

Peoria, Arizona: Workforce Development Program

Workforce development for economic development purposes refers to efforts to train individuals for specific jobs associated with targeted industries as dictated by end-user needs, as well as to provide job placement assistance. Peoria's workforce development program has the following components:

- Training that may cover everything from soft skills (work ethic, attitude, getting to work on time) to basic skills (literacy, numeracy) to specific targeted job skills for desired end users
- Job placement assistance including resume writing and interview skills.

This workforce training program serves two customers: individuals seeking a new career in a high growth employment sector and targeted businesses in our community.

The need for a workforce development program is borne out of current trends:

- By 2010 the number of workers age 45 to 54 will grow more than 30 percent. By 2020 almost 20 percent of the U.S. population will be over 65 years old.
The U.S. Department of Commerce projects a 1.1 percent growth of labor supply and a 2.6 percent growth labor demand in the next 10 years.
- Suburban areas experience approximately 30 percent more high-tech business growth than do cities.
- Both public and private sector initiatives seek to prepare inner city residents for high-tech jobs.
- Former welfare recipients, mature workers, dislocated workers, and other low-income individuals provide new talent the labor pool.
- Developing advanced technology manufacturing training meets needs for skilled workers in regions with high-tech industries.
- Formalized business clusters can delineate shared skill needs and standards to alleviate concerns over talent poaching and to develop joint workforce training curricula.
- Small business consortia are now helping small businesses gain access to previously unaffordable training.
- Partnerships pool and leverage a range of financial, physical, human and intellectual resources and provide a collective voice for workforce development funding.
- Businesses' employee retention efforts focus on accommodating differing needs and lifestyles of workers.
- Cities are establishing programs to retain local university graduates who possess needed skills for high tech firms.
- Corporate universities offer specialized certifications and diplomas such as Microsoft Certification.
- Integrating the curricula of community colleges and vocational schools provides an educational path for students seeking specialized technical skills.

- Firms seeking new locations are interested in data that shows the level of unionization and employee/management relationships.

This program must find a balance in meeting the needs of its dual customer base: individuals and businesses. Individuals need training that supports their aspirations and businesses need employees that serve their needs. An effective program will identify ways to support both customers. Business involvement in programs, therefore, is critical. Retention rates should hold more weight than placement rates in an evaluation. The real test for training programs is how long individuals stay on the job.

Goal: The goal of the targeted workforce training program is to improve the quality and skill sets of individuals, to place them in jobs, and help Peoria businesses find an employee base in line with their needs to better meet business attraction and retention goals.

Program Objectives:

1. Provide training to individuals in our community in order to meet the needs of existing businesses and future industry targets
2. Assist Peoria businesses with their workforce development requirements

Program Activities:

1. Survey businesses in the business retention and small business programs to assess their workforce development needs and identify any gaps that exist between available labor pool and business needs.
2. Partner with public and private organizations (Maricopa Workforce Connections, Maricopa Community College) to create a training program that will result in a qualified skilled labor pool.
3. Market the program to the community according to the campaign identified through the Economic Development Implementation Strategy.
4. Create partnerships with organizations that can integrate job placement assistance to train individuals on resume writing and interviewing with skill training.
5. Partner with businesses to create apprenticeship and internship opportunities for job training participants that complete the program.

Program Metrics:

- Total number of individuals trained
- Total number of individuals placed (including internships and apprenticeships)
- Retention rate (after 6 months) of individuals placed
- Cost per person trained
- Number of businesses hiring from the training program
- Number of businesses that keep coming back for new hires