Colorado Community College System

Lessons Learned:
BUSINESS & INDUSTRY Partnerships

APRIL 2010

Scope of Project

"Colorado's success in a competitive global market is based on the state's ability to meet the needs of employers with well-educated and trained employees. Investing time and resources into developing a highly skilled workforce will give Colorado an edge when attracting businesses, and growing and sustaining existing businesses already located in our state." Governor Ritter, August, 2009

In 2008, Governor Ritter convened the Jobs Cabinet. This group was composed of top business, economic development, education and workforce development experts, along with members of the Governor's Cabinet. The group was co-chaired by attorney and community leader Jim Lyons, Qwest Executive Vice President Teresa Taylor and retired Trinidad State Junior College President Ruth Ann Woods. Over a period of 16 months, the Jobs Cabinet found "a robust system of dedicated education, training and workforce professionals who make it their lives' work to help Colorado's businesses and workers thrive in these turbulent economic times. Their efforts at collaboration and partnership are to be applauded." (*Economic Competitiveness through Collaboration, Talent Development and Innovation Report*, August 2009)

The Jobs Cabinet concluded that to improve workforce quality and better meet the needs of businesses currently and into the future, Colorado needs a proactive strategy that includes, "a combination of existing workforce investment boards (WIBs), a more focused outreach to business, enhanced electronic systems and ***continued emphasis on Colorado's P-20 educational system, especially our community colleges"*** (Emphasis added).

A recommendation of the Jobs Cabinet report was for the State Board for Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education to review and evaluate the continued collaborative relationships between community colleges and industry to ensure a prepared high-skilled, high-demand Colorado workforce with an emphasis on:

• Continuing to identify promising practices in creating, developing and administering programs directed to businesses short-term training needs;

• Continuing to identify training delivery methods to better meet the needs of businesses and workers.

This project, *Lessons Learned: Business & Industry Partnerships*, was to conduct a series of focus groups to determine how well partnerships were working between local business & industry and the colleges. Specifically, the project was to explore areas such as:

- Partnerships developed with the college

- Components of the partnerships that worked well

- Roadblocks to successful fruition of the partnerships

- Benefits of the partnerships for college, business/industry and community.

- Strategies for continuing additional partnerships.

Focus Group Methodology

Several different methodologies were considered. Focus groups were selected because they produce high quality data from qualitative interviews with a small number of carefully selected participants. Qualitative data derived from focus groups are very valuable when vivid and rich descriptions are needed. Unlike the one-way flow of information in one-on-one interviews or surveys, it was felt that focus groups would generate data through in-depth group discussions.

Project Elements

The *Lessons Learned: Business & Industry Partnerships* project had the following elements:

- Focus Groups. Focus groups were conducted at a select sample of community colleges in the state including both rural and urban schools. Using a random generation program, CCCS determined the participating colleges. Group members were recruited randomly or intentionally by the individual college. Focus groups were held on the college campus or other off-site location selected and sponsored by the college. Groups were conducted with one facilitator and one videographer (facilitator asked the questions and managed the group while the videographer recorded the actual conversations.)

- Debrief Session. A debrief and feedback session with college representatives was held after focus groups, as appropriate.

- College Survey. A survey on Business & Industry Partnerships was distributed to each participating community college. Responses from the limited returned surveys informed the findings of the focus groups.

- Final Report. This final report on the project was prepared and submitted to the State Board for Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

Calendar of Focus Groups

Focus groups for this project were conducted from November, 2009 through January, 2010. In all, seven focus groups were conducted. Two originally selected institutions, Arapahoe Community College and Front Range Community College did not participate in the focus groups (see chart). Pikes Peak Community College was added as a replacement.

