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Agency of Education

Testimony to House Committee on Education

Last February, ACCD (Pat Moulton), DOL (Michele Kupersmith), and AOE (Heather Bouchey & Jay Ramsey) were sitting at a table during a convening related to the Advance Vermont 70x25 initiative. That discussion was about our collective desire to identify where our funds overlap with regard to career technical education and workforce development. We talked about how to more effectively collaborate around the awarding of funds and alignment regarding development of career pathways. We left with an action step that we would try to find more formal ways to be intentional in our work in the workforce development domain.

In March of this year, Heather Bouchey and I submitted an application for the New Skills for Youth grant. This program, funded by JP Morgan chase is part of the Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) career readiness initiative. Twenty-five states were awarded \$100,000 each (42 applied). The funds were to be used primarily to conduct a needs assessment/gap analysis for career readiness with a focus on CTE. That information would be used to develop a three year action plan – which would be the application for Phase 2 and only 10 would win round 2 – about \$1.4 million each.

With the \$100,000 in funds from CCSSO, Vermont has contracted with the Southern Region Education Board to conduct a gap analysis. The gap analysis is intended to look at gaps in preparation for careers, gaps in policies that align secondary and post-secondary CTE programming with labor market needs, and several other areas. As recipients of the first round of grants, Vermont is entitled to participate in other career readiness initiative events – including webinars, meetings, and conferences that all center around career readiness.

Vermont's proposed work incorporates the following components: (1) conducting a comprehensive needs assessment focused on gaps in career technical education (CTE) service delivery, curricula, and instruction with respect to high-skill, high-wage jobs in VT; (2) designing a three-year statewide career readiness plan, as a result of the needs assessment and gap analysis, to guide a future implementation phase; and (3)



establishing a Career Readiness Council (CRC), composed of leaders from secondary and postsecondary education; employment, workforce, and industry; and legislative bodies, who will be collectively responsible for the developing the statewide career readiness plan

The “career readiness council” as we were calling it had the initial meeting in July 2016 and included Job Spaulding and Yasmine Zeisler from VSC; Pat Moulton and Joan Goldstein from Agency of Commerce & Community Development; Annie Noonan and Michele Kupersmith from DOL, Scott Giles from VSAC, and Lisa Ventriss from the Vermont Business Round Table. Ryan Reyna, the “coach” that was provided from the NSFY project was also there. We also invited three technical center directors (Essex, North Country, and Central Vermont).

We didn’t want to create yet another council – another reason to meet but we all felt it was an important topic. There is no entity or education related initiative in Vermont that focuses specifically on career readiness – at least not in the same way that we talk about college readiness. The two efforts that come to mind immediately are Advance Vermont and the Pre-k -16 Council. Advance Vermont is concerned with postsecondary attainment; the Pre-k-16 Council is concerned with aligning pre-k to 12 with the higher education community and with postsecondary aspirations and postsecondary enrollment and completion.

As you know employers are very concerned with career readiness. So much so that they frequently say “just send me someone who can show up on time, and who will work hard and we’ll teach them the rest.” I understand what they’re saying, but to me, that seems like a very low bar.

We haven’t asked the members of the “council” to reconvene simply because we need to determine what actionable items will come out of this council and how can they overlap with other groups and organizations like the State Workforce Development Board. But this doesn’t mean that we aren’t work on this and other initiatives.

Vermont brought a team of 5 to Washington, DC in October to present our proposals for the second round of funds. Our team included Heather Bouchey (AOE), Lisa Ventriss (VT Business Round Table), Michele Kupersmith (DOL), Joan Goldstein (ACCD), Patrick Leduc (VSAC) and me (AOE). During this event, Joan and Lisa attended a presentation from the US Chamber Foundation about a project called Talent Pipeline Management. The Chamber Foundation website describes the project like this:

Through extending lessons learned from innovations in supply chain management, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation calls for employers to



play a new and expanded leadership role as “end-customers” of education and workforce partnerships. From there, employers can proactively organize and manage talent supply chain partnerships with measures and incentives tied to performance.

This Friday, a team from Vermont is leaving to participate in a Talent Pipeline Management training event. Three representatives from RDCs around the state are joining Lisa Ventriss (one Vermont’s project leads) and a partner from ACCD to learn the model and bring it back to Vermont.

Vermont Business Roundtable, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Agency of Education constitute the steering committee for this project and have been meeting regularly for over a month with scheduled meetings into April to identify what we will measure and how we will measure it to determine the success of the project. Joan Goldstein gave some testimony about this a couple of weeks ago.

This project will help the Agency’s efforts to build programs of study within CTE centers and it will help the state’s overall efforts to identify and build career pathways between secondary and post-secondary education and training (including adult CTE and adult basic education) and that will be used to help build the workforce and the economy.

