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**BUSINESS SERVICES**

**STRATEGIC PLAN for NCWorks**

**PROGRAM YEAR 2019**

**WESTERN PIEDMONT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB), in partnership with state and local governments, is a local policy board responsible for the planning, oversight and coordination of workforce development initiatives in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. Of the 14 metropolitan statistical areas (MSA), the Hickory MSA is currently the seventh largest Metro area in North Carolina. As of Census 2010, Alexander-Burke-Caldwell-Catawba County population is 365,497.

Purpose Statement: *The purpose of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board is to be at the center of community and regional leadership to identify workforce challenges, to be the convener of the conversation to resolve the challenges, to be the champion for workforce development, to work in a collaborative partnership with key stakeholders, (especially economic development and education), to bring resources to bear on resolving the challenges, and to act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.*

Western Piedmont’s Business Service Staff will provide businesses with a broad range of “Business First “consulting services. These services include Business Information Exchange, Recruitment and Training Grants, where funding is available. We are committed to providing excellent customer service that meets the needs of a business through a “team approach,” and in collaboration with other workforce and education agencies.

The Business Service Consultants are dedicated to enhancing economic prosperity by strengthening and supporting area businesses in their recruitment and retention needs. Employers and prospective business owners can rely on our Business Services Team to:

* Deliver relevant labor market information
* Wage rate information
* Recruitment services
* Assist in posting and marketing job orders
* Connect talent to jobs
* Provide businesses training grants where applicable to help retain their current workforce and create succession planning

**BUSINESS FIRST PHILOSOPHY**

In order to put businesses and job seekers on a ‘Pathway to Success’, The WPWDB and its workforce development partners follow Three Service strategies that create the “Business First Philosophy.”

**THE THREE SERVICE STRATEGIES**

WPWDB provides the following business service activities as a framework to assist with the development of a Business Services Plan to meet the needs of businesses throughout the Western Piedmont WDB area:

* **BUSINESS INFORMATION EXCHANGE**
* Local Workforce Characteristics
* Career Pathway & Career Ladder
* Industry and Occupation Trends
* Wage Rate Information
	+ **Local Workforce Characteristics**
		- Provide information on the characteristics of the local workforce to businesses. Assist business in understanding vital business information of the local workforce area as pertain to local workforce demographics. Learn information like the number of candidates in the area who fit your requirements, the amount of experience they have, and their average educational level.
	+ **Career Pathways & Career Ladders**
		- Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, in collaboration with our workforce partners, has developed career pathways to assist individuals with navigating through various industries. As of today, WPWDB has certified Career Pathways in Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, and Energy Line Worker. These pathways give inside information on industry occupations, pay, and career progression. Each career ladder shows a snapshot of the jobs, skills and education levels businesses are seeking, and salary ranges for the area. Each career pathway shows the ways to progress within an industry and where to get the necessary education to do just that.
	+ **Industry & Occupation Trend Projections**
		- How big is the local labor force? What’s the breakdown by educational attainment? How many other companies in the area do what you do? Keep informed on the area’s economy: where it’s at and where it’s headed.
	+ **Wage Rate Information**
		- Provide industry wage rate information about the local workforce to local employers. What’s the median salary range for their jobs? What do qualified candidates expect to make in that position? What do people in similar jobs make? Paying your employees for their worth is key to increase job satisfaction and retention.
* **CUSTOMIZED RECRUITMENT**
* On and Off-Site Targeted Hiring Events
* Available Space for Business Uses
* Job Orders Services
* Diverse Talent Pool
	+ **On and Off-Site Targeted Hiring Events**
		- Assist businesses to meet hiring deadlines by helping coordinate and host targeted hiring events, Hiring events can be on the businesses site or at an off-site location such as our NCWorks Career Center(s) or any other locations suitable to deliver the best results in meeting the hiring needs of the business. Staff will create hiring event flyers and promote and market the event to potential job seekers. Staff may assist in the application process, job seekers skills assessment, and/or with the interview process.
	+ **Available Space for Employer Uses**
		- The Western Piedmont WDB area has three main NCWorks Career Centers and a branch office (Alexander) to provide available space for businesses to use at no cost for hiring efforts.
	+ **Job Orders Services**
		- WPWDB Business Services Staff will: Contact and/or visit businesses to promote the benefits of posting job orders on NCWorks Online; Provide general information regarding NCWorks as a workforce system to connect talent to jobs using job posting and job skill matching technology; Assist employers in writing effective job postings to ensure quality referrals and resumes are provided; Verify status of job orders; Refresh existing orders that have reached expiration and remained unfilled; Close job orders that have been fulfilled, regardless of expiration date.
	+ **Diverse Candidate Pool**
		- Our candidate pool includes career-seekers of all ages, skill levels and education. Register as an employer on NC Works Online to gain access to an abundant career-seekers list powered by a comprehensive search engine. NCWorks Online offers a virtual recruiter tool to assist in searching for desired candidates as well.
* **TRAINING GRANTS**
* Upskill Western Piedmont Training Grant
* Skill Training Scholarships
* Internships for Youth
	+ **Upskill Western Piedmont Training Grant**
		- Upskill Western Piedmont offers competitive training grants to businesses in addressing employee’s skill gaps, improving employee retention, helping stabilize the business, and increasing the competitiveness of the employee or business. Businesses can apply for a training grant up to $10,000, $60,000 lifetime max, to assist current employees with developing leadership skills, gaining industry recognized certifications, or skill development to improve retention of current job.



