

House Proposal of Amendment

S. 155

An act relating to creating a strategic workforce development needs assessment and strategic plan.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

(a) Over the years, significant resources have been devoted in Vermont to supporting many workforce development, training, and education opportunities that prepare individuals for employment. Among them are private and public education, social service programs focusing on work readiness, internships, apprenticeships, training programs, and other forms of government support.

(b) Despite these investments, there is a gap between the readiness of individuals for employment and the needs of employers in the State. Graduates and underemployed and unemployed workers express that they cannot find work, they do not possess adequate work skills and experience, or that jobs for which they are qualified are unavailable. At the same time, employers report difficulty in filling current and projected job openings due in part to the insufficient skills, training, or experience of the available workforce. Consequently, individuals are not advancing their employment interests and businesses are impeded in their success. The combination of these factors negatively impacts the revenues of the State and the well-being of our citizenry.

(c) There is broad agreement in the General Assembly that individuals should have adequate opportunities to engage in the workforce in the way that best suits their needs and wishes. There is also agreement that the workforce needs of our employers must be met in order for our businesses and economy to thrive.

(d) Administrators and policy makers acknowledge that there are both gaps and overlaps among the many workforce development, training, and education activities in the State. There is broad consensus on the need for significantly improved coordination and strategic focus.

(e) In adopting this act, it is the goal of the General Assembly to create a process that will result in a comprehensive compendium of information about the workforce education and training activities that are taking place in the State. This information, which is not currently compiled in a way that is sufficiently useful to policy makers and administrators, will serve as the basis for the more effective and strategic use of both public and private dollars.

Sec. 2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WORK GROUP

(a) Creation. There is created a Workforce Development Work Group composed of the following members:

(1) two members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;

(2) two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee; and

(4) the Commissioner of Labor or designee.

(b) Duties. The Work Group shall:

(1) coordinate with the Workforce Development Council in the performance of the Council's duties under 10 V.S.A. § 541(i);

(2) research, compile, and inventory all workforce education and training programs and activities taking place in Vermont;

(3) identify the number of individuals served by each of the programs and activities, and estimate the number of individuals in the State who could benefit from these programs and activities;

(4) identify the amount and source of financial support for these programs and activities, including financial support that goes directly to the individuals, and, to the extent practicable, the allocation of resources to the direct benefits, management, and overhead costs of each program and activity;

(5) identify the mechanics by which these programs and activities are evaluated for effectiveness and outcomes;

(6) provide a summary for each program or activity of its delivery model, including how the program or activity aligns with employment opportunities located in Vermont;

(7) identify current statutory provisions concerning coordination, integration, and improvement of workforce education and training programs, including identification of the entities responsible for performing those duties;

(8) identify overlaps in existing workforce development programs and activities; and

(9)(A) research and inventory all programs and activities taking place in the State, both public and private, that identify and evaluate employers' needs for employees, including the skills, education, and experience required for available and projected jobs;

(B) indicate who is responsible for these activities and how they are funded;

(C) specify the data collection activities that are taking place; and

(D) identify overlaps in programs, activities, and data collection that identify and evaluate employers' needs for employees.

(c) The Work Group shall meet not more than eight times, and shall have the administrative, legal, and fiscal support of the Office of Legislative Council and the Legislative Joint Fiscal Office.

(d) In order to perform its duties pursuant to this act, the Work Group shall have the authority to request and gather data and information as it determines is necessary from entities that conduct workforce education and training programs and activities, including agencies, departments, and programs within the Executive Branch and from nongovernmental entities that receive state-controlled funding. Unless otherwise exempt from public disclosure pursuant to state or federal law, a workforce education and training provider shall provide the data and information requested by the Work Group within a reasonable time period.

(e) On or before January 15, 2014, the Work Group shall submit its findings and recommendations to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Education, and to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Education.

(f) Members of the Work Group shall be eligible for per diem compensation, mileage reimbursement, and other necessary expenses as provided in 2 V.S.A. § 406.