

AGIA Training Plan Steering Committee
August 15, 2007
Minutes

Present:

Fred Esposito	John Hakala	Bonnie Jo Savland
Tony Delia	Janelle Vanassa	Karen Martinson
Greg Cashen	Mike Andrews	David Matthews
Fred Villa	Clark Bishop	Brynn Keith
Mary Lou Madden		

Meeting opened at 10:30 with introduction of two new members: David Matthews from H.C. Price and Fred Villa from the University of Alaska. Fred is sitting in indefinitely for Wendy Redman as the UA representative.

Clark Bishop, Commissioner of Alaska DOLWD welcomed committee members and thanked them for their participation. He is particularly pleased at the industry/employer representation provided by David, Tony and Bonnie Jo. He emphasized the importance of the training plan and the immensity of the task ahead. He recognizes that the plan will always be a draft “evergreen” plan, that will need review and revision as technology and demand changes and as other projects come on-line.

As other members introduced themselves to the new members and the Commissioner, several points were emphasized:

- The human resources of rural Alaska need to be tapped
- The importance of apprenticeships can’t be over-emphasized
- There are assets—eg., the pipeline training center, the Sitka Education Consortium—that bring many partners to the table and could serve as models
- There exists a significant gap between high school and the world of work
- The group members need to bring assets to the table—not try to grab assets for their own constituency
- Grow your Own labor force is an important goal; perhaps a certificate or other “branding” device could be established for Alaska-trained workers

The group reviewed the agenda, which had two main items: 1) R & A presentation on possible ways of determining the economy-wide skills gap and 2) the draft plan template forwarded by the I-team to the steering committee. Fred announced that the goal is to have a draft plan ready for review by the AWIB at its October 22-23, 2007 meeting.

Commissioner Bishop emphasized that the plan will not be “the Commissioner’s” plan, but “our” plan. Under AGIA, the state will provide some funding, but he will look to leverage this funding with dollars from the federal government and from industry and other sources. He hopes to use AWIB and members of this committee to advocate for the necessary funding. He is also looking for better coordination of existing resources.

He shared his philosophy with the committee to help provide a focus for the day's discussion. He indicated that a culture change is necessary if we are to succeed in training Alaskans and putting them to work on the pipeline. We have resources in the state for training, but need to "connect the dots". He cited the example of Donlin Creek's one-on-one efforts to bring about a positive change in attitudes toward work and work readiness and its subsequent success in hiring and maintaining a local, qualified and drug free workforce. He indicated that he wants to carry this positive attitude forward with AGIA.

The Commissioner spoke to the problem of declining vocational education in Alaska high schools and reported on a plan that he has developed with the Commissioner of Education and Early Development to address this lack. The plan has three phases

- Phase 1: Increase academic skills and pre-training readiness through adoption of Work Keys statewide. This phase will be implemented in FY08.
- Phase II. Bring back formula funding for secondary vocational education; fund regional hubs in rural Alaska.
- Phase III. Placement. Connect training to actual jobs such as is done at the Pipeline Training Center.

The Commissioner stated that apprenticeship is the key if you want to train a sustainable workforce and lower non-resident percentages. Apprenticeships can help absorb the 7,000 annual high school graduates into the Alaska economy, especially in rural Alaska. He is close to finalizing an apprenticeship agreement with DOT and would like to extend similar agreements to other departments of state government. He would also like to see X number of apprenticeship slots per craft guaranteed as part of pipeline construction. He does not want to mandate apprenticeship by statute but wants voluntary participation on the part of employers, maybe through some incentives.

We won't know firm numbers on the jobs created by pipeline construction and operation until an engineering plan is complete. When we do get numbers, the state needs to be collaborative and form coalitions, since it cannot train all of the workers needed. We need to be realistic about the numbers we can train and recognize that the remainder will come from elsewhere. Since as David Matthews indicated in his introduction, several Canadian and Lower 48 pipeline construction projects will end just about the time AGIA is anticipated to begin, there will be a trained non-resident workforce that can be tapped.