Colorado Northwestern Community College	Friday, November 13, 2009 from noon to 1:30 PM	11 participants, including John Boyd, president
Trinidad State Junior College*	Monday, November 16, 2009 from 9:30 to 11 a.m.	8 participants including Felix Lopez, interim president
Lamar Community College	Thursday, November 19, 2009 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.	14 participants including John Marrin, president
Pueblo Community College	Friday, November 20, 2009 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.	11 participants
Morgan Community College*	Monday, November 23, 2009 From 9 to 11:30 a.m.	14 participants
Front Range Community College	Wednesday, December 2, 2009	Cancelled due to weather and low participation
Arapahoe Community College	Friday, December 11, 2009	Cancelled due to low participation
Red Rocks Community College*	Thursday, January 7, 2010 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.	7 participants
Pikes Peak Community College*	Thursday, January 14, 2010 1 to 2:30 p.m.	12 participants

*Post-focus group debrief sessions were held at these colleges with presidential staff.

Focus Group Participant Profile

The seven focus groups had a total of 77 participants, ranging in group size from the smallest at seven to two focus groups with 14 participants. The participants were categorized into three broad areas.

- **Private Sector**. These were focus group participants that owned or were employed by a private concern. They varied from agricultural concerns to service organizations to large manufacturing companies.

- **Public Sector**. These were focus group participants that were associated with a non-profit organization such as SCORE, a chamber of commerce or economic development agency. They could also be an employee of a local jurisdiction's planning department or workforce center.

- **Education Sector**. These were focus group participants who were in the educational arena. They included superintendents of school districts, as well as community college presidents, administrators, and faculty.

The three sectors provide a balanced, comprehensive perspective on the roles, responsibilities and effectiveness of community colleges in community development, workforce education, economic development and business & industry training. Appendix A is a complete listing, by community college, of the focus group participants and their organizational affiliation.

The following pie chart is a depiction of the percentage breakdown of the three sectors. 54% were from the private sector; 30% represented the public sector and 16% comprised the education sector.
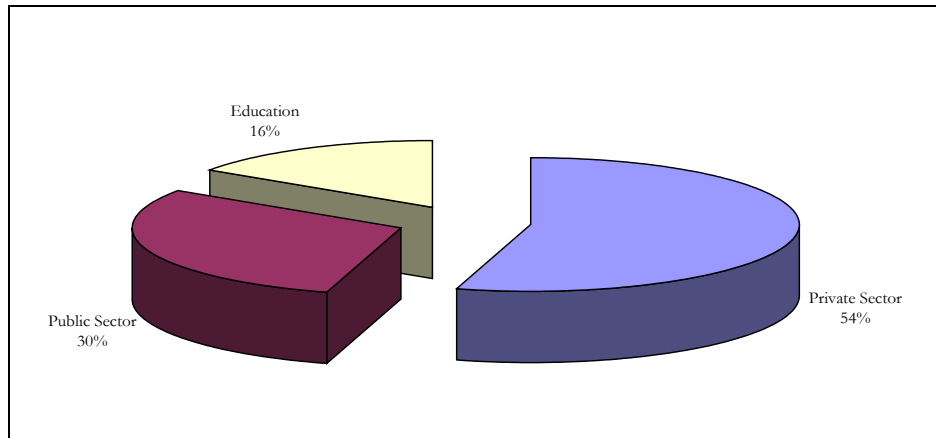
The following table is a breakdown of the focus groups at each community college according to their sector affiliation. The private sector represented from 29% to 82% of individual focus groups. The public sector ranged from 0% to 57% of the groups. And, education counted for as much as 43% of a group, with one group having 0%.

	Private Sector	Public Sector	Education	Total
CNCC	9	0	2	11
	81.8%	0.0%	18.2%	
TSJC	3	4	1	8
	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	
LCC	4	4	6	14
	28.6%	28.6%	42.9%	
PCC	9	2	0	11
	81.8%	18.2%	0.0%	
MCC	9	4	1	14
	64.3%	28.6%	7.1%	
RRCC	2	4	1	7
	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	
PPCC	6	5	1	12
	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	
Total	42	23	12	77
	54.5%	**29.9%**	**15.6%**	**100.0%**

Focus Group Findings

A protocol was developed for use in conducting the focus groups (see Appendix B: Focus Group Procedure and Script). This protocol acted as general guidelines for the conduct of the group discussions. A preliminary analysis of the focus groups suggested that the participant comments could be grouped into four general categories (NOTE: In addition to the focus group comments, responses from the college survey were included as appropriate, See Appendix C: Community College Survey.) Four categories of focus group comments are:

- **Community Asset**. These comments characterized the value of the community college as a community partner.

