



**VISTA 2025 Goal 2:**

***Position Chester County as a magnet for attracting talent and a model for developing an employer ready workforce.***

**VISTA 2025 Goal 2 Team Meeting**

**December 11, 2015**

**Meeting Notes**

**Team Members Attending:** Kathi Cozzone, Trish Faidiga, Jim Nemes, Jerry Parker, Joe O'Brien, Kirk Putt, Chaya Scott, Ralf Weiser

**Also Attending:** Marybeth DiVincenzo, Pat Bokovitz, David Sciocchetti

**Kathi Cozzone**

- Opened the meeting at 9:10 AM
- Introduced herself as the public sector co-chair of the VISTA 2025 Goal 3 team
- Introduced Jerry Parker and Joe O'Brien as her co-chairs
- Asked all present to introduce themselves

**Kathi Cozzone**

- Asked for comments on meeting notes from July 28, 2015 meeting
- No comments received

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Gave examples of other VISTA 2025 goal activities
  - Goal 1 – Urban Centers Forum – all 15 boroughs and City of Coatesville represented – focus on urban economic development opportunities and approaches
  - Goal 4 – Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Map – resource guide for start-ups and entrepreneurs

**Pat Bokovitz:**

- Reported on status of new program to provide Economic Development Program Administrator for City of Coatesville – joint Chester County/Coatesville Area Partners for Progress (CAPP) initiative. Position likely filled by end of January.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Noted that new position would be based in the City of Coatesville
- Funding provided by County and CAPP

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Discussed the need to review the status of the VISTA 2025 Goal 2 Year One strategies and make decisions regarding them.
- Noted that the information package included a status report and a recommendation for each of the Year One strategies.
- Noted that Strategy 2.1.1 was successfully completed. Workforce Summit was held. Well over 100 in attendance. Event focused on important workforce issues including Baby boomers leaving the workforce, freelance economy and other critical topics.

**Pat Bokovitz:**

- Thanked Delaware County Community College, Chester County Intermediate Unit, Penn State Great Valley for their assistance

**Jim Nemes:**

- Stated that the Summit was a great event. Asked about follow-up and a “deeper dive” into key issues. We need to focus on the gaps in the system. Summit can’t just be a “check the box” event.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Noted that this group, the VISTA 2025 Goal 2 Team, will need to lead that effort. We need to keep the focus on the disruptors and any mismatch between what employers need and what the educational system is delivering.
- Noted that capacity is there if we correctly understand the needs and can get students to understand. Commented on use of apprenticeships to help build connections between high school students, higher education and employers

**Ralf Weiser:**

- Stated that the Workforce Summit was the best event he attended all year. He found it enlightening and noted how the multiple work groups arrived at similar results in terms of workforce issues and needs. He asked what the follow up would be.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo:**

- Stated that the results of the Summit were being shared with the Industry Partnerships supported by CCEDC. She noted that there was an active effort to identify and support internships.

**Ralf Weiser:**

- Noted that groundbreaking ideas like the growing freelance economy were discussed at the Summit. He commented that some of the issues discussed were already making their way into his company’s strategic plan.
- He noted that transportation and long workers commutes were another important workforce issue. He suggested that this was more of a public sector issue than one to be addressed by business.

**Jim Nemes:**

- Stated that one statistic from the Summit stood out for him – that as much as 50% of the workforce could be freelance by 2020. He questioned whether this meant that companies were not investing enough in their workforce.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Indicated that the trend towards a more significant freelance economy has not had a lot of discussion and generates many questions. If it is the worker's choice to freelance there were one set of issues like how do they get benefits. If it is the employer's choice, there were many other issues.
- She also noted that addressing transportation needs in Chester County was a tough issue. She further noted that infrastructure was the focus of Goal 5.
- Commented that the County has more ability to impact the workforce housing issue.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Indicated that good paying jobs help address these issues in that employees can afford houses and cars

**Kirk Putt:**

- Pointed out that workers on the western edge of the County often chose to live in Berks and Lancaster counties where housing is less expensive
- Identified resistance to business expansion as another challenge. Noted that an expansion of RV Industries in Honey Brook Township met with significant resistance. This is an area where some assistance is needed.

**Joe O'Brien**

- Raised issue of student understanding of employer needs and employment options. Indicated that kids do listen but that they may not be getting the correct information.

