated workers’ skills sets with other employers that may need these skills, but often it doesn’t work directly because of timing, skills sets, etc. The team will identify companies that may be hiring and sometimes these companies will offer “preferential interview.”

For Rapid Response, the team tries to involve ABE from each county to makes sure there are representatives at each presentation. Sometimes representatives are in attendance, sometimes they are not, but they are always a key partner.

- Adult education provides additional education and training.
- Adult education provides the curriculum for the National Career Readiness Credential and OET issues a certification.

Business Services Activities

When targeting businesses, the business services representatives receive calls from employers, Commerce Lexington, or economic development entities.

- Commerce Lexington sometimes asks representatives to meet with employers that are considering locating or expanding in the area. Once they locate in the area, information is shared with employers are customized training, on-the-job training and other services.
- Some of those outreaching to business also use a database that includes all the businesses that pay taxes.
- Business services representatives participate on chamber of commerce committees.
- The Industrial Authority refers businesses to the Career Center/ workforce system.

Unfortunately, partners end up contacting and meeting with the same employers. This happens too frequently.

- If the information and notes were put into EKOS and partners looked at the system before outreaching to employers, duplication of efforts could be eliminated.
- Convenings or regular meetings of the business services representatives and other agencies could also help.



Confidentiality is an issue when working with economic development. They can't always share information about companies that may be locating in the area.

Information about all the services is based on relationships/ personal knowledge.

The various individuals and agencies need to work together as a team and avoid turf issues. Partners don't currently have informational materials.

Partners are sometimes territorial because of performance measures; some participants stated that they don't always sell someone else's program because they need employers to "get numbers." But most partners say, "I work for the Career Center..."

There needs to be more communication among the Business Services Team. Because of time management, sometimes things slide and there needs to be more coordination.

Participants suggested holding meetings of all the partners for team building. This would include managers, business services representatives, WIA staff, etc.

Many companies are referred to the Bluegrass Community and Technical College, which is also outreaching to employers.

The Bluegrass workforce area cannot currently offer customized training because of the lack of funding.

Currently in the Bluegrass workforce investment area, there are four Business Services Specialists on staff that represent the Career Center.

As a member of every chamber of commerce in the region, Business Services Specialists always attend chamber events for networking opportunities and to share/ gather information.

The Bluegrass Workforce Investment Board is extremely active and has developed a new strategic plan. The Business Services Team ties to leverage the business people on the board to outreach to other businesses.

The sectors targeted by Bluegrass Workforce Investment Board include:

- Advanced manufacturing
- IT
- Transportation, distribution and logistics
- Healthcare

Staff will be assigned to a specific sector and professional development will be available to help them become industry experts.

The Bluegrass Career Center conducted a survey of employers to determine how aware they are of services. This survey was coordinated with the chamber of commerce and sent to all members. Mailers and phone calls are also utilized to increase employers' familiarity with the system.



Business Services Specialists are moving toward “business consulting,” not just sharing information but asking, “What can we do to meet your needs?”

The Business Services Team is careful to remain flexible and will work long hours, evening events, or do whatever is good for businesses.

One of the challenges for the various partners is that job titles and occupational information doesn’t match up from one system to another. For example, a veterans’ representative tried to find security jobs” and got zero results, but there are security of jobs listed.

- One participant stated about the job matching system, “The system is flawed and doesn’t let me do my job. To help businesses, I have to go back into the system and spend extra time.”
- Training of Career Center and WIA staff would help with this.

One of the participants stated, “Communication is empowerment!”

Recommendations for Business Services System

It is important to develop a strategy to capture all of the knowledge that individual team members have and then, as a team, make sure to coordinate, convene, debrief and learn from businesses.

A Career Center Resource Guide would be beneficial so that information about all programs could be left with employers. One guide is needed that includes information broken down by agency/program.

Entrepreneurship doesn’t fit neatly into sector strategies, but it has to be a focus.

Other Comments

One participant commented, “Business people see things quite differently; the market drives where the jobs come from. We have to understand the market.”

The Bluegrass WIB Chair and key staff are visiting each of the region’s seventeen counties and board members from these counties to earn buy-in and identify what their interests are.

