



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

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Dear Workforce Board Members,

I want to first thank you for a very successful retreat in Vancouver. We covered a lot of ground in discussing the topic of improving our system's ability to engage with WA's businesses. At our September 13th meeting in Moses Lake, we will discuss our Board strategy moving forward over the next 12 to 18 months. This letter outlines a proposal for the Board to consider and discuss at our next meeting. You will have the opportunity to take action on a strategy at this meeting, or provide direction to staff to hone ideas for your consideration at the November meeting.

Top Priorities

While the discussion at the retreat was quite robust and free-flowing, I discerned four primary categories or themes that I think capture the Board's priorities. Following is a description of those themes and the key points that lead me to the proposal that follows this section.

1. Continue Commitment to TAP Goals and Implementation:

It was clear that Board members and stakeholders alike are still committed to the mission of "*Talent and Prosperity For All*". We still feel strongly that we must, as a system, improve outcomes for both businesses and jobseekers, especially those jobseekers who traditionally face challenges to economic success. We also have to improve our measurement systems, so we know that we are actually making a difference where we intend to make a difference—tracking the impact of our investments of both effort and resources.

It was also clear that we have much more work to do on service alignment and integration across the various components of our system. There seems to be continuing agreement that working across programmatic and funding silos is the only way we will be able to make significant impact within current and potentially declining resources. The work of integration is complicated and hard, but absolutely worthwhile. We already have some terrific examples of success emerging, and some policy ideas to explore further. We need to keep our foot on the TAP gas pedal.

2. Improved Business Engagement is Important to All Aspects of TAP Implementation:

TAP calls Business Engagement out as a single strategic priority. This was an important action during the creation of the plan, and was responsive to a top concern expressed by all stakeholders involved in the planning process. In hindsight though, decoupling business engagement from all other aspects of TAP might have been a disservice to the work of the TAP Implementation committees focused on the major components of system transformation. We have inadvertently created an impression that services are either for jobseekers or for businesses, rather than an understanding that the majority of our system's services should be addressing the needs of both customer groups. David Stillman provided a wonderful example of how support for child care has only been perceived as a jobseeker service, but also clearly supports employers' ability to hire and retain workers.

3. We Don't Know What We Don't Know About Business Engagement:

The four representatives on our business panel were very generous with their time and quite open about their perspectives and experiences with the public workforce development system. There were certainly some epiphanies, such as even our web-based system lacks the features of some of the private systems (Monster, Indeed, ZipRecruiter), and the perceived lack of accountability for performance outcomes when employers contribute equipment, funds and other resources. We had reaffirmation for the need for single points of contact for business—we discussed the difference between the concierge and account rep concepts, as well as the new ways that businesses are measuring the value of their investments in recruiting and growing their talent. But we only touched the surface of business perspectives during that discussion and the subsequent discussions with the Board and attending stakeholders. On the system side, as individuals mentioned certain programs or projects their organizations offer for businesses, I heard quite a few compliments, but even more, “I had no idea our system did that”. And, as in #2, more comments questions about services offered to jobseekers, like child care, that can be reframed as employer supports. Without a handle on services offered throughout the system that can be used to support WA’s businesses, and what business needs from our system, it is difficult to develop a clear business engagement plan moving forward.

4. Expand the Presence and Impact of Career Connected Learning Across Our System:

Having the State Superintendent of Public Instruction personally involved in the Workforce Board is new, exciting, and something everyone wants to continue. Chris' vision is one that resonated, is critical to the future of education, aligns with our joint Charter with SBE and he's asked for our help. We keep trying to address youth unemployment - however, the K-12 system is critical to having a long-term solution. With the Governor’s Career Connect Washington taskforce fully mobilized, we have additional opportunities to understand best practices across the State, nationally and internationally as well as engage directly with businesses to assist with this effort. This is our opportunity to do something tangible to help.

The Proposal

As a starting place for the Board discussion on September 13th, I offer the following proposal:

1. Embed the goal of increasing and improving business engagement within each of five TAP Implementation Committees (all but the Business Engagement Committee). Disband the Business Engagement Committee as a separate committee. Each committee will add business engagement objectives and activities to its charter and timeline. Progress on the charter will be reported to the Board, using our “traffic light” dashboard.

To ensure that whatever best or promising practices developed through TAP implementation are institutionalized it is critically important that the system creates and uses a set of meaningful performance metrics on increasing and improving business engagement. Our TAP Implementation Committee on Performance Accountability will take on the responsibility of driving system-wide development of these metrics. However, we have an opportunity to begin recording actual business engagement numbers with WorkSourceWA.com. I would like the Board to use data generated through this system (which should grow to include more programs in the system) as an early dashboard or gauge of our and our system’s efforts.

2. System-wide intelligence gathering. I propose that we gather intelligence on two planes.

We must all have a common understanding, an inventory or catalogue, of all the services available to support business' workforce needs in every region of the state. Each service listed should include scope, scale and performance information, as well as any eligibility or other limitations.

We must get clear information from the business community about what they need from our system, how we can make it easy and efficient for them to engage with our system, and what data we could provide to them to let them know that we are effective. We have many points of engagement with businesses throughout the system currently, whether through the WDCs and WorkSource Centers, our Community and Technical Colleges, our High School CTE programs, apprenticeship, vocational rehabilitation services, DSHS services, and others. We also have the benefit of committed business and labor organizations on our Board with tremendous reach into the private sector. Lastly, the Workforce Board has a statutory mandate to undertake a periodic employer survey. We have held off putting our usual survey into the field in order to align with the work of the Business Engagement Committee. This is an added opportunity to reach out to employers who we may not connect with through other channels.

I propose asking Workforce Board staff to convene the right parties from across the system to develop the protocols and procedures for gathering intelligence on both planes. Once information is compiled, I propose that the Board work with stakeholders to develop a clear set of next steps. An idea that seemed to resonate at the retreat was the need for a system-wide marketing and communication strategy. But there was agreement that we can't move forward without having much deeper information on the two planes described.

3. Board and staff work with Chris Rykdal's team to develop a TAP strategy around Career Connected Learning that aligns with OSPI's vision.

I am extremely excited about our path ahead. You all are doing amazing work. Thank you for all that you do. It is a pleasure to serve as your Board Chair.

Please let me know if you have any burning thoughts about this proposal prior to our Board meeting. Otherwise, I look forward to a rich discussion on September 13.

Sincerely,

Perry England, Chair