

Testimony of Gwen Bailey-Rowe, North Country Career Center Assistant Director for Adult Education to the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee
February 6, 2019

Representative Marcotte and Members of the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee; I would like to thank you for asking me to testify regarding Adult Technical Education to discuss how our programs align with workforce needs in our regions, as well as how to build capacity in workforce development for adults.

My name is Gwen Bailey-Rowe and I have been the Assistant Director for Adult Education at the North Country Career Center in Newport since 2013.

To prepare for today's testimony, I surveyed my colleagues at the 17 career centers around Vermont. We meet bi-monthly in Randolph as an association under the acronym VACTEA, the Vermont Adult Career and Technical Education Association. We use this time together to discuss successes, challenges, as we attempt to meet the workforce needs in our regions. The existence and the strength of this group is building capacity statewide for adult technical education programs as we attempt to align offerings and curriculum.

Let me begin by giving some examples.

The first question I asked my colleagues was about aligning Adult Technical Education programs with workforce needs and how they build capacity at their career centers.

Responses showed that we recognize in our effort to develop programs that are relevant to regional workforce needs, we must go into the community and become involved in regular meetings. This gives us valuable face-time with business owners, case managers from Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation, Creative Workforce Solutions, Adult Basic Education, the Community College of Vermont, and other providers that are unique to our regions. In these meetings, we are listening to needs, and becoming part of solutions.

VACTEA can respond quickly to employer needs to provide custom training that can develop into regular programming and shared with VACTEA members.

1. At the St. Johnsbury Academy, Marina Cole has worked closely with their local hospital NVRH to develop leadership training to develop potential of their managers and those who could become managers. Southern New Hampshire University accredits this leadership series. Not only has she met the needs of her local hospital, she now has curriculum to share with VACTEA. I have asked Marina to participate in meetings in Newport to share the successes of her program, so that we may try to replicate it to meet the needs of employers in our region.
2. Hannaford Career Center keeps up with workforce needs by convening Advisory Committee meetings at multiple times per year. In nine months, they have offered three TIG welding classes for specific Addison County employers to improve the skills of incumbent workers.

3. Northwest Technical Center developed a Phlebotomy certification program in partnership with UVM Medical Center. Program development planning and curriculum has been shared with all members of VACTEA.
4. North Country Career Center developed a 100-hour Medication Nursing Assistant program in response to the Board of Nursing's recognition of this endorsement, new to Vermont, which allows and LNA to pass medication on a level two ward, freeing up an RN from the medication cart. We run one of two programs in the state and are ready to support other career centers to develop this program.
5. Southwest Vermont CDC meets monthly with representative from local manufacturing firms to discuss their training needs and entry-level skills needed for new hires. In the past year, they have offered or are planning to offer 30-hour training courses in all levels of CNC operation, blueprint reading, Excel, and now GD&T.
6. Center for Technology, Essex developed and HVACR lab, which can offer EPA 608 certifications to meet the growing need for Plumbing and Heating technicians certification to handled refrigerants, due to the increasing installation of heat compressors in residential builds and remodels. Now CTE, Essex is consulting with North Country Career Center, as we develop a HVACR lab in our region.

VACTEA works to builds capacity.

1. North Country Career Center is collaborating with Community College of Vermont, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, and local childcare centers recruit a cohort of students that would like to be professional childcare workers. With a Department of Labor WETF Grant, we will fund the necessary certifying classes for starting their own in-home childcare business or working as a teaching associate in a childcare center. The cohort of students will also benefit from a four week paid internship at a local childcare center.
2. Last year Rived Bend Career and Technical Center received a Department of Health grant to develop and deliver Opiate Awareness training at all career centers throughout the state. Besides raising awareness about addiction, this effort has demonstrated how career centers can be a conduit for delivering training to all regions.
3. Hannaford Career and Technical Center partners with Vermont Adult Learning of Addison County to provide workforce development training to 18-24 year olds who are not in school and not fully employed. Hannaford provides technical training in health careers, NCCER construction, welding, and makes employment connections. VAL provides soft skill training, literacy and numeracy training, and recruitment from the community they serve. (Many other regions have a similar partnership).
4. St. Johnsbury Academy has a strong relationship with Creative Workforce Solutions, and organization, which is connecting potential employees with employers. CWS is a great resource

for identifying skills gaps. Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Labor case managers are able to give the same type of feedback to adult technical education offices. (Many other regions have a similar partnership).

The second question I asked my colleagues was about hopes. How could we train more Vermonters?

In some cases, responses I received were unique to regions, and the work that individual career centers need to do to raise their profile. However, there are common challenges that we hope to overcome as an association of adult career and technical educators.

1. In each career center, the position of Adult Education Coordinator varies. Most have Assistant Director duties or work in a part-time capacity. In career centers where we have full-time Adult Education Coordinators, the numbers of students trained is higher, and we see an increase in program development. How can we support an increase in personnel dedicated to developing adult career and technical education training in all career centers?
2. The Equipment Grant that was funded last year has provided a needed injection of funds and imagination into adult CTE. If this Equipment Grant is approved for next year, we could be even more prepared to develop programs and partnerships for adult technical training. However, can this grant go beyond equipment to support the expenses of program development?
3. The Department of Labor has been a consistent partner and offers many grants, besides the Equipment Grant, that are important to our success and progress. The VACTEA has asked the DOL for reliable timeframes for grant applications, so that we can plan with partners, develop curriculum, market programs, and deliver training. We need lead time to make this work, and we need to be able to count on a timely release of the funds. They hear us and are responding with the possibility of dedicated personnel to coordinate this effort.
4. VSAC Non-Degree grant funding runs out in late winter or early spring and is not replenished until July 1. This creates a season of low opportunities. For example, CDL training may come to a halt in the spring due to lack of funding.
5. Within our career centers, we need to see how our adult programs can be extensions of secondary CTE programs. How can we help bridge gap between graduation and a career in a trade or post-secondary training.

Some examples – but not inclusive of all we can do and are already doing...

Career Centers filling gap and leading to	Vermont State Colleges/Trade School
LNA, MNA	LPN, RN
Emergency Medical Technician	Paramedicine
EPA 608, Oil Burner Bronze, Propane Technician	Plumbing Apprentice
NCCER Construction	Construction Management
Fundamentals in Early Childcare	Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education

