

Narrative 4: Soft Skills Program:

Provide evidence of employer engagement in the program development process, including representation of the county's most prolific businesses and industries.

After reviewing best practices for engaging business and industry as a part of addressing soft skills issues, a Soft Skills Committee has been formed. This committee will be business chaired and led with meet quarterly at a minimum. Business leaders from the following businesses had agreed to serve on the committee: INFAC, Ingersoll Rand, Amazon, Murakami, Serco, Frost Arnett and Taylor Regional Hospital. Other representatives on the committee will be comprised of workforce partners who will listen and implement measures that come from the business members of the committee. These representatives will be: Campbellsville Career Center, Campbellsville Technology Center and University, Green County Area Technology Center, Taylor County and Campbellsville High Schools, Taylor County Adult Education and Cumberland's WIA.

With this committee being business lead, the concerns that each may have will be compiled into a list. The list will then be addressed by the entire committee starting with the concerns that are consistent with all businesses and work down until all are addressed including an individual concern by an individual business. Solutions will be sought from the entire committee and must be agreed upon as a workable solution. The solution will be assigned to the partner or partners who can best deliver the solution and the business members must use the solution as part of their hiring or retention of employees.

After the committee has tangible successes, additional businesses will be sought to be a part of the committee to make sure that all concerns of all types of businesses are heard and addressed.

The first meeting of the soft skills committee convened on June 5, 2013. There were 8 businesses with 14 representatives present. Representatives from 2 ATC's, 3 Boards of Education, 1 University, OET and WIA were present as well. The businesses jointly voiced their concerns with the soft skills possessed by the youth entering the workforce. Examples of efforts to address these problems were given by the non-business representatives. All agree to continue to meet and formalize this group as a standing committee to continue addressing this critical area.

Provide evidence that employers recognize achievement of work ethic or soft skills credential in their hiring/advancement processes.

Campbellsville and Taylor County High Schools have committed to implement a Work Ethic Seal program. Before the next school year starts in August 2013, a program will be put in place and open to enrollees. The program will be structured to show the students skills and personal attributes that will show their ability to be a successful employee. With the program being voluntary, it will also show their desire, through extra work, to pursue documentation of their work ethic. While this will take a year to be put in place, the Soft Skills committee should address and promote the advantages of this as a solution in the hiring process.

Programs must include measurable goals for annual improvement in the raw number and percentage of workforce credentialed

A major part of the Cumberland's Workforce Investment Area's strategic plan was to provide soft skills training and establish a goal of 250 individuals being trained and receiving a certification of completion during the current program year. The program, Fast Forward to Work (FFTW), is being used with an individual solely devoted to soft skills training through a MOU with EKCEP. Fast Forward to Work was

established from an in depth survey of employers across Eastern Kentucky that allowed them to voice their present workforce needs and future needs as well. This survey showed certain work readiness skills, known as soft skills, are universally sought by employers. These soft skills consist of following instructions, communication skills, decision-making ability, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative problem solving and team building. Other areas center on basic employer expectations such as time, attendance, professionalism and work ethic. FFTW curriculum was developed with all these areas in mind and had been copyrighted by EKCEP.

To date the training has far exceeded expectations in both acceptance from the business community and the total of numbers receiving a certificate after nine months is 672. This training has also been approved for Continuing Education Units (CEU) with 476 hours being awarded thru this training. Taylor County residents that have completed this training include 96 employees of Taylor Regional Hospital (with 236 CEU's awarded), 12 thru Campbellsville University Technology Center and 52 High School seniors attending Green County Area Technology Center.

Our goal is to continue to offer this training to businesses, individuals who are looking for employment and youth who will be joining the workforce. This is a tool that the Soft Skills committee will bring the attention of its availability to other businesses and Taylor County and Campbellsville High Schools are prepared to make this training a part of the Work Ethic seal program. A certificate of completion is awarded only after all areas of the training program have been completed. The FFTW will continue to be promoted to make businesses aware of the potential help in created a better workforce.

The Green County Area Technology Center continues to work with local business to provide training and certifications necessary for employment. Their goal is to meet specific needs of these businesses and construct classes that will accommodate training needs. The offering to secondary school students also allow the earning of many industry recognized certificates which will be reflected in the supplemental data section. The GCATC continues to make effort possible to create a better workforce with the soft skills that are necessary to be successful in the workplace.

Plans must include a strategy to assure employers of the sustainability of the programs.

Taylor County was one of several counties that awarded a Race to the Top grant thru the United State Department of Education. As a part of this grant one program will be implemented that will have lasting positive implications on the students that will pass through the secondary education systems in Taylor County. That program is named The Leader in Me.

What is The Leader in Me? It is a whole-school transformation model that acts like the operating system of a computer – it improves performance in all other programs. Based on The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, The Leader in Me produces transformational results such as higher academic achievement, fewer discipline problems, and increased engagement among teachers and parents. Better yet, The Leader in Me equips students with the self-confidence and skills they need to thrive in the 21st century economy.

The possibility of a school filled with students who were responsible, who showed initiative, who were creative, who knew how to set goals and meet them, who got along with people of various backgrounds and cultures and who could resolve conflicts and solve problems is a dream come true.

This is a reality at Leader in Me schools across the country. In started in 1999 when struggling school A.B. Combs Elementary was asked to reinvent itself or be shut down. When principal, Muriel Summers, asked parents and business leaders what they wanted in their schools she heard the following: Leadership, Accountability, Adaptability, Initiative and Self-direction, Cross-cultural Skills, Responsibility, Problem Solving, Communication, Creativity and Teamwork.

This feedback represents what most people believe – that our schools should not merely be focused on test scores, but should provide opportunities for students to develop their full potential. As Ms. Summers searched for answers she attended a 7 Habits seminar and noticed how comprehensive the habits were in covering the same needs expressed by her community. She and staff developed a leadership theme and a school mission statement: To Develop Leaders, One Child at a Time. They taught the 7 Habits not as a curriculum, but in a ubiquitous fashion, integrating them into the curriculum, systems and culture of the school. Years later the school became the #1 magnet school in the country. The leadership model began to be duplicated by other schools with similar results. In 2008, Dr. Stephen R. Covey, published the book – The Leader in Me – which documents the leadership model these schools pioneered and its outcomes for staff, students, parents and community.

With the success of this program in schools within Kentucky, such as Warren County, Taylor County believes using this program for students in K thru 12 will make as profound a change in the culture and mindset of our younger generation. The results will have a great impact on the workforce of the future.

Programs must address, at a minimum, the following topical areas:

Attendance/punctuality, Communication, Teamwork, Leadership, Critical Thinking

After reading the programs listed above we believe that they are a great starting point to addressing the areas mentioned above. If the envisioned Soft Skills committee will take these tools and continue to search for others, gain confidence and leadership from the business community and have a combined effort between the business community and the educational entities that are available, the future problems with soft skills within our workforce can be greatly reduced.