* + **Training Scholarships**
		- Training Scholarships are available for individuals who are unemployed or underemployed through no fault of their own, to revamp their skills in attempts to gain stable employment at a better wage. Scholarships are offered through the WPWDB at our NCWorks Career Centers for training such as CDLs, Manufacturing/Furniture Academies, Nurse Aid, Phlebotomy, Registered Nurse, and much more. These scholarships may assist eligible clients by providing funding for tuition, books, fees, and tools as needed to complete a training course(s) at one of our local community colleges or training providers.
	+ **Internships for Youth**
		- WPWDB offers eligible NEXTGen youth/young adults ages 16-24, with a paid internship for up to 400-hours, 29 hours per week. This form of work-based learning allows interns to gain valuable and applicable work experience, while providing the employer an opportunity to showcase their industry and engage a young person in their career path. NEXTGEN will act as the employer of record, incurring the costs of background checks, drug screens, wages, and insurance. The employer will be responsible for training and supervising the participant. At the end of the internship the employer can choose to hire the individual or release them from the internship.

**BUSINESS SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES TEAM**

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Boards, NCWorks Career Centers recognize businesses as prime customers and partners. The primary contact for planning and carrying out engagement activities with businesses is the Business Services Representative (BSR). Business Services is a strategic extension of the Local Workforce Board to build strategic collaborative partnerships with critical stakeholders, including economic development and education entities, for the purpose of designing and implementing appropriate business solutions. Business Services Representatives are highly focused on developing sector strategies to meet a business’s talent development needs.

* Business Services Representatives’ main business contact is the business suite executive, i.e., owner, president, CEO, COO.
* Additional business contacts may include Human Resource Director, Manager, or business representatives authorized to conduct businesses on behalf of the company.
* Business Services Representatives listen to businesses’ needs and develop responsive, system-wide customized solutions, provide meaningful workforce intelligence so businesses can meet their talent needs and act as champions of change to ensure service delivery responds to aggregate business demand. A more inclusive strategy positively affects businesses’ competitiveness in the state.

**Principle Duties and Responsibilities**

The Business Services Representative is positioned to carry out unique responsibilities that will add value to the success of a business to find and retain talent and to build business competitiveness. Primarily, the Business Services Representative will focus on these essential duties:

* Linking businesses with the NCWorks job management system through critical information exchange
* Engaging businesses in talent development activities
* Developing and implementing diverse solutions that meet a business’s workforce needs
* Participating in strategic economic development activities
* Analyzing and delivering current labor market information
* Recognizing and acting on areas of improvement for business satisfaction with our local area NCWorks Career Center services
* Building long-term valuable relationships with businesses
* Collaborating with education partners to close identified skills gaps
* Coordinating business engagement with partner agencies

**BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

**Outreach**

Outreach includes, but is not limited to face-to-face contacts, handouts, or electronic media. We partner and collaborate with economic development agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, SBTDC, Community Colleges, public school districts, and other agencies to promote and market solutions that meet the business’ needs. We utilize a strategic marketing mix, via multiple platforms such as email blasts, surveys, direct mailings, postcards, newspaper advertisements, billboards, flyers and posters, press releases, and social media, public service announcements, presentation at local organizations, and other suitable venues.

