

**BC Skills Force Initiative
May 31, 2005
Cranbrook, BC**

AGENDA

1. Rob Gay (GM of CFDC of the SE Region) introduced Paul Wiest & Ron Trepanier
2. Introduction of the BC Skills Force Initiative
3. Introduction of participants
4. Overview of project
5. Background research
6. Focus Group discussion
7. Next steps
8. Wrap up

Comments and Discussion

Employer Labour Needs

- Seventy-five percent of employers in attendance are looking for employees
- Most have been looking for a long period of time and some positions are still not filled. They need skilled workers
- Many are missing business opportunities because they can not find the right people to fill the positions
- Seasonal operations have a particular set of issues regarding staffing needs
- Employers get many resumes but most applicants do not have enough of the right skills
- Receiving lots of applications for general labour but employers need higher skills sets
- Most employers are seeking employees with manners, courtesy, and appropriate dress

Skills and Education

- Vacancies include security guards, technical skills, professionalism, transferable skills, curriculum developers, life-time learners, Basic Security Training 1 and 2 for security guards, designers, developers, marketing consultants, and construction workers
- Skilled workforce may be available but they are not likely to re-locate to this region
- Lack of Canadian citizenship is often an issue
- Employers often have to train employees from the ground up and teach them about the area
- Training is often required and expensive to send them to Vancouver. It is expensive to bring them to our Region
- On-the-job training is fine, but very labour intensive
- Ontario and BC are the only two provinces that require licensing for the travel business, and although that is great, there is competition with government-funded agencies that are not licensed. It is tough to compete with government-subsidized agencies because they can undercut the pricing
- Many workers with post-secondary degrees do not have the right attitude. Some employers will take less qualified people and train them if the candidate has manners and a good attitude
- Training is often cost prohibitive
- More technical training (i.e., electrical and plumbing courses) needed
- Huge gap exists with trades training; it is not considered a prestigious career choice and now there are university grads that do not have any transferable skills

- Hospitality sector not really considered a profession and yet this is one of our largest sectors where workers can earn good wages
- Need more information at the high school level that certification training is available
- Colleges need to offer a hospitality degree program
- Businesses are not always planning for the skills their employees need

Attitudes

- Employers do not want to baby sit staff. They looking for workers with a good attitude, self actualizing, and are "can-do" kind of people
- Family values are not prevalent and many youth are not receiving basic courtesy/etiquette skills
- The younger workers seem to have an attitude that they do not need basic employment skills
- Employers are looking for team players -- people with positive attitudes are needed
- Pride in their work is important for employees. A uniform sometimes helps the employee feel that company pride

Infrastructure

- Labour shortage so housing is not being built
- Affordable housing
- Education needs to be offered locally without a waiting list; the demand is there but there is a waiting list for those who want the training
- Wages are not comparable to real estate prices

Succession Planning

- Flex hours for new staff and allow early retirees to phase out
- Older workers are healthier now and want to enjoy retirement, so we would also like flex hours
- Most attendees will be retiring or have staff who will be retiring within five years
- Succession planning for ourselves - very difficult in computer or technical industry because training is so specialized
- A bank will not finance goodwill
- Those who are retiring and selling their businesses are sometimes not able to sell; current employees who can take it may not have the skills

Hiring Practices/HR Strategies

- Employers originally hired for experience, but now many hire based on willingness and eagerness to work
- Mentoring, although a good practice, is highly demanding of employers' time

- Employers are looking for staff commitment. They are looking at how they can retain their good employees
- Employers need to reward good attitude
- Workers need to be a team - with a positive attitude
- "Never has there been a better time to do business in BC"
- Employers need to consider offering flex hours for good employees and flex hours for those who want to retire
- Creative human recourse strategies are needed to keep everyone happy
- Employers with five employees or more - they offer a benefits package in order to compete with larger businesses

Support

- Many employees need on-the-job training and government support is needed to ensure staff can upgrade or improve the skills
- Barriers within Canadian government bureaucracy are inhibiting the attraction of foreign investment
- People from other countries want to move here, but they are declined unless they have a lot of money
- Sponsoring immigrant workers is onerous; the obligations to employer for providing health and safety coverage are enough to make small business think twice about sponsoring a new employee. This is encouraging the underground economy
- Small companies cannot offer perks like benefit plans or pensions and it would be helpful to assist small business in some way, possibly with compensation packages through government assistance
- On-the-job training -- government should offer funding support
- Municipal legislation required to allow backyard cabins or a "granny cottage" for aging parents to stay with family and still work or volunteer part-time
- Business support agencies need to knock on doors and let businesses know how they can assist, because the average operator does not really know
- Business license costs etc; we need help with all these costs since we are providing employee opportunities
- Skill development for business operators is needed
- Employers can provide on-the-job training but they require some financial support and elimination of the red tape
- Need a clearing house for information that can help businesses understand how/where to go for resources