

Advisory Team meeting highlights—August 1, 2017

Attendees

Amy Anderson, Association of Washington Business; Allan Atienzo, Independent Colleges of Washington; John Aultman, Governor's Office; William Belden, Clark College; Alisha Benson, Greater Spokane Incorporated; Vi Boyer, Independent Colleges of Washington; Jim Crabbe, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Rich Cummins, Western Governors University; Nancy Dick, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Brian Dixon, Washington State University; Alison Eldridge, WSAC; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; Julie Garver, Council of Presidents; Nova Gattman, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Carrie Hert, OSPI; Michael Highfill, Washington State University; Joe Holiday, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Brian Jeffries, Partnerships for Learning; Noreen Light, WSAC; Bill Lyne, United Faculty of Washington State; Ellen Matheny, WSAC; James McCafferty, Western Washington University; Gil Mendoza, OSPI; Eleni Papadakis, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Marina Parr, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Susana Reyes, Mead School District; Antonio Sanchez, Central Washington University; Lexi Shankster, WSAC; Rachelle Sharpe, WSAC; Randy Spaulding, WSAC; Gray Sterling, WSAC; Becky Thompson, WSAC; Maddy Thompson, WSAC; Marc Webster, WSAC

Review of states

Indiana

- Sent 125 thousand direct mailers
 - Strategically sent to adults who stopped out for years ago
 - Identified using Clearinghouse data
 - Successfully re-enrolled 9 thousand students
- Part-time grant redirected to an adult-only grant (similar to SNG)
- Workforce-ready grant equivalent to the Opportunity Grant
 - WA already has similar pieces in place.
- Changes to academic progress policies
 - Back on track with federal funding

Vermont

- Just in the beginning states
 - Cohort-based model
 - Childcare initiative

New Jersey

- Marketing to different demographics of students
 - Intentionally engaging communities of color

Kansas

- Seeking funding for portal development and grant funding.
- Building a sense of community
 - Find a way to build with adult students themselves
 - Tapping into community networks
 - Recognizing the need to engage rural communities

- Two-generation work, HEAD START mailers

Questions/Comments

- Anything that could be implemented in WA?
- Mix of funding mechanisms—how do sectors/collaboratively receive funding?
 - State
 - Lumina
 - Community

Review Objectives and outcomes from 7/31 Tech-team

Attendance

- 32 people attended
- Reps from 6 different vendors
 - Share their expertise in how this could be developed
 - Help up craft a procurement

Focus groups

- 6 focus groups conducted
 - Purpose
 - Understand needs and barriers
 - Motivation, value of education

Findings

- Earnings, key area of interest
- Websites tend to be according to the organization function, as opposed to the customer function
- Students wanted *something*
 - It was a question of navigation, information was not easy to find
 - Customer experience concept, two different generations looking
 - Everyone knew about the welcome pack from WGU--experiential construct
 - In addition to the content, think about the experience of the student

Key Questions

- Have we unearthed from other states where students are accessing the web resources?
- Is the tech/user interface available off-the shelf?
 - College Completion Consortium, yes (NewEd)
- What is the cost?
 - Not a clear estimate, 150k + maintenance
 - Site maintenance ideally handled by the vendor
 - Estimates, results may vary...80/20 rule
- Where do people go to access information?
 - How do you maintain and remain current?
 - Accurate data is imperative

Content Considerations

- Job-specific
 - What job is there right now today
 - Consider alignment of language among sectors/organizations
- Suggested content to user (Amazon model)
 - Ex. "People who searched this, also viewed that..."

- Credit hours
 - How many classes are you taking at a time
- Site navigation
 - Users need to know what they're looking for initially
 - Users tend to say a site is confusing because they can't find what they're looking for...
 - Is there a search feature, google search embedded in the site...
 - "I'm not clicking, I'm searching"
- Cost, credits, and available programs
 - Important to leverage existing resources
 - Ex. Evening/weekend studies, there is a way to direct students to those resources
- This resource is not just limited to "adults"
 - Developing a system that helps students access information, with adults in mind
- Is there a way to talk to a human being?
 - Usually it is difficult to find a number or chat
- If a number is made available, there should be someone on the other end who knows what they're talking about...
- Self-sufficiency calculator, how much does it really cost to go to school

Other considerations

- Privacy, enrollment tracking to measure success
 - User should be able to enter as much information as possible before being required to enter name
 - Student voices should be visible
 - Variation by region...how do we make sure what we're doing at the institution level, recognizing the differences in regional needs?
- Ensure certificates and apprenticeships information is made available, not just degrees.
- Sharability via social media, and save features
 - Adult learners want to start right now, but not ready to start right now
 - Ex. Financial aid is a need, but they may have already missed the deadline...
- Provide information about critical support services
 - Child care
 - Food stamps
 - Housing Authority
 - Better effort among states to coordinate all of their benefit programs
 - Institutions are already starting to work on this...
 - Is this something we reference, or something go into indepth
 - Coordination is a place to start
 - Static page
 - DC site has a link to TANF
 - Template possibly provided to all institutions, "Here are things we recommend..."
- Is a web-based tool the only approach we're taking and/or considering?
 - We could potentially lose people if so...
- If we can serve 80% of people with most of what they need, would we consider that success?

- Helping them to know what questions to ask when they do talk to someone
- Using the word "adult friendly"

What questions should the Tech-Team consider?

- Prioritizing the purpose of the tool
 - Determine what you want, not how much we want to spend
 - What's out there? Vs. What can we buy with the resources we have?
- Connect with competency-based learning
 - Military can automatically go into the system and get equivalency
 - Give information about academic and work backgrounds
 - What's the information needed for PLA, transcripts etc
 - Hybrid, collecting some information from the student and passing to the institutions, vs using site widgets and tools
 - PLA is a bucket--combination of tools and passthroughs
- Is there any provision in the grant for "free" money for wrap around services?
- Veterans need to be plugged into the right advisor to avoid losing benefits
 - Same with students receiving other benefits
 - i.e. TANF, housing etc...(see notes above re: critical support services)
- Proactive links to self-identify—series of questions to prompt user identification
 - once user clicks a particular link now you know user person
 - ex. "Did you know a vet earns 20% more?"
 - ex. "single mom's have benefits available..."
- Employer connectivity, on-ramping...
 - How do we update, is there a portal to log-in and update

Micro-grant

- Serves as a solution to address small dollar pre-enrollment barriers
 - Do we implement at the time we launch the tool?
 - How do we effectively connect funds to identified pre-enrollment barriers?
 - How do we connect to institutions (both those who have initiatives already in place, and those that do not)?

Pre-enrollment considerations

- Identify the type of need
- Could these funds be used to help institutions with their marketing plan?
 - Institutions already know who and where they are...
 - Link the micro grant to the marketing
 - Waiving the entry fees as part of the match
 - Needs to have some portability
 - In case students had a bad experience at one institution and decided to go to another
- Direct contact examples
 - President at CWU called at the students who didn't re-enroll
 - IN model--sent letter as a follow-up from institution with a "deal"
 - Personal direct marketing
 - Referral method

Funds available

- \$500k is the hope for a pilot model in hopes of future funding for sustainability?
- Key question: How do you make \$500k into \$1 million?
 - Explore incentivizing institutional matching
 - Possibly do the same with child care
- Invest in success--three-way (institution/feds/student)
 - “Hook” the student and incent monthly mentoring/check-in w/funds
 - Georgia-tech has a small dollar grant
 - UC Berkley--interest free small dollar loan