Alaska needs to focus on legacy jobs, not only from the gas pipeline itself but also for spur lines and regional distribution points. Training should emphasize transferable skills, that can take a worker from project to project and which can lead to a multi-faceted, long-term career.

The group had a working lunch and continued the discussion generated by the Commissioner's comments. The following points were made:

- Apprenticeship is the key, but may need to provide incentives particularly to small employers to keep them competitive while they provide apprenticeship training.
- We need to get people into entry level now so that they will be skilled and experienced in time for pipeline construction.
- Culture is part of the individual. We can influence the culture of young people if we start at a reasonably young age to help students see themselves as participants in the state's workforce.
- Rural students in particular don't know how to connect the dots between school and work. Role models, internships, elders and direct contact between employers and secondary students can help make these connections.
- Secondary vocational education is the cheapest kind of training, especially for work readiness and basic technical skills.
- "Grow your own" should emphasize transferable not discrete skills.
- If we are going to rely on apprenticeships and other ojt, the state needs to invest in overall economic development to make sure that there are jobs after training.
- AGIA and other workforce training is not the job of just one department. We need a system which includes UA, Board of Regents, State Board of Ed, DEED, legislature, Governor, etc.
- A statewide system should identify common elements and develop standardized curriculum/content and outcome measures. Standardize the content and outcomes but leave the methodology up to the training institution. AWP's construction academies may provide a model.
- Career pathways can provide a framework for training, including broad skills, soft skills and technical skills.

The group took a short break and reconvened at 1:50 pm.

Brynn brought the group up to speed on the data collection/analysis plans for AGIA. At first, R & A planned on doing estimates for AGIA demand in occupations directly and indirectly impacted by pipeline construction. However, this would require reasonably specific estimates from industry that are probably not attainable at least in the short term. Given both this lack of data and the steering committee's desire to get better information on the current skills gap, R & A has changed the question it is asking. Between now and December 31, 2007, it will use existing data to identify a mismatch between employer needs and available workers; the skills or employment gap across the Alaska economy.

Brynn distributed the Occupational Matrix Training Priorities developed for the Workforce Readiness Committee of AWIB in 2004, which is based on the 2002-2012 forecast. The matrix ranks occupations by number of jobs, numerical and percentage growth rates, earnings and numbers of non-resident and older workers. The first three rankings indicate demand and the last two serve as proxies for supply. In order to get additional information about supply, R & A will look at training program completers, by occupational grouping, from institutions that report to DOL and will also look at information from ALEXsys, which gives some current information on both employer demand and supply of available workers seeking employment.

Once R & A gets solid numbers, it will create an AGIA-specific staffing pattern that can be overlaid on the matrix. Brynn is aiming for the following timeline:

- Matrix complete—mid-September, using 2004 as a baseline
- Develop units of analysis – end of October
- Training capacity information – will need to check with staff on timeline

The group had the following comments for Brynn

- We need to get a handle on industry training, both dollars and programs
- Military training is a large resource
- Once the matrix is updated, it would be useful to have a shorter AGIA occupations list, with training needs prioritized within this list

Group consensus was that the methodology that Brynn was proposing would provide useful information. She was asked to report back at the September 18th meeting.

The group then reviewed the draft template—Building Alaska's Gas Line Workforce—developed by the I-team. Using this draft as a launching point, the group outlined its own draft plan template and began to identify some of the content of the plan. A very preliminary plan outline is appended to these minutes and will be sent to committee members for review and comment.

The group agreed that they needed a longer session to begin to look more in depth at the objectives and strategies that they and the I-team have tentatively identified. Therefore, the next steering committee meeting will be on September 5th and 6th and will focus on fleshing out the plan.

The September 19th meeting has been changed to September 18th. The group will decide at the September 5th meeting whether or not it needs to expand the meeting on the 18th to two days, also.

The meeting adjourned at around 3:10 pm.