- **Business & Industry Partnership**. These comments addressed the range of perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of community colleges in serving business & industry education and training needs.

- **Improvements and Issues**. These comments encompass the various issues, concerns and recommendations made by the focus groups to improve the colleges' effectiveness in serving business & industry.

- **Best Practices**. In conducting the focus groups, there were projects and initiatives that were enthusiastically embraced in their communities. These are listed as "best practices" for consideration by other community colleges.

Community Asset

In general, community colleges were perceived to be highly valued assets to the local community. The college's role in education and training, its engagement in civic organizations, its contribution as an economic engine (often, one of the largest employers in the area) and its critical –particularly in the rural areas –participation in economic development was greatly appreciated by all focus group participants. Particularly in rural

Colorado, the community college was viewed as a critical part of the strategy to keep local youth in the community. Additionally, the community colleges were generally lauded for their responsiveness. Representative comments are:

"I think that having a local college is a huge asset…"

"A good partner in the community…"

"[The community college has] really talented teachers and staff; [that have] been here for a while, [and are] committed. People recognize how important the college is to the economy; to keep kids from leaving the community… not every college has the respect of the community."

"Overall community buzz is that it's a great asset to the community…"

"Role of college is a big part of economic development in this area; it's a big deal to say that we have a community college in our backyard…"

"I could spend an hour on the benefits of [college name] in economic development, when marketing the county to potential businesses and existing businesses; it is an asset that sets us apart from other communities…"

"The quality of the programming at [college name] and the reputation that [college name] has earned was attracting… students"

"[The college] has its finger on the pulse of the community, and I want to commend [the College President] and his staff because they do know what is going on…"

"The quality of the staff and the longevity of people here says a lot about the college. We are one step ahead in all we do…"

"We worked very closely with [the college] and have had good success with them."

"Community involvement and outreach has really expanded in the- probably I would say- last two or three years… just hearing more about [college name]… it's about exposure."

"We have a very close working relationship with the community college; they actually provide staff to our sites to provide training and classes directly on-site."

"I've been involved with [college name] probably for 10 years as well and in various ways. Red Rocks has been very generous in offering their facilities for many different meetings. One in particular that I recall is a visioning meeting for the purpose of establishing a new curriculum and a new direction for Alameda High School. [They also] provide the facility for the fire muster in the summer. Also we have worked with business in establishing a program called "Greening Lakewood Businesses", doing a comprehensive analysis utilizing [college name] students…"

"A unique challenge for a community college is retain youth in the community… we have to find the right balance.

"On a personal note, I have a sister who went back to school late in life, chose [college name] to start, and today is a very successful senior vice president of a large international insurance company… I am a big believer in what [college name] and community colleges can do."

"On a couple of different levels… I just never cease to be amazed at how we will go to [college employee] and say we need this and something happens… literally, an entirely new program, an entirely new class all in six months"

"[The college has] an atmosphere of "we can look at things in different ways, and we can move forward in a cooperative way and we can be progressive…" (They have created) one of a kind, one-off things here… particularly there have been some energy jobs that have been created... Everyone else around here just really wants to do not only the right thing but in a way that benefits everybody."

"I was at spring commencement; and there were three high school kids who were graduated with their high school diploma and their associate's degree at the time… that to me was flat out the coolest thing going.. I would love to see that pushed more."

"…willingness and openness of the college to reach out and engage the community and businesses."

"(The college) has adapted very well; very responsive."

"Elected officials are so connected to the college; any one of us could pick up the phone and call any county official or any one of state elected officials and they would respond immediately…" (Comment by college president.)

