



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

317 West Main Street, Boise, Idaho 83735-0510

TRANSMITTAL #3

MEMORANDUM

August 13, 2012

TO: Workforce Development Council
FROM: Tim Komberec, Chair
SUBJECT: Report on Educational Attainment Task Force

ACTION REQUESTED: Informational Only

BACKGROUND:

In May 2012 the Council established an "Educational Attainment" task force to make recommendations for policies and strategies to the Governor and the State Board of Education to assure Idaho achieves the following Council goal: *Sixty percent of Idaho workers will have a degree, certificate, industry recognized credential, or apprenticeship beyond high school by 2020.*

The Idaho State Board of Education has established a similar goal of having 60 percent of Idahoans ages 25-34 have a degree or certificate by 2020. This issue is a top priority for the State Board and we have been working hand in glove with their office to assure what the task force recommends will be valuable in helping them establish policy objectives and program processes.

The Governor has invited 20 key stakeholders from business, education and government to serve on this task force (membership attached), which will be co-chaired by myself and by Bert Glandon, President of the College of Western Idaho. We have tried to engage an equal number of key industry representatives and education representatives (including all of the Presidents of the Community and Technical Colleges in Idaho) to bring relevant players to the table to help facilitate this discussion and to make a meaningful difference.

The goal to increase training and educational attainment beyond high school has been established for the following reasons:

- Idaho must grow talent within the state to fuel innovation and economic competitiveness;
- Increased education attainment improves the quality of life for Idahoans and drives a vibrant, diverse economy;
- Idaho's increased education attainment must be responsive to businesses that will employ the workforce of the future;

- It is imperative we commit to efficiently and effectively increase postsecondary degrees and certificates; and
- Changing the projected trend lines to enhance economic development and job creation.

The specific focus of the task force will be to:

- Identify the training needs of specific industries that require certificate level workforce training beyond high school.
- Understand current barriers and challenges in meeting these industry identified workforce training needs.
- Make specific recommendations to improve the design of Idaho's education and training delivery system that make it more responsive and flexible in meeting the identified workforce industry training needs by developing greater opportunities for workers to build marketable and needed credentials.

Some of the issues that will be addressed by the task force to accomplish these goals include:

- More flexible timing for training and education courses - Increase responsiveness to adult learners who may have part-time or full-time jobs or who need to receive training on a shorter schedule than the traditional 16 week college semester approach to make education and training offerings more accessible.
- Make workforce training credit bearing - Develop articulation agreements so industry focused, workforce training currently being provided by community colleges and technical schools may be counted as credit courses that could lead to greater certificate and degree attainment.
- Stackable credentials – Develop more complete career pathways so that credits received through various training and education courses or even academic credit for work experience already obtained can “stack” up to allow individuals to more easily attain a certificate and a degree.
- Establish data benchmarks for certificate – Establish a means or process to have a reliable measure of the number of Idahoans who possess certificates issued by public and private organizations. Establishing a benchmark of current certificate and degree attainment will be important to track progress towards the goal. Because industry certificates and credentials are often issued by private organizations, documenting the number of Idahoans completing such certificates may be challenging.
- Better match of degrees and certificates to workforce demands – Improve processes to help make education and training more responsive to specific industry skill demands and determine what degrees and certificates would be most helpful to encourage meaningful employment in higher wage jobs.
- Delivery methods – A combination of classroom instruction, on the job training, work experience and assignments, internships, labs and online components could improve the accessibility of education to adult learners. This means possibly using more than one method for a single course. There may be infrastructure and/or cultural issues that stand in the way of such methods.
- Awareness - As the Board of Education is targeting 25 to 34 year-olds in their goal, there may need to be an education effort to make that group of adult learners aware of items such as: 1) availability of certificates, 2) cost effectiveness of certificate attainment, 3) industry need for certificate holders, and 4) time needed to complete certificate programs.

We appreciate the support of the full Council for this task force.

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Attachment

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