

ATAT Focus Group
DON'S SEAFOOD
JANUARY 29, 2002, 12:00 - 2:00

SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE FOCUS GROUP

The purpose of the focus group is to gather opinions of regional Apprenticeship Trainers on the subject of the workforce development system in Southeast Texas, pursuant to a survey of the region and the development of a workforce development map of Southeast Texas.

FOCUS TOPICS

Sources of Applicants

- How do you find qualified applicants?
- How do applicants decide on a career in your craft?
- What skills are lacking in the available applicants?

Discuss training problems

Discuss employability problems of apprentices and journeymen

Are you aware of the WDB and their services?

Do you use their services?

What services would you like for them to provide for you?

What kind of workforce development services would help you in providing recruitment, training and employment for ATAT-trained craftsmen?

Rank the workforce system in Southeast Texas

How do you find qualified applicants?

- Newspaper ads, flyers, and yellow pages
- Career days where students hear about academic requirements
- Word-of-mouth when work is good
- Family referrals
- Letters to special population groups such as NAACP and Women in Construction and to the Boards of Universities and community groups
- Participation in local and state ATAT
- Pre-apprentice referrals from employers

How do applicants decide on a career in your craft?

- High wages and benefits of the craft jobs is basis of some decisions
- Guaranteed job placement
- Observing relatives' success in the crafts
- Applicants wanting to work with their hands
- Unlimited career level -- they can supervise a business or open their own business
- Trial and error -- they try other jobs and find out that a craft is better

What skills are lacking in the available applicants?

- Lack of reading, writing, verbal and math skills
- Lack of drafting skills
- No punctuality or commitment -- high school attendance not good
- Lack ability to read measuring tools or blueprints

- Finding quality applicants is problem -- many meet the minimum requirements but don't meet quality standards

Discuss Training Problems

- Apprentices quitting the program before finishing training -- some employers hire them before they finish.
- Public schools are doing a poor job of preparing students for jobs in construction or apprenticeship programs -- there should be an early career awareness program for 8th and 9th graders.
- Apprenticeship programs are doing a poor job of promoting themselves and their training.
- Drugs are a problem in apprenticeship programs, both for recruiting and retention
- Finding jobs for apprentices
- Funding for the program is not always sufficient
- Low attendance and apathy of apprentices
- Keeping up with technology
- Lack of work experience while in high school -- parents don't expect them to work nor do they emphasize the importance of learning how to work
- Lack of respect for work ethics and respect -- "What can you do for me" attitude
- Industry lacks resolve to put funds into workforce training -- employers complain about quality of workers but don't support training programs

Discuss Employability Problems of Apprentices and Journeymen

- Loss of local industry
- Some employers don't want to pay a livable wage
- Failure of local government to protect local workers -- local jobs being taken by out-of-town workers who don't contribute to the local economy
- Ability to pass drugs test
- Lack of transportation
- Youth are leaving the area looking for quality of life
- Technology is replacing workers in some crafts
- Open-shop employers do not contact building trades labor unions for skilled workers when there is a shortage. Workers are sought outside the area.
- There is a lack of communication between open-shop and union providers
- Lack of quality and safety regulations and business ethics by some contractors who hire workers who lack license or certification

Are you aware of the WDB and its services

- All participants were familiar with the name but some were not really familiar with their purpose or services
- Some thought that the Board finds jobs for people
- The Board funds some training programs but funding may not be available for crafts training
- The Board conducts LMI services
- The Board operates one-stop-shop career centers
- Referral of applicants

What kind of WDB services would help you in providing recruitment, training and employment for ATAT-Trained Craftsmen?

- Supplement the apprenticeship programs
- Provide more information about the WDB activities and funding opportunities for apprenticeship training through newsletters and quarterly reports
- More referrals of applicants to apprenticeship programs
- Provide marketing of apprenticeship programs to job seekers

Rank the workforce system in Southeast Texas

- Needs improvement
- 6 on a scale of 10