Business & Industry Partnerships

The community colleges in Colorado have created well-received and varied business & industry partnerships, reflecting the local community needs. These partnerships are often beneficial to the economic needs of business & industry and the economic/enrollment needs of the college. The business & industry sector, or individual company, has their needs for developmental education and entry or middle-skill levels met in a cost-effective way. These partnerships, particularly if they generate FTE, are economically viable for the colleges; but colleges enter local partnerships for numerous reasons and a strict return-on-investment may not be a prime consideration. (See section on "Issues and Concerns.")

Focus group participants at all sessions were uniformly positive about the involvement of community colleges in business & industry endeavors, as well as positive about the benefits of the partnerships for the college, business & industry, and community. General comments and specific comments about components of the partnerships that worked well include:

"Community college system is perfect for us because they have short term classes that people can get in and out and employed."

"Fortunately for us [the community college], we live in a relatively small community where it's pretty easy to know people; we will actually go out to the mines or out to the

power plant. It's generally a conversation that we have face-to-face to identify what their needs are and how we can accommodate that…"

"It's close and handy; we get them trained and right back on the job really quickly."

"Business thinks that [college name] is a huge asset, obviously not just as an employer, but training programs that they offer… are a huge asset."

"We support financially as much as we can [college name] because we know how important education is to the community."

"We have a highly valued and very extensive relationship with [college name]."

"[College name] is coming to the table to meet training needs."

"[The college is] proactive in fulfilling the healthcare need in northern Colorado."

"[College name]has been very adaptable for us; very accommodating…" "I would second that."

"They listen to what we look for and then try to tailor that; there is a little lag time but that's natural; but I have seen over the years that it does change."

"Lots of interaction with [college name]; sharing a billboard; we held events and programs at the college; a few of the faculty on our committees and councils that we have." (A chamber of commerce participant)

"I think that the college has been very responsive to industry… they have done a very good job with that."

"[The college formed a] Natural Resources Advisory Group… [This was a] collaboration of agencies and individuals within the areas… everybody from Venal Utah on down to the Rifle and over to Steamboat Springs… working together to put range science program, there will be a certificate for guides and outfitters, there will be an AGS and an AAS as the students are prepped to move into range studies…"

"We [the college] created a banking program that the local banks said they need and that banking program is fully online. It is a good example of serving the needs of our community… instead of expecting people to drive in from all over of our communities. Our service area is about half the size of West Virginia."

"They are doing a lot of things well; it shows on our business retention survey. Both [college name] and [college name] are way above the national average. We are able to compare our data to the others and consistently every month both OJC and LCC rank very high. The business community is pleased with the responsiveness of the colleges and what they are able to get here."

The response of individual community colleges to needs for customized training, particularly in short-term and low-participation situations, is not consistent throughout Colorado. The utilization of Colorado FIRST and Existing Industries grants ranges, for example, from very little to multiple grants to the same company over many years. There are numerous extenuating factors that hamper a college's ability to address customized training. (See "Issues and Concerns.") At the same time, it is clear that the leadership at all of the community colleges in the focus group pool is committed to finding innovative and creative ways to meet local customized training needs. Representative comments include:

"We really need to tap into [Colorado FIRST]"

"The numbers for Colorado FIRST have never made sense for us. [Our employers are] unwilling to meet the requirements of disclosing employee information that Colorado FIRST warrants."

"It has also been a challenge to get companies to spend the time to complete the grant application paperwork. They comment that it is too cumbersome, takes too much time, too much detail is requested, and several balk at sharing the required financial information."

"Our connection with [college name] is huge; we serve customers through the workforce investment act."

"A real advocate for community colleges, I know the kinds of opportunities that community colleges afford folks that they otherwise wouldn't have." (In regard to customized training)

"When we started [2 ½ years ago], we brought all of our employees into [college name] had about 10 months of training in a lot of basic things (safety, electrical motors, basic understanding). We did get into some very technical things as well like for our electrical and mechanical people…"

"The instructors… are very good quality instructors… we audit the classes… and they always have very high marks."

"Long standing relationship with [college name]; we have done some manufacturing forums [and have a] good history with them."

"Worked with EPIC [college name]… worked out really well"

"WIA [has a] long lasting relationship [with the college]… [and we are] forging forward with new opportunities."

