

# Employer Engagement Webinar

June 23, 2016

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# Sector or Industry Partnerships

- With the rapidly-changing pace of technology, sectors are increasingly challenged to keep the skills and knowledge base of their workforce up-to-date
- Skills are what employers want but they tend to ask for degrees and credentials as proxies
- Work-based learning (experiential learning that complements didactic learning) marries skills with knowledge

# Demand Driven

- We all say it but not all of us do it
- Listening to the needs of employers...in detail...is one of the more important on-going tasks that we have
- Start with what are the key occupations and drill quickly down to knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Differentiate between soft and hard skills
- Not everyone needs training...sometimes, just good counseling

# What We Really Need Is Skills

- Foundational skills
  - Attendance, On-Time, Drug-Free, Get Along with Others, Prepared for Work and Home Life,
- Literacy skills
  - General literacy but also reading for information, locating information, math
- Hard skills
  - Hand and power tools, measuring, equipment operation, fork-lift driving, and many more

# Work-Based Learning and Beyond

- Apprenticeships and internships being replaced by new kinds of work-based learning
- Micro-skills and credentials that can be learned and earned in short timeframes and be used immediately on the job, and then...
- Stacked into credentials with more skill sets
- Strong experiential component
- Competency-based apprenticeships over time-based
- Pre-apprenticeships connected to broader career pathway

# The Agriculture and Food Industry

- Normally, when we think of the agriculture and food industry, we think of production agriculture;
- However, production agriculture is part of a supply and distribution chain that extends to food processing, food distribution, and consumer consumption of food;
- Agriculture and food also includes the horticulture, forestry and wood products industry as well as service industries such as landscaping and veterinary services.

# Value of Ag Products

- In the production of agriculture products alone, Pennsylvania is a powerhouse in the nation;
- Total market value of products sold was \$7.40 billion in 2012 with 37% in crop sales and 63% in livestock sales;
- Pennsylvania ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the US in layers and 5<sup>th</sup> in pullets as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> in corn for silage and 6<sup>th</sup> in poultry and eggs

# Competitive Position

- Pennsylvania also leads the United States in two important parts of the agriculture distribution chain...
  - Food processing which includes industries which process and package eggs, milk, iced tea, ice cream, hot dogs, cookies and crackers, candy, and many food products employs over 76,600 workers which is more than 16% times more concentrated than the national average
  - Forest and wood products with a high concentration of cabinetmakers employs more than 47,400 workers which is more than 31% times the national average



# Jobs, Earning, and Sales

- As an industry cluster, the agriculture and food industry is a major contributor to the regional economy...
  - 258,401 jobs which is 3.55% of the total workforce in the State;
  - Earnings of \$387,084,034,701 or 2.86% of all earning;
  - Sales of \$1,257,366,830,770 or 5.33% of all sales in the State;
- High productivity

# Multipliers

- However, if we also look at the multiplier effect which includes the effect of the supply and distribution chain on these measures, the result is even more significant...
  - 491,791 jobs which is 6.76% of the total workforce in the State;
  - Earnings of \$22,536,023,455 or 5.82% of all earning;
  - Sales of \$105,932,611,306 or 8.42% of all sales in PA.

# The Agriculture and Food Workforce

- More than 258,000 people work in the Agriculture and Food Industry in Pennsylvania
- With an additional 233,000 people in jobs related to the Industry supply and distribution chains
- Between now and 2025, the PA Department of Agriculture predicts that the Industry will need more than 74,200 people because of growth and the replacement of workers because of retirements

# In-Demand Occupations

- Farming and Agricultural Operations
  - Farmers and Farm Managers
  - Dairy Herdsmen, Flock Managers
  - Farm Equipment Service Technicians
  - Farmworkers
- Landscaping
  - Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers
- Food Manufacturing
  - Food Batchmakers
  - Packaging Machine Operators
  - Bakers and Meat Cutters
  - Maintenance Mechanics
  - Forklift Drivers
  - Truck Drivers

# In-Demand Occupations

- Forestry, Lumber, and Wood Products
  - Fallers and Equipment Operators
  - Sawing Machine Operators
  - Team Assemblers
  - Machine Operators
  - Sales Representatives
- Conservation and Natural Resources
  - Soil and Water Conservationists
  - Agriculture Technician
- Animal Health and Veterinary Services
  - Veterinarians
  - Veterinary Technicians and Assistants

# Preparing for Agriculture and Food Occupations

- Nearly all of these jobs require STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) knowledge and skills
- Many of them require additional technical skills which can be obtained at a community college or local career and technology center
- A few of them required advance training and a bachelor's (or higher) degree

# Gaps

- Only eight of the In-Demand Occupations have formal education and training programs connected with them
- There is training available after high school for practitioners through Cooperative Extension and other providers
- No community colleges in PA are involved in any meaningful way with agriculture skills
- There are many emerging occupations for which no training exists

# Supply

- More than 150 high school agriculture programs around PA with 16,000 agriculture students
- More than 12,000 young people involved in FFA
- Two institutions of higher education – Delaware Valley University and Penn State University – provide nearly 900 graduates in ag and food careers yearly
- Six of the 26 In-Demand Occupations have substantial numbers of Latino workers



# Enriching Work-Based Learning

- Working on more job shadowing and internships
- Articulating high school agriculture programs with post-high school apprenticeships
- Developing apprenticeships for three careers
  - Agriculture equipment service technician
  - Dairy herdsman
  - Organic farmer
- Filling gaps in related training where needed

# From Here

- Evaluation of the K-Adult Agriculture Education System in PA
- Conversations with the Community Colleges in PA
- Development of registered apprenticeship programs
- Exploration of the utility of micro-credentials

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# START Toolkit

Sector Targeting to Advance Regional Transformation

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Welcome to START Toolkit, a step-by-step guide to setting up a sector partnership (a regional, industry-driven partnership of education, workforce development, economic development and other stakeholders) to address skills needs of critical industries in your region.

