TENCO Workforce Investment Area

Regional Input Session

October 11, 2011

NOTES

Participants represented the following organizations/ agencies:

- Buffalo Trace Area Development District
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Ashland Community and Technical College
- Maysville – Mason Co. Area Chamber of Commerce
- TENCO Workforce Investment Board
- Maysville Career Center
- Ashland Career Center

There were approximately 9 participants.

Rapid Response Activities

One of the participants expressed that he would like to see better communication about the Rapid Response program to employers. He stated that the message about this service can be conveyed more positively rather than focusing on all of the paper work and steps an employer must go through. This communication needs to focus on letting them know that the services and staff people are flexible.

The Rapid Response process entails:

1. The Rapid Response Coordinator relies on One Stop Managers for information about companies that are thinking of or are already laying off. They are the "eyes and ears" of the Rapid Response system.
2. The Rapid Response Coordinator contacts the employer and sets up a meeting with him/her.
3. After meeting with the employer, a presentation to employees is scheduled at a flexible time that meets the needs of the employers including time and location. Whenever possible, the Rapid Response Team frames the presentation as a supportive service that shows the employer is still looking out for his/her employees.

Sometimes the Rapid Response Coordinator will receive an advanced notice from the company's HR Manager. But, the smaller dislocation and smaller companies are harder to find out about.

Employers seem to be worse than they used to be at filing a WARN because they don't want to release information.

One of the clues that a layoff is going to occur or has occurred is more people coming into the Career Center from a certain company.

Rapid Response is too late in the process. Participants noted, "We need to be asking ourselves: Are we communicating *all* the tools that are available?"

Recommendations for the Rapid Response System

One of the participants commented that he would like to see a top-down communication from the state-level that makes employers aware that Rapid Response is an option and that it is a benefit to their employees as they transition into future employment.

Currently, Rapid Response is very "hodge-podge" and the tools are limited. If businesses could be presented with a whole menu of services, they may be more open.

Business Services Activities

Partners at the input session commented, "Funding hamstrings us." For example, Incumbent Worker Training was working well in collaboration with the Ashland Community and Technical College, but now cannot partner because of the money.

- The Community and Technical Colleges have a valuable resource in the Kentucky WINS program. The program works like incumbent worker training and TENCO previously would pay the employers' portions. But the limitation put on the funding to only be used on layoff aversion has caused the partnership to grind to a halt.
- Ashland CTC and TENCO's Business Services Manager used to call on employers together to share information about Kentucky WINS and would also sometime include/ be included in economic development.
    - This makes an impact on employers when the various partners present jointly.
    - Ashland CTC has very good relationships with TENCO WIA and both look at grant opportunities and ways to present a united front.

Business services in the TENCO region are malleable so that they can be adapted to business needs. This is a strength.

There needs to be better synergies with economic development. Sometimes a non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement gets in the way of working with economic development. But, if workforce and education partners cannot be at the table with economic development when they are calling on

businesses or attracting new businesses, then the partners need to provide economic development with information that can be relayed.

The agencies within the area development districts don't have an understanding of what one another do/ offer. TENCO cuts through three different area development districts (Buffalo Trace Area Development District, FIVCO Area Development District, Gateway Area Development District).

The TENCO region has not previously done any layoff aversion because partners don't find out about the layoff until a WARN is filed or until the decision is made.

Participants suggested developing a toolkit of information about economic development, one stops, community and technical colleges and how the partners can help employers in the area. This would be helpful to inform:

- Employers
- One Stop staff
- Chambers of commerce

This could be a tool that is provided by the State that would offer a more standardized, efficient communication tool.

Employers talk to each other and talk about whether or not the services provided are helpful.

Participants reported that for certain agencies and organizations money can only be spent on targeted sectors (sector strategies). This raises questions about marketing the region's services to employers. For example, Dupont heard about the Kentucky WINS program and economic development assistance and was very interested in participating, but they are now frustrated because they don't qualify/ belong to one of the targeted sectors.

It is possible that the region needs two versions of marketing materials/ tools:

1. A broad-based menu of services that are available to all employers (somewhat generic)
2. A more detailed version to provide to partner agencies/ organizations and sector-based employers

Some participants in the session were weary of the sector-strategies approach and pointed out that it doesn't fit for every region, especially the more rural areas.

Everyone participating in the regional input session conducts business outreach. This included WIA Business Services Manager, One Stop Managers, community and technical college representatives, and chamber of commerce representatives. The partners participate in chamber meetings, rotary meetings and the local HR groups.

Participants commented that there needs to be a more formalized outreach approach. The Ashland Community and Technical College is more formalized, has a full-time position, contacts the area's largest employers and has a tracking system.

- But, the CTC doesn't know who the Veterans representative, economic development representative or other have met with.

- Participants noted that it would be helpful to see who has been contacted and with what outcome

Revolving Loan Programs are an opportunity to learn/ identify who is expanding and growing.

One Stop Managers and staff don't have a sector focus because they can still provide employers with people that will be happy with a $9/hour job.

The partners need to establish a communication platform. The chamber of commerce is a key partner for this.

STP: Same Ten People. Participants asked: How do we reach the people who don't come to meetings or events? The plant managers are hard to get in touch with because they are so busy.

The region used to have One Stop Partner meetings quarterly, but stopped because of time constraints. These could be reinstated and would be helpful to the chamber to know what is available.

A first step for the TENCO region will be to sit down with local partners and collaborate on a brochure that includes information about what services and opportunities all the partners can provide. This will become a unified TENCO area brochure that every partner uses when meeting with businesses.

EKOS takes more time to use and upload information to than it takes to be productive and partners like the CTCs cannot access it. Participants noted that if EKOS is used as the region's information sharing tool, then there will be duplication of efforts because it is not collaborative and will not be used by all partners.

The business penetration rate in the TENCO region is hard to pin down. There is better penetration in Maysville, Morehead but not so much in Ashland.

The state has data on who employs people in the area. This could help identify/ target business contacts.

The economic development cabinet does a survey every year. Some of this information can be used as clues about growth or closures. The Kentucky manufacturers' report is also done annual and provides more detailed data. If trends could be distilled from this information, it would be helpful when targeting and working with businesses.

Recommendations for Business Services System

One of the participants noted that he had never attended a training that provided information about what other workforce investment areas are doing related to business services. He expressed that a better communication platform with other entities would be helpful. For example, information could be shared on how on-the-job training was being received in Western Kentucky.

One of the participants shared that he had seen a business/ customer lifecycle map at a conference previously. It included all the phases of the business lifecycle – from ramping up to closing down – and showed the services that were available at each point of the cycle. It included federal, state and local resources/ assistance.

In materials for employers, like the lifecycle map, it has to remain very simple and transparent.

Participants talked about the need to be able to see who all the partners have talked to. A collaborative system is needed, but it hinges on everyone using it and updating it. A collaborative system must be a separate system from EKOS.

Communication needs to be improved at both the Commonwealth-level and the local level.

Participants discussed the need for a concentrated effort at the state-level that presents information about what the workforce system can do and what its partners can. This would identify:

- Tools that are universally available (from the federal level, state level)
- Tools that branch off into the regional/ local menu of services

A dedicated web page on the state's site about employer services would be beneficial. Then the local areas could piggy-back on these by providing information about unique assets and services. A web-based information page about employer services also plays to attracting employers to the state/ regions.