Issues and Concerns

The funding mechanisms for academic programs are long-standing and well-understood. A program of study is identified and matched to labor market trends; key investments in equipment, if needed, and curriculum development are made; and certificates or degrees are defined. Equipment investments are essentially amortized by using general funds. Enrolled students pay tuition and generate FTE creating two funding streams to cover the instructional operational costs.

Funding mechanisms for customized training are less defined. Colorado FIRST and Existing Industries grants can help defray the costs of designing and mounting

customized training, but most customized training expenditures are largely "earned income" from charging companies for the training. Since customized training is considered an "enterprise account," earned income for customized training must exceed the associated cost and any equipment investment must be expensed in the same fiscal year. Some institutions recognize the importance of customized training and use the surpluses from one enterprise account, such as the bookstore, to offset the losses in customized training. Another complication is the myriad of training delivery options that employers, and employees, demand. Training might be at the business's location. Trainees may only need a few hours of training. Training may need to occur at non-traditional hours, e.g. nights, weekends, graveyard shift, etc.

In a related budget issue for community colleges, budget reductions since 2001 have significantly decimated faculty and staff ranks. Many colleges have assigned workforce training and other customized training efforts as part of a larger staff workload. With a myriad of roles and responsibilities, these staff often lack the time or resources to devote to nurturing business & industry relationships, identifying customized training opportunities, and devising innovative and creative ways to address the needs. In this regard, Pikes Peak Community College has taken a calculated financial risk and hired a full-time dean for economic and workforce development.

Representative comments include:

"When I came, she [a college vice president] made a point to come in and talk to me about the void that she saw in Colorado FIRST and how we needed to have a person dedicated to that. We made it a dean because we wanted the dean at the table along with the academic deans. Ultimately we want to get where we are integrated with credit and noncredit… we are committed and ultimately we will bring credit and noncredit together into one continuum."

"We have to have a presence in workforce development, whether we breakeven or not."

"The Majority of people are looking for flexibility…and how fast can I get it done."

"…something that I have been hearing from interviews from the business community for quite some time; that's the need for a portion of a class; they are willing to send their employee for a day or two but they can't justify sending them for an entire semester because all they need to know is how to do a spread sheet."

"One of the major challenges for educational institutions moving forward is how do we adapt to this new generation that's coming up."

"Many organizations realize the value received from training but just do not have the dollars to expend in that area."

"There has been a tremendous decline [in customized training] in the past 12 months. We had one FTE in customized training, but I don't know if we can continue even at ½ FTE."

"The pressure is on FTE; but we have all these other needs that MCC needs to fulfill."

"The overemphasis on FTE is not good."

"The last thing we want to do is cap our enrollment so we stay below that number [a threshold number for large/small school funding allocations]…"

"Some initiatives do not yield a monetary return, however, the college exposure and effort suffices to call worthy attention as a good gesture initiative. Many times, it is not the monetary result that commands action, however, the expectation by the community for the college to respond becomes a responsibility to react proactively in an effective, assertive and prompt manner."

"One of the problems that we have with business & industry is the whole aspect of cost reimbursement and the paperwork associated with cost. It discourages business & industry from even working with us because of the bureaucracy and administrative burden of the paperwork (for) COF reimbursement. It's the single biggest complaint that we get from business & industry on training."

"Haven't been in a position economically to do [service business & industry in customized training]. "

"You talk about how to incentivize the local community college, if we knew here that noncredit counted the same as credit, I guarantee you we would be stepping up."

"Customized training is going to continue. For me to put a full-time individual in there and not have the sustainability is not good business…"

"One of the problems is we have no one who's job is community education. Right now it's not a priority for us for any one person in the institution to do that"

"We have an ROI [return on investment calculation]. One of the first steps in program development is do the ROI, we don't want to jump into something that will not have the return for us… especially if there is a lot of equipment or if we have to have specialized instruction. [Are there] other considerations beside financial? Absolutely."