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## Step Two: Identify Partners

Employers are the most important partners in any sector initiative because the partnership is built around their needs. To meet their needs, intermediaries must recruit the right mix of service providers that are knowledgeable about the industry, as well as the workers and resources in a region.

Some sector initiative intermediaries initially recruit a small group of stakeholders, heavily weighted toward employers, to act as an advisory group.

Key industry "champions" (defined as employers that see the worth and potential of a sector partnership, and speak on its behalf) can be *the key to success* during the early phases of an emerging sector partnership.

The exact mix of partners will depend on the region, the industry, and the types of organizations available. Here's a sample membership list of sector partners of an actual sector initiative.

To get the right mix of partners, ask: Which stakeholders in the community should take part, or who could be a resource in this effort? For example, who is currently working to match workforce needs in this industry with workers? Which employers in the industry are best positioned to guide the partnership's activities? Who besides employers can bring knowledge of the industry? Who can bring knowledge of the region's available labor force? To help answer these questions, consider the following list.

### Employers

Employers are partners, drivers of the initiative, *and* customers. As such, they play a unique role in a sector partnership. Sector initiatives should attempt to engage as many employers as possible within the target industry and defined geographic region. Of those employers, the partnership should be driven by a set of industry leaders (such as Presidents and CEOs of companies) that are energized by the potential to overcome particular workforce barriers to competitiveness, and committed to working with the partnership



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## Step Three: Engage and Enlist Partners and Employers

An intermediary should consider how and why the many and diverse partners are recruited. In all initial communications, share the purpose of the initiative. Provide an overview of the life cycle of a sector initiative. Explain why their participation is critical, and how their organization can benefit from participating (Sample Handout - What a Partnership Can Do For You). Be clear about partner roles and responsibilities.

Remember that employer engagement must start early, and can take different forms depending on existing relationships with employers, their knowledge of public workforce or education systems, the level of "pain" they may be feeling with their current workforce challenges, or other factors. It also takes time, and should not be rushed. (Rules of Thumb for Engaging Employers)

One of the most important success factors for a sector partner is a strong understanding of the industry, how it works, its needs and priorities, and future trends (see Chapter 2 for more on secondary and primary data sources). Conveners should use a variety of methods to build their knowledge of the industry and connect with employers.

The most important method will be talking to representatives of the target industry one-on-one.

- Sample Talking Points and Questions for Employers
- Understand *who* to engage and *when*

But they may also want to:

- Attend trade association meetings or trade shows related to the industry
- Arrange tours of key companies in the industry
- Talk to union leadership or attend one of their meetings
- Attend public policy or community meetings that affect the target industry





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## Sample Talking Points and Employer Questions

### Sample Talking Points and Questions for Employers

#### What Employers Should Hear from You:

- That the goal of a sector partnership is to better organize the public sector (including workforce development, education and training, economic development) to meet the needs of their industry;
- That sector partnerships are employer-led, and that because their company is an important member of the local industry, their input will be highly valuable to the identification of common challenges across firms and the development of customized solutions to benefit all firms;
- That you know something about their industry (how it works, their priorities, trends, and some challenges), but want to know more;
- That sector partnerships have been shown to work in their industry. Share stories of other sector initiatives that have had positive impact for employers, including outcomes that they can appreciate (higher productivity, reduced turnover, etc); and
- That you are part of a planning team for a potential sector partnership in their industry, and immediate next steps include . . .

#### What You Want to Know from Employers:

(The following questions are generic and can be customized for any industry. To see a framing that focuses on green sector initiatives, check out this example from Kansas City.)

#### About the Economy

- Looking at the big picture for a moment, what national and global economic drivers are affecting your company or industry, both positively and negatively?
- Getting closer to home, what state and local economic factors impact your company and its potential



# Effective Employer Engagement: Key Ingredients for Building Success

Table 2: Engaging Employers as Strategic Partners

Employers as Customers... →	Employers as Strategic Partners...
Made aware of grant program and training components.	Shared program costs with the employer underwriting certain elements.
Attend bi-annual business advisory committee meetings.	Have an executed memorandum of understanding and are engaged in numerous ways including program and assessment design, internships, mock-interviews, resume reviews, providing adjunct instructors, etc.
Participate sporadically on an “as needed” basis when asked by program staff.	Are engaged on an ongoing basis in program design and refinement. Provide subject matter experts to identify needed competencies and skills, and co-design relevant program curriculum and assessments.
Share demand data occasionally and hire program graduates as needed.	Work with the grant program as an employer network identifying current and upcoming opportunities at various partner companies. Strategically map career pathway opportunities for participant hires and partner with programs to develop a steady “pipeline” of workers. ( <a href="http://autoworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MakingAMarketforCompetency-BasedCredentials-WHITE-PAPER.pdf">http://autoworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MakingAMarketforCompetency-BasedCredentials-WHITE-PAPER.pdf</a> )



**THANK YOU!**

**ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS?**

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