Work-Based Learning: Employer Challenges and Solutions

Fairfax County Economic Advisory Commission (EAC)

April 19, 2022

Presented by the Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives and the Department of Family Services

Agenda & Goal

1. The EAC Challenge & Response

2. Work-Based Learning: Benefits & Challenges

3. Proposed Solutions

4. Discussion & Feedback

Our Goal Today: Identify the opportunity(ies) or actions to develop further

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Employers' Challenge: Hiring & Retaining Workers

Finding, hiring and retaining workers is a top concern among Fairfax County employers

- **60K+ job openings**
- **2.9% - "official" unemployment rate**
- **Demographic changes, decreased participation**
- **Applies to diverse sectors and skills levels**

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The EAC Challenge

How can more Fairfax County businesses establish or utilize work-based learning initiatives?

To open up new talent pools, boost recruiting, up-skill workers, and increase retention of skilled talent.

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EAC Response to Challenge

EAC Workgroup on Work-Based Learning(WBL) successfully addressed the challenge

- **Reviewed briefing paper & background**
- **Completed a WBL survey**
- **Participated in Workgroup Session**
- **Recommended innovative & actionable WBL solutions**

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EAC Engaged Local Experts

Leads and Experts:

- **Bill Browning, Workforce Innovation Manager, Department of Family Services**

- **Daniel Mekibib, Division Manager, Workforce Development, Department of Family Services**

- **Theresa Benincasa, Economic Mobility Manager, Department of Economic Initiatives**

WBL Practitioners and Innovators:

- **Dana Fallon, Interim Director, Business Engagement & Career Services, Northern Virginia Community College**

- **Jennifer Williamson, Vice President, Workforce & Member Engagement, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce**

- **Jennifer Glaser, Director, Counseling and College and Career Readiness, Fairfax County Public Schools**

- **Victor Hoskins, President & CEO, and Mike Batt, Director, Talent Initiative, Economic Development Authority**

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Our WBL Definition

Work-based learning is connected to, integrated with, and informed by actual work.

WBL helps prospective workers of any age and stage deepen their technical training with hands-on learning for the workplace, as well as develop broader work readiness capabilities for new professional roles.

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Employer Benefits of WBL

- **Enlarges Candidate Pools - by up to 50% for entry-level jobs by converting B.A. requirement into WBL pathway**

- **Taps into the Benefits of Diversity - e.g., higher revenues/profits, less turnover, stronger worker commitment**

- **Increases Retention of New Hires - WBL compared to traditional candidate sourcing increases retention by 9%-50%**

- **Accelerates New Worker Productivity – Apprenticeship approaches can double productivity within 1-3 years of hiring**

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Employer Benefits of WBL
(As ranked by EAC Working Group)

1. Increases Retention of New Hires (45%)

2. Taps into the Benefits of Diversity (28%)

3. Enlarges Candidate Pools (21%)

4. Accelerates New Worker Productivity (7%)

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Employers' WBL Challenges
(As ranked by EAC Working Group)

#1 Challenge: WBL "Takes Too Much Time and Expense"

• Higher Costs

• Staff Resources Available

#2 Challenge: "Limited Expertise in the Organization"

• Lack of Marketplace Information and Connections

• Complexities of Coordinating Effective Partnerships

Other Challenges

• Longer Payoff and Regulatory Considerations

Examples of Existing WBL Initiatives in the Region

- **NOVA's career services and internship fairs connect thousands of students with employers**

- **EDA's Talent Initiative website with WBL informational resources and hundreds of internships posted**

- **FCPS actively seeks and customizes WBL engagement opportunities for all students, including Career and Technical training programs enrolling thousands of high school students**

- **Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce's Apprenticeship Network to facilitate employer peer-to-peer information sharing**

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Employer WBL Solutions

EAC Recommendations

- **Solutions that build on local WBL programs and innovations**

- **Targeted resources to help businesses grow and scale WBL programs**

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Employer WBL Solutions

Solutions that Expand WBL & Build on Local WBL Innovations

1. Build out a Local WBL Exchange

2. Set Up New Intern/Apprenticeship Cohorts

3. Establish a WBL Opportunity Fund

4. Strengthen Existing WBL Initiatives

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1. Work-Based Learning Exchange for Employers

- Facilitate connections and matches between businesses, WBL opportunities and students/workers through a resources and exchange platform

- Provide toolkits and resources on how to start, operate and scale a WBL program

- Outreach to business and employer leaders about WBL options

- Requires a solutions team to build engagement among more firms in Fairfax County; create mentoring connections, identify champions and provide customized technical assistance

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2. New Intern & Apprenticeship Cohorts

- Increase opportunities for WBL through cohort-based programs

- Cohorts could leverage peer to peer experiences for workers and employers

- Offers a more centralized support system to establish and scale effective programs

- Target small and medium-sized firms that may not have the staffing capacity to operate a program

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3. WBL Opportunity Fund

- **Create an incentive program to help small and medium-sized firms establish work-based learning opportunities**

- **Private and public sectors contribute to establishing opportunity fund**

- **Special focus on upskilling and work opportunities for Fairfax County residents**

- **Support small and medium-sized businesses with hiring needs**

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4. Strengthen WBL Initiatives

- **Fairfax County's Workforce Development Programs**

- **Public Workforce/Private Sector Partnerships**

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EAC WBL Workgroup

Additional Feedback & Perspectives on WBL Challenges & Solutions

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