

PHILADELPHIA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

1601 MARKET STREET, SUITE 1500 - PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

Help Wanted: Knowledge Workers Needed

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2008

4:00 PM – 5:15 PM

Cocoa Suite 1, Hershey Lodge, Hershey PA

OBJECTIVE: Explore effective strategies for telling the adult literacy story in a compelling, creative manner and engaging a wide range of stakeholders in advancing solutions.

AGENDA

I. Welcoming Remarks & Introductions

II. Idea Generator Exercise

- What key information do you want to share?
- What partnerships do you want to cultivate?
- Whose opinions do you want to inform?

III. Excel Philadelphia

IV. Question & Answer Session

V. Closing & Next Steps

- What Communications steps or actions can you take leaving this workshop?

VI. Evaluation

Handouts: Excel Philadelphia Overview; Help Wanted; Communication Approaches & Tips

Excel Philadelphia is an established partnership with the Philadelphia Literacy Coalition launched to address the issue of adult literacy levels in Philadelphia. Over fifty percent of adults in Philadelphia are low-literate; that is, lacking the basic skills they need to effectively compete in an increasingly knowledge-based economy or successfully complete a post-secondary degree. Consequently, one-half of all job seekers residing in the city can expect to be competitive for only one-third of the jobs that currently exist in the economy. That's approximately 550,000 individuals qualified for roughly 189,600 jobs. In 2015 there will be 120,000 job vacancies in our city requiring knowledge workers. The success of Excel Philadelphia – on any scale – will help businesses to upgrade their workforce, assist workers to achieve professional and economic success, and increase the overall economic vitality of the city.

Strategy / Approach

- Raise awareness about the impact workforce literacy initiatives have on employers, employees, and the community.
- Increase investments of time, talent, and treasure in advancing adult literacy.
- Inform employers about workforce literacy programs available to their employees.
- Increase the number of employers offering workplace literacy programs customized to specific, employer-identified skill sets.
- Build the capacity of the literacy provider community and establish a comprehensive system of adult education to ensure that top-quality services are available for all adults.
- Led a survey of literacy providers in Philadelphia to better understand local capacity in relation to local need; findings were shared with the provider community and used to identify opportunities for strategic enhancements to the adult literacy system.
- Completed innovative research comparing the literacy levels of residents to the needs of the local economy.
- Partnered with local literacy providers and CareerLink administrators to help initiate, study, and document pilot projects to embed literacy services in PA CareerLink centers.
- Obtained funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to support the development of a formal business plan for a group of leaders in the literacy provider community committed to enhancing workforce literacy services.

Select Accomplishments

- Obtained grants from the Verizon Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to support employer focus groups, the creation of a brand, and research to localize and contextualize the impact of low literacy levels on the economic viability of the city.
- Preparing to release a compelling new report, *Help Wanted*, and companion research and policy briefs in early 2009.

Excel Philadelphia is designed to address the fundamental misalignment between the skills of the workforce in Philadelphia and the needs of our increasingly knowledge-based economy.

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Communication Tactics/Approaches

- **Conduct innovative research** – Ask challenging questions, and work with researchers to understand the bigger picture.
- **Interview partners** – Talk to partners and potential partners to understand their needs, challenges, and views.
- **Lead surveys** – Develop brief online surveys to gather information on a topic.
- **Organize forums** – Unite people to discuss important issues and share information.
- **Set-up focus groups** – Recruit 8 to 10 people to give you feedback on your ideas, projects, and programs.
- **Release compelling publications** – Put out information in a clear, concise manner and use visuals – this should not look like your traditional research report.
- **Develop policy briefs** – Explain the policy barriers you face and be specific about your recommendations and the changes you would like to see.
- **Compile fact sheets** – Highlight key research, outcomes, program data, and other relevant facts.
- **Write press releases** – Share real time information and publically acknowledge the work of foundations and other partners.
- **Convene task forces** – Bring people together to help you brainstorm and tackle the challenges you're facing.

Tips

- Speak their language
- Position yourself as a resource
- Engage people early and often
- Employ community organizing principles
- Expect obstacles
- Be creative

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