Public-Private Partnership Focuses on Sector Strategies

Career readiness, workforce development, skills gap and other workforce issues have been topics of conversation for a long time. A variety of stakeholders have been working on these issues individually. However, more partnerships and collaboration between stakeholders are taking place.

As employers, we recognize that the future of our country and our state’s competitive standing relies on an education system that adequately prepares the future workforce.

As baby boomers retire, current, emerging and future generations need to be prepared with the right skill sets while remaining flexible to changing requirements.

There may be people without jobs, but many jobs exist without people due to the lack of appropriate skills. If nothing is done to remedy the situation, more than six million jobs nationwide will be vacant by 2020.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and U.S.A. Funds are partnering on a Talent Pipeline Management initiative to close the skills gap in a demand-driven context and put business in the driver’s seat of educational partnerships.

In Hawaii, it’s critical that employers play an active role in career readiness as, ultimately, we are the end-users of educational and workforce partnerships. A qualified workforce is directly linked to the growth of our economy, creating jobs and spurring economic development.

We need to be a part of the solution and work with various stakeholders in a coordinated way.

As the first concerted effort, the Chamber is working with the broader business community and the University of Hawaii System, a U.S.A. Funds grantee, to develop economic STEM sector strategies and convene business leaders to develop industry-specific workforce development strategies.

We are also working with the Department of Education on its career readiness initiative as part of its New Skills for Youth Grant. This initiative bridges industries and education, and brings together a cross-sector team to transform Hawaii’s career pathways, align them to high-skill and high-demand needs of business and industry, and ensure that students can achieve their postsecondary and career goals.

The Chamber commends the P-20 Council for its leadership in bringing together a statewide partnership led by Early Learning, DOE and the UH System to strengthen the pipeline.

The Chamber also commends and supports members of the business community for contributing to this effort, such as DevLeague, the state’s first accelerated learning program for modern software development. To date, they have more than 103 alumni within three years of startup. The 12-week program is designed to teach skills to motivated adults seeking careers in the software industry.

The organization also works with middle and high school coding classes and after school programs, as well as a daytime pilot program at Waipahu High School.

Preparing the talent pipeline is more than an initiative. It’s a collective movement to prepare our students for the demands of this ever-changing, highly competitive global market.

Sherry Mener-McNamara, President & CEO

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