



## Workforce Development Professional Competencies

In August 2002, the University of Virginia and the Virginia Community College System organized and facilitated a cohort of workforce development professionals representing economic development, manufacturing, private sector, higher education and various government agencies to:

- Identify the initial core competencies and skills necessary for a successful workforce development professional; and
- Develop the initial standards and essential curriculum for the Workforce Development Academy.

The results from the founders' cohort became the foundation of the Workforce Development Professional Competencies course, the University of Virginia's Workforce Development Graduate Certificate program, skill development workshops and the Professional in Workforce Development certification process.

The competencies were revised and updated in September 2005.

### A. Definitions of Workforce Development Terminology

**Competencies:** Sets of behaviors that encompass skills, knowledge, abilities and personal attributes that are critical to work accomplishment. Core competencies are essential to business operations and aligned to the organization's strategic goals and performance management system.\* *\*HRCI Study Guide for PHR and SHPR Certification*

**Workforce Development System:** Workforce development systems are market-driven; easily accessible to any individual who wants or needs a job, education, or training; supply well-trained people for all employers; and provide employers with assistance and support for life-long learning initiatives and for the creation of a high-performance workforce\*. *\* National Association of Workforce Boards' mission*

**Workforce Development Professional:** Workforce Development Professionals have as their primary responsibility the facilitation of processes by which individuals identify, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, careers and self-sufficiency; and by which businesses, other employing organizations and communities develop, access and retain a workforce that enables them to maintain and improve their economic competitiveness. Workforce Development Professionals work at a professional level either in directly



providing services to their customers or in planning, evaluating and managing organizations that do so\*. \* *National Association of Workforce Development Professionals definition*

**Target Audience:** The target audience who fall into the category of workforce development professionals are: College administrators with responsibility for workforce development activities; educators and trainers in universities and colleges; secondary school educators; human resources professionals; workforce and economic development practitioners (one-stops, partner agencies, etc.); private sector trainers; proprietary school personnel and those interested in pursuing careers in workforce development.

## **B. Overarching Principles of the Workforce Development Professional Competencies**

- Deliver responsive, consistent, credible, quality programs and services.
- Apply customer service principles.
- Understand and apply adult learning techniques.
- Incorporate a global perspective – continually research and disseminate information on new and emerging trends in workforce development on the local, regional, national and international levels through:
  - Professional development career paths for workforce development practitioners
  - Regional, national and international conference presentations
  - Publishing best practices, white papers and predictive models in workforce development.
- Operate as a business.
- Collaborate with community, economic development and business partners.

## **C. The Core Competencies**

### **I. Leadership and Influence**

Ability to:

- Establish and communicate a shared vision, values, strategic goals, priorities, parameters and accountability standards for the organization.
- Embrace change and facilitate the process.
- Be innovative and creative in program design, operation and problem solving.
- Implement values of diversity in the organization
- Model customer service principles.
- Empower others.
- Foster team environment/partnerships internally and throughout the system.
- Manage boards, councils and/or advisory groups.
- Embrace lifelong learning as a personal and professional philosophy.
- Model ethical behavior.

WDP Competencies List

4/9/2008



- Model accountability.
- Understand organizational governance structures.
- Incorporate a global perspective.

## **II. Planning and Continuous Improvement**

Ability to:

- Evaluate workforce infrastructure through strategic planning.
- Assess internal and external factors (SWOT) affecting workforce and business development.
- Continuous awareness of existing business/industry base in service region.
- Utilize cluster analysis data and elicit feedback for continuous improvement of services and programs.
- Identify and implement innovative methods for delivering services in rural and urban areas and to diverse or special populations.
- Monitor and evaluate results of workforce services through data collection:
  - Enrollment and completion counts,
  - Customer satisfaction surveys,
  - Job placement results,
  - Revenue from services, and
  - Return on investment (ROI) studies to assess local/regional impact.
- Monitor and evaluate courses, curricula and training programs based on:
  - Meeting community needs,
  - Currency and relevance, and
  - Consistency with course objectives.
- Benchmark model programs and best practices.