 "[There is a] bigger ROI. [It's the] economic impact of [college name] on the community, on the whole 11,000 square mile service area. [We are doing an economic impact study that will show] for every dollar that is(?) spent at MCC, we generate seven dollars in the community."

Best-kept secret in Colorado

In the Jobs Cabinet publication, *Economic Competitiveness through Collaboration, Talent Development and Innovation Report*, it is reported that, "While many programs and services are currently offered to help Colorado businesses find and train employees, business are often unaware of those offerings." Further, the report states, "Our survey found that 82% of employers had not used their local workforce center, community college or economic development organization and that many employers did not know what services were offered. Effective workforce development programs and services cannot be effective if they are "best kept secrets." …Barely a majority of the respondents (54%) understand or use the training offered by community colleges. Of the 46% of

businesses who do not use community college training programs, nearly two-thirds say they could use community college grads but there are no programs that meet their needs. An astonishing 70% have never contacted a community college about employee training." The focus groups underscored the findings of the Jobs Cabinet report. Typical comments included:

"Best kept secret in northeast Colorado."

"From a reactive standpoint, outstanding. From a(?) proactive stand point, marketing the product, which is the student, that's where I am suggesting that there may not be(?) the connection that there could be…"

"But I didn't know until I came to this meeting that you had these focused non-degree specific training programs. We might be able to make use of those in a different way."

"I didn't realize that there was all this kind of training…that specialized. That's a big deal to me."

"It's been hard for me to know what's available… I need to find out how to know more about what's available."

"I don't know what is on the whole plate."

"I really believe real opportunity lies with the college to get more involved with the business community and while Rotary and chambers to a certain degree can help with that, outreach to the business community in different ways might be of benefit; relationship building is so important."

"The college is doing a good job in reaching out…of being what they are and getting the word out; and they are out recruiting students to come here more than recruiting businesses."

Best Practices: Procedures & Process

Unlike the traditional community college credit programs, there are no statewide policies to govern process or procedures when designing workforce training programs. Individual colleges have established a variety of processes to streamline the development and implementation of workforce training programs. The "best practices" include:

- CEO to CEO Conversations. One college sets appointments with the college president and the CEO of local companies. The vice presidents of the college [instructional and finance] and the company are included in the introductory meeting. The CEO's establish what the goal of each program will be and then direct the vice presidents to "make it work". With a directive from "the top" programs are quickly implemented.

- BISnet. Sponsored by CCCS, BISnet is an electronic network with a comprehensive listing of business and workforce development training resources available through Colorado's community colleges and technical schools.

- College Partnerships. To defray the costs of expensive training programs, two colleges have partnered to share equipment and the costs associated with curriculum design. This has been particularly beneficial in the emerging wind industry.

- Needs Assessment. Completing a community needs assessment was very helpful for a small rural institution. This allowed the college to leverage resources to develop programs to address local industry need. The college developed a series of program proposals prior to meeting with industry leaders.

- Combine Credit and Non-Credit Offerings. Colleges are concerned about returns on cash operated non-credit offerings. As a result, one college is combining credit programs such as ESL courses with non-credit customized training programs. This reduces the over-all costs for industry and the college is able to increase credit-bearing offerings.

Best Practices: Programs

There are numerous projects and initiatives at Colorado's community colleges that were created to meet local needs and have been locally successful and well-received. These "best practices" include:

- Adult Basic Education at Cargill Meat Solutions. This Morgan Community College program has received recognition nationally and is a long-lasting example of a successful partnership between business and education. Begun in 1993, over 200 students per year participate in ESL, Basic Skills, GED, and College Preparatory classes. Cargill makes available 3 classrooms and a computer lab. Employees of the plant and their family members attend class before or after their regular shift at the plant.

- Use of "Private Instruction" at Morgan Community College. Morgan Community College has effectively used private instruction to generate FTE. Meeting one-on-one with students who might, for example, be receiving training in QuickBooks. This approach allows the instructor to personalize the training to the specific needs of the student. Instruction typically occurs at the student's workplace.