Our promotional materials are to be business-focused and business-driven with clear, concise, and professional in appearance, ensuring that promotional materials are consistent and available electronically through the WPWDB’s website.

**Identifying Employers Needs**

Collect and analyze feedback from businesses; Feedback can be in the form of online or hard copy surveys, one-on-one interviews with employers, focus groups, and other suitable methods; Determine employer needs; Analyze current strategies to evaluate if business needs are met; and consult with businesses to develop solutions if needs are not met.

**Attachment A – Conversation Guide for Business Visits**



Business Services Strategic Plan

**CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR BUSINESS VISITS**

The purpose of existing industry visits is to talk with businesses to identify areas of need and then provide/connect the business with the appropriate services or resources if applicable. The questions offered in this guide are intended to provide a reference point for important topics in conversations with existing industry. The questions are not intended to be a questionnaire in which a response is needed for each question. Business Services Team members are expected to prioritize the questions asked, based on the direction of the conversation with the business.

It is expected that Business Service Team members will research the business information including company name, address, activities and case notes, website, HQ country, industry sector, year established, employees, annual revenue, products or services, and brief company description. It is important to identify the appropriate contact for your conversation (it may be multiple people). It is critical to have a decision-maker in the room. Other items to consider PRIOR to making the visit;

* Determine which partner may have an existing relationship (or who has the best relationship) with this employer – invite them to join – or at the least provide valuable insight
* Balance the number of people you invite to join - don’t overwhelm the employer!
* Know when to speak - this is an opportunity for you to listen and share with the employer if applicable.

**COMPANY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND**

* Tell me about your company and the products you manufacture.
* What is the history of your company?
* What is the organizational structure of your company?
* Do you have locations/facilities/plants in other cities/states/countries?
* What are your company’s goals and values?

**CUSTOMIZED RECRUITMENT**

* **Workforce Status**
* How many employees do you have?
* Do you have a contingent workforce?
* What are your workforce demographics?
* What are your current workforce needs? Future needs?
* How do you feel your wage as compare to your competitors?
* Do you require any certifications or special skills in order to apply for a job?
* Do you have employee retention and/or attrition issues?
* Do you have any issues in finding or hiring new employees?
* What are your best sources for talent?
* Are you familiar with employer services available through NCWorks?

**TRAINING GRANTS**

* **Skills Development**
* What are the most important skills to your operations?
* Do you have trouble finding skilled workforce?
* How do you currently train your employees?
* Are you interested in training/retraining your employees?

**BUSINESS INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

* **Industry and Trends**
* **Growth Plans**
* **Opportunities for Collaboration**
* **Industry and Trends**
* What are the key issues facing your industry?
* Are the problems short term (i.e., recession-related) or systemic?
* What are the current industry standards for your business sector?
* What impact has the advancement of technology had on your company?
* Are you interested in obtaining Labor Market Information?
* **Growth Plans**
* Where do you see your industry growing in North Carolina and in general?
* What would you say your immediate needs are to improve your business?
* **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION**
* Do you have any retention challenges?
* Do you have productivity challenges?
* Do you have any skill development needs?
* Is there any other concerns that we may be able to assist you with?

Once the visit is complete, please summarize the notes from your visits and discussion. Create activities and case notes in NCWorks Online and other mediums so other partners will aware of the conversation. Your summary should provide a brief overview/update on the company and its general business outlook. Specific challenges and issues should be noted, as well as services/resources recommended. Follow-up discussions/meetings with company should be recorded.