- Also questioned whether companies can do a better job of keeping freelancers.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Noted that it is a growing trend. 60% of DCCC classes are taught by adjunct teachers

**Kirk Putt:**

- Commented that workers today don't want a lot of administrative hassle. They want easy access to good work

**Chaya Scott:**

- Stated that the same trend is showing up in the non-profit community. Connections and loyalties are weaker than they used to be.
- Also, expectation of young workers that they would have a long relationship with their employer are not holding up. This leads to disappointment and changed perspectives on the nature of employment.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Added that another challenge is parent's predisposition to college as the first choice for their children. Pointed out that working with their hands is often not even on the agenda.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Commented that it should not be an either or decision. College should be the destination but not always straight out of high school. There are other paths to get there.

**Trish Faidiga:**

- Commented that this was an amazing discussion. Noted how no one in her workforce was interested in taking on her company as their career.

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Indicated that the results of the Workforce Summit and other critical workforce issues would be covered in a “state of the workforce” document to be published early next year.
- Directed attention to Strategy 2.1.4 regarding Next Generation Task Force to address intergenerational workforce issues.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo:**

- Noted that CCEDC had held two workshops on this topic. Commented that data on this issue was insufficient to drive program activity.

**Chaya Scott:**

- Noted that the Pew Foundation had funded a study in Philadelphia that looked at data on educational trends. Could be value there for Chester County
- Noted that millennials should be a part of the task force activity.

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Stated that Strategy 2.3.2 was part of a larger effort to identify a marketing theme for the County.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo:**

- Commented that VISTA Today was up and running and it was a part of the marketing effort.

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Noted that Strategy 2.3.3, 2.3.5 and 2.3.6 were all related to building visibility for Chester County. We want to be the place where employees and employers choose to locate.
- Briefly discussed the “Did You Know” list of Chester County’s high rankings on multiple factors
- Pointed out the need to keep key facts in front of key recipients.

**Kirk Putt**

- Noted that Downingtown STEM school was ranked the best in the state but that this information is not as well-known as it should be.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo:**

- Suggested that the STEM school offers a different approach to education.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Commented that other high schools can learn from the STEM school. Putting kids together with industry opens new options.

**Joe O'Brien:**

- Stated that the STEM approach was a hard sell in the beginning. Not everyone was on board.
- There is a need to get our educational systems to recognize that all education is vocational – designed to lead to employment.
- He added that there is definitely a need to get more females involved.

**Chaya Scott:**

- Commented that some of the challenges are institutional like teaching to the test. It is easy to lose focus on broader issues and developing needed skills.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Math skills are the biggest challenge

**Ralf Weiser:**

- We can keep to existing structures but we need to build better bridges

**Marybeth DiVincenzo:**

- We need to focus on getting kids “out of the school building” to let them see the range of opportunities that are available to them.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Reminded folks that despite the fact that we are doing well in Chester County, there are still many people who need help to get a good job.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Noted that enrollment of low income individuals is down 10% at DCCC from 2008. This is a serious challenge. They can't afford to go to college.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Suggested that lower income individuals can take better advantage of technical schools

**Chaya Scott:**

- Pointed out that the job placement connection for these programs is critical. She described an example where individuals trained in welding skills were unable to connect with job opportunities

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Suggested that the message needs to be different. Not that you don't need to go to college, but that you don't necessarily need to go to college now. There are many ways to get there.

**Chaya Scott:**

- We need to lay out the options and ask which path will you choose.

**Jerry Parker:**

- Pointed out that they almost needed an agent for students interested in jobs at Flowers Foods to manage the process.



**Pat Bokovitz:**

- Suggested that this connection issue is a challenge that is continually raised at the Manufacturing Alliance meetings

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Noted that part of the problem is that we have the same employers at the table. We need a broader engagement strategy.

**Ralf Weiser**

- Noted the need for such committees and events to have value for companies where time is always a challenge. To get participation it is critical to demonstrate a value proposition.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo**

- Commented that training assistance was the value proposition but that funds for training have diminished.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Stated that we need to be creative in finding a better way to market to employers to secure their participation.

**David Sciocchetti:**

- Briefly discussed Strategy 2.5.1 regarding Live Niagara Falls program that provides incentives in the form of paying off student loan debt to live in targeted areas. Noted that this concept could be used in that way or as an incentive for companies seeking employees in a competitive environment.
- Noted that Strategy 2.9.2 had seen limited activity in year one and should be moved to year two.
- Noted that next year, 2016, would be year 2 for VISTA 2025 and would see a blending of ongoing, Year 1 and Year 2 strategies that will require prioritization

based on available resources. He invited comments and suggestions for the Goal Team members regarding that prioritization.

**Kathi Cozzone:**

- Closed the meeting at 10:35 AM by thanking everyone for their participation.