

Evaluation of RevUp's Workforce System Alignment Initiative

Three of the four alignment initiatives are described in other reports. That information is not duplicated here, but can be found in the Final Evaluation of RevUp's Workforce Navigator Initiative, the Final Evaluation of RevUp's Industry Outreach Initiative, the Final Evaluation of RevUp's Apprenticeship Initiative Part 1 and in the Final Evaluation of RevUp's Post-employment Initiative. After some discussion of the overall initiative, this report focuses primarily on the outcomes and implications of data sharing across agencies.

I. Executive Summary

What was the initiative? As part of USDOL \$25 million dollar grant efforts were made to align the workforce activities of Montana's Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and the state's two-year college system. RevUp staff and DLI worked collaboratively and across agencies to align data, student/job-seeker funding streams, outreach to industry, expand apprenticeship, post-employment and other forms of work-based learning.

What were the results? An MOU established the ability to match student data to their subsequent wages setting the stage for ongoing longitudinal data. Two associated reports were created outlining state and regional workforce supply and demand gaps. Several new apprenticeships were created in manufacturing fields and a collaborative effort was made to enhance marketing of all WBL opportunities. A plan was created to connect sector strategies to the Governor's Key Industry Network initiative and the State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB) that resulted in adoption of a new committee structure of the SWIB.

What are the implications? Regarding data-sharing (*other collaborative efforts are addressed in other reports*): significant opportunity exists to utilize new workforce supply and demand data to prioritize certain career pathways that are more likely to impact the state's overall economic health than others. Such prioritization should be the nucleus of a unified workforce development systems strategy.

II. Background on the Initiative

USDOL's TAACCCT initiative emphasized aligning the efforts of different factions of grantees overall workforce development systems. In partnership with the US Department of Education the feeling was that vast federal funds were being spent across two agencies that worked largely in isolation from one another despite significant overlap in the arena of workforce education. USDOL highlighted advantages of aligning services that included:

- Increasing the efficiency of outreach to the private sector from well-intentioned but uncoordinated public agencies and community organizations that can negatively impact businesses;
- Increasing wrap-around services to job-seekers that can increase success in obtaining training by mitigating social and academic barriers to their success (viewed as necessary for the population served by public programs);
- Increasing the formal connection between federally funded programs (e.g. Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.) and postsecondary programs that could increase job opportunities for the participants of these programs (a.k.a. "pathways");
- Creating longitudinal data systems that can track the wages of graduates/non-graduates over time to gauge the impact of education on labor market outcomes.

RevUp focused primarily on aligning the efforts of the state's two-year colleges, the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and the service providers that help implement USDOL-funded WIOA programs (e.g. Adult Education). While the K-12 system and schools are critical components of workforce development, USDOL inhibited grant activities that impacted students under 18 y.o. While employers have historically been a recipient



of workforce development efforts, TAACCCT and the state’s work-based learning initiatives also sought to make the private sector a direct partner in workforce development.

DLI was very committed to this partnership and offered a liaison to RevUp to help implement collaborative activities and provided funding for a director-level position to oversee collaborative activities.

One of the mandated deliverables of RevUp was a “Scorecard”. By accepting USDOL’s award, institutions agreed to provide USDOL with outcome data on each college’s programs including all (not just grant-funded) programs completion rate, average wages after completion, retention, etc. It was recognized that completion of this requirement would: (1) necessitate significant data matching across agencies and (2) might be combined with labor market workforce projections data to create a comprehensive vision of worker supply and demand at the local and state-wide levels.

III. Initial Goals

The strategy to align colleges and the efforts of DLI was fourfold:

1. Hire local, cross-agency workforce navigators to help job-seekers/students access resources across agencies with the intent of increasing postsecondary enrollment, retention rates, completion rates and job placement rates through improved services and access to resources;
2. Create cross-agency data-sharing MOU’s to enable linking student data with wage data (opportunity to create ad-hoc longitudinal data system) and complete the required Scorecard deliverable;
3. Integrate of the Governor’s Main Street Montana Key Industry Networks (KIN) initiative and RevUp’s efforts to expand sector partnership as a means of formalizing industry outreach;
4. Integrate of the Governor’s National Governor’s Association work-based learning (WBL) expansion, DLI’s apprenticeship expansion and RevUp’s interests in expanding apprenticeship and post-employment opportunities;
 - a. Hire a joint-funded director and a “Main Street Montana Leadership Committee” comprised of senior leaders across multiple agencies to oversee these collaborative activities.

IV. Adjustments/Challenges/Road Blocks

The Commissioner of DLI had interest in creating longitudinal data systems, better aligning Job Service One-stops to postsecondary training programs and expanding work-based learning opportunities (apprenticeship in particular). This personal interest from senior-level leadership was helpful to gaining momentum within the collaborative initiative.

On the other hand, Montana’s Department of Labor and Industry internal efforts to refocus the activities of Job Services around the state seemed to delay the agency’s ability to effectively engage in several initiatives, and focused the majority of their efforts on apprenticeship expansion.

Regarding the Scorecard: DLI chose to expand the original vision for the Scorecard adding a wealth of interesting data but limiting the ability to produce reports for each region as originally planned.

V. Outcomes

Goal 2 - Data Sharing: A collaborative workgroup was created to create a “Talent Pipeline Report”. A 61-page pilot report was created for Missoula College with great interest shown by other colleges: ([Link to Missoula College Report](#)). The report included such data as the percentage of graduates employed, average wages by program and analysis of which industries and fields where workforce demand is likely to grow.



While the report was illuminating on many fronts, RTI, RevUp's third-party evaluator, noted that some descriptions seemed misleading, particularly the suggestion that students recouped their costs in all programs in under a year (analysis did not include students' opportunity costs or those associated with student's loan interest and did not account for the length of time required by most students to complete programs). The report also included little focus on students that did not graduate or gained certificates of less-than-1-year or industry-recognized credentials.

A similar report was also created that summarized workforce supply and demand across the state: [Link to State-wide Report](#).

VI. Implications/ Sustainability

The ability to match student data and wages has huge potential for creating an ongoing state-wide longitudinal data system. Such data could be used at the regional and state level to help determine priority industries and pathways in which to invest public dollars with the greatest chance for returns to individuals, the economy and the state (through increased tax revenue). Such data is also important for helping students, advisors and case-managers make informed decisions about which post-secondary training areas align with career and financial objectives.

DLI has discussed providing individual colleges a customized regional report as a fee-for-service in future.

DRAFT