- 21st Century Skills Forum. For two years, Pikes Peak Community College has helped to plan and host a career exploration forum for middle school students. A partnership of Junior Achievement, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Community College, the 21st Century Skills Forum is

designed to encourage middle school students "to be thinking more in terms of future careers in many different areas."

- Community Engagement. All community colleges are engaged, at some level, with their local communities. Particularly at the rural community colleges, the education-sector participants in the focus groups clearly took their role as a community partner seriously. The colleges were highly visible assisting and participating at local community activities and events. Pikes Peak Community College, in particular, has a proactive approach to community engagement; a recent inventory of community involvement by faculty and staff resulted in an impressive listing.

- Mobile Laboratories. Pueblo Community College has mobile laboratories in answer to business & industry needs for customized manufacturing-related training. There are four laboratories: hydraulics, electrical, welding and machine shop. One focus group participant reported, "They brought it [the laboratory] onsite and we did [the training] in three days for 4 hours each."

- South East Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction program (**SEBREA**). SEBREA is a joint venture of six counties (**Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers Counties)**, Otero Junior College and Lamar Community College. It recently received an International Business Retention & Expansion Award for its economic development and training programs. Working with regional organizations and government agencies, this collaborative partnership helps attract, sustain and grow business in the six-county area. SEBREA's executive director, Tandy Parrish, is actually an employee of Otero Junior College, but she is housed at Lamar Community College.

- Greening Lakewood's Businesses. Red Rocks Community College has teamed up with the Alameda Gateway Community Association and other Lakewood organizations to form the Greening Lakewood Business Partnership. The goal of this public-private partnership is to develop a sustainable model for a citywide conversion of commercial properties (of less than 50,000 square feet) to optimum energy efficient standards. A key feature of the partnership is the educational component provided by RRCC. A leader in training for workforce development, RRCC provides coursework and internships to educate and retrain veterans and students from all backgrounds for employment in the private sector. This training creates a cycle of education, employment, and refurbishment potentially affecting 250 properties and 4,000 students/employees in Lakewood over the next 10 years.

- Energy Production and Industrial Construction (EPIC) Program. Trinidad State Junior College's EPIC is a "business driven initiative; one of the best models in the state in terms of leveraging resources." (focus group participant comment) There are three areas of emphasis under EPIC including EPIC Diesel, EPIC Heavy Equipment and EPIC Welding.

- Gunsmithing. Trinidad State Junior College and Brownell's, the world's largest supplier of firearm accessories, gun parts and gunsmithing tools, have entered into an innovative partnership for an advanced (third-year) gunsmithing program beginning January 2010 at the school's Trinidad, Colorado campus. TSJC has built a world-wide reputation for the excellence of its gunsmithing program. In addition to its Gunsmithing Program, TSJC also conducts a Summer NRA Gunsmithing Program that offers short-term summer courses.

Recommendations

College President Involvement: Business partnerships seem to be more effective, when presidents are explicitly and integrally involved in responding to business needs and implementing solutions. There is a strong correlation between presidential outreach and successful business/industry partnerships.

Designated Training Person: Colleges that have the most successful business and industry training programs have a designated person at the dean level or above who is responsible and accountable for the workforce development mission of the college.

Define & Promote College's Workforce Training Expertise: Throughout the focus group process business and industry representatives repeatedly reported that they did not know the college had such programs or that the college was the community's best kept secret. In order to better serve the business community, each college leadership team should define their mission for industry training and promote it throughout their service area.

Funding Source: Secure and coordinated alternative sources of funding for short-term, workforce-responsive training is critical. This may include pushing for legislated non-general funding based on a non-FTE metric for workforce training or simplifying the process for securing existing State funding. It may also include the development of a new type of value proposal to business/industry so that they better perceive an incentive to self-fund their employees' training and re-training at community colleges.

Colorado First Application: At each focus group it was reported that the Colorado First grant program was a source of funding but the grant application was too long and complicated for companies, especially smaller rural industry. In order to assist companies that are in the most need of training support, it is recommended that the Colorado First Grant Application be evaluated and streamlined where possible.