## **III. Community, Business and Economic Development**

Ability to:

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Participate in and influence the region's workforce and economic development planning processes.
- Facilitate community partnerships; develop community initiatives and convene stakeholders.
- Provide rapid response to economic development needs.
- Foster interagency relationships in local/state government. Focus on building and management of relationships.
- Create consensus toward desired goals.
- Cultivate community awareness of the workforce role.
- Strive to be recognized as an integral economic development tool.

WDP Competencies List

4/9/2008



- Provide just-in-time labor market information to support economic development prospects.

#### Trends Analysis

- Research and utilize cluster and industry analysis data, labor market information and elicit feedback for development of services, programs and identification of trends.
- Develop and maintain a local, state, national and global focus on the business environment.
- Know and utilize the language and tools of business.

#### Social and Political Environment

- Position workforce services as an economic development tool within the region and the state.
- Understand how economic and workforce development work together for business recruitment, retention, development, capital investment and grant acquisition.
- Continued awareness of the political climate and community planning and how it impacts organizational and community initiatives.

### IV. Customer Focus

**(Refer to Customer Service and Sales Skill Standards approved by the National Skills Standard Board (NSSB))**

Ability to:

#### Customer Service

- Provide follow-up and customer service.
- Effectively communicate to internal and external customers.
- Effectively use consultative skills.
- Meet client needs and provide ongoing support.

#### Client Development (relationship and client management)

- Identify and qualify prospects.
- Identify and assess client needs.
- Develop, package and deliver effective solutions.
- Address challenges and objections.
- Negotiate and write contract(s).
- Complete the sales process.

WDP Competencies List

4/9/2008



- Manage time and territory.

### Marketing and Promotion

- Analyze local market needs and identify the appropriate products and services to solve those needs.
- Develop and implement a strategic marketing plan.
- Promote and brand your organization's products and services through a variety of marketing techniques.
- Price products and services appropriately.
- Position workforce development program as a primary community partner in the economic vitality of the service area.

## V. Managing Your Business Unit

Ability to:

### Human Capital Management

- Identify, hire, supervise, motivate, evaluate and reward staff.
- Manage time effectively and value time of staff and stakeholders.
- Facilitate effective meetings.
- Apply effective customer service and communication skills.

### Financial Management

- Understand project management principles.
- Identify, attract, maintain and evaluate teaching and training resources.
- Learn established policies of state agencies, including state human resource policies.
- Plan and manage budgets.
- Negotiate and write contracts.
- Perform purchasing functions.
- Plan, pursue, write and administer grants.
- Identify and apply optimal cost models and contracting options.
- Understand legal issues of business operations within a state institution.

### Asset Management

- Identify, allocate and effectively use resources (human, financial and assets) to achieve organizational goals.
- Develop a cost-recovery long term business and marketing plan.
- Use information technology effectively.
- Understand how to access or leverage funds and financing through partnerships.

WDP Competencies List

4/9/2008

5



- Understand and use concepts of Return on Investment (ROI).
- Identify and implement innovative methods for delivering services in rural and urban areas and to diverse or special populations.

## **VI. The Profession of Workforce Development**

Ability to:

### Professional Development

- Understand the definition of workforce development.
- Stay current by participating in professional development organizations and networking.
- Demonstrate work/life balance incorporating motivation and stress management techniques.
- Understand and provide career ladder training services.
- Understand the history of workforce development programs.

### Organizational Consulting Services

- Provide or facilitate organizational consulting services.
- Use consultative skills
- Understand and provide needs assessment services to identify the competencies and learning needs/objectives required by a client organization, of an industry or of a cohort of students
- Assist employers in the delivery of job placement services.
- Customize training to client's needs.
- Design and implement curriculum.

### Metrics & Evaluation

- Understand and apply adult learning techniques.
- Design and deliver flexible "just in time" services.
- Understand and choose alternative teaching methods and delivery systems to accomplish learning objectives.
- Research and anticipate trends and forecasts.
- Understand the value of metrics in communicating value of programs and services.