2000 Environmental Scanning Report for the Oakland County Workforce Development Board
Session #1

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Planning is an iterative process. As circumstances change locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, plans must also change. David Brinkley, ABC news correspondent observed during the fall of the Berlin Wall, "Each day seems to bring the dawn of a new era." In such a turbulent world, it is vital that every organization is aware of what is happening in the external environment.

Simply monitoring what is occurring does not go far enough. It is critical that people involved in the workforce development process skills in predicting future trends which enables us to utilize the information garnered in conjunction with an analysis of our organization - - our purposes, mission, goals - - and the like. Ultimately, the fusion of external and internal information will assist us in developing, implementing, and evaluating our strategic planning process.

Overview of the Environmental Scanning Process

Environmental scanning as a tool for assisting organizations in planning efforts has been widely discussed. In general, *Environmental scanning is defined as a system for continually monitoring the external environment in order to determine the impact of these events on the institution at present and in the future.*

The accomplishment of the scanning task involves the contributions of many individuals. Scanners monitor various printed, web, and other sources of information about the external environment. This monitoring process is accomplished by using a consistent set of trend descriptors or potential event indicators as key words in a systematic search to locate information about them. This search results in the identification of trends and events salient for workforce development. Scanners look for signals of potential events on the horizon, as well as expert opinions on what trends are most likely. This environmental scanning session serves to gather together community leaders in the area of workforce development to lend their expertise in identifying the most salient future trends and their implications.

The driving purpose of environmental scanning is to function as a continuously updated source of information. The information serves to alert the institution to potentially significant external environmental occurrences early enough to have the opportunity to plan for the implications of events. Regardless of the specific topic, environmental scanning is the divining rod of change. The scanning process has great potential to provide information relevant to developing a plan for the coordination of workforce development activities in Oakland County.

Environmental Scanning Session Goals

The goals of the first session were multi-fold. First, participants were given a brief overview of the workforce development planning process. Next, three main topics were introduced comprising the remainder of the session. Each of these topics will be discussed in turn. For all topics, the main goals were to identify the most important trends and to discuss their implications.

Topic #1: Demographics

For this first topic, each participant in the seminar had the opportunity to speak to the group and nominate an idea as a critical happening in the area of demographics. The following is a list of trends nominated by the group.

- The recent influx of non-native people into the Oakland County area – both individuals from outside the United States and those coming from a different county or state to work in the Oakland County area.

    - Satisfying jobs that are needed
        - Technical jobs
        - Service industry and other lower paying jobs

- Literacy and the need for training in this basic are to better prepare people for a variety of occupations.

- Mental health issues stemming from such sources as dealing with the changes in the workplace, stress from information overload, difficulty in setting priorities when family and work issues conflict.

- The lack of well-trained workforce affecting the economy in the County and at the state and national level as well.

- The increasing cost of the price of housing in the County as the population grows
- Providing more services for retired individuals as the age of the County's population climbs due to the lifespan of the 'Boomer' generation.

    - Some individual are not in workforce due to care taking responsibilities for elderly.

- Cultural diversity issues; with increase of minority population, there will be a decrease of majority population - transition power, authority from different ages and ethnicity.

    - Numerous primary language spoken by individuals, difficulties in dealing/working with these individuals
    - English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) training needs increasing as a result of the influx of non-English speaking people into the County

- People with disabilities represent a pool of labor and this highlights the need to get creative in training.

- There are several challenges with the 'new workplace'

- Complexity of life highlights the need for different types of benefits — such as flex-time and daycare.
- Need for sustained training of workforce in technology areas.

- Transportation issues continue to be an important issue

  - Increasing traffic on County and surrounding roads
  - Little mass transit to accommodate people who want to work in the County, but have no economical and easy way to get to the jobs.

After the group sharing session, people were asked to vote on which trends they thought were most salient to the County and its workforce development efforts. Participants voted for these based only on their opinions. The following list identifies those trends the group considered the most critical.

1. *Flat Population in County leads to high labor demand in high and low tech*

2. *Movement to new areas of the County and growth in existing ones leads to greater transportation needs (Roads/Public)*

3. *Changing Age of Workforce/Retirement leads to a need for basic skills training*

4. *Low Population Growth leads to more demand for non-native labor*

5. *Greater County Diversity - more support services needed.*

6. *Pay Attention to Special Needs Populations*

Topic #2: Business Climate

For the next two topics, the format of the scanning session was altered to include more opportunity for people to form groups and discuss the issues together. The following is a list of business climate trends nominated by the groups during the session.

- The diversification of businesses into companies that are not unifocused, but instead produce a variety of products, or produce a number of goods.

- The increase in non-native owned business in the County.

- If the growth of Oakland County is to be sustained, there needs to be a continued investment in infrastructure needs.
- Currently, the political situation is quite conducive to business growth and sustained economic development. These circumstances need to continue to promote success.

- Changes in the labor market will continue to impact the Business Climate both in the County and at the national and state level.

  - Need for workers in all areas of employment will continue, but especially in the service and technology areas.
  - Growth of E-commerce and other technological business practices requires that every employee keeps current in terms of their training on new technologies. This is not solely for those in strictly IT occupations.
  - More women in workforce means an increase need for certain services such as day-care and flex-time scheduling.
  - With understaffing in many businesses, increasing employee stress and the need to be knowledgeable in many areas is growing.

- At the national level, continued interest rate increases by the Federal Reserve seems to have slowed the economic boom in the country.

- Continued high numbers of mergers and acquisitions contribute to a tenuous feeling on the part of many employees, especially with the trend of downsizing continuing.

- The stock market has been quite volatile over the past 3 years or so. The ebb and flow of the market often seems to have little reason or logic behind it.

- The largest areas of growth in terms of occupational opportunities include - legal, medical, banking/finance, computer, manufacturing, e-commerce.

After the group sharing session, people were asked to identify the business climate economic trends they thought were most salient to the County and its workforce development efforts. In addition, they were also asked to discuss the positive and negative implications of their selections. The following list identifies those trends the group considered the most critical.

1. The lack of employee training and orientation is contributing to the lack of consistent employees in area organizations and businesses

Positives:
> Training & Orientation allow people to know what is expected of them in a position and allows them to work on the skills they need.
> Both serve as an investment for companies as it saves resources. This includes both monetary and time demands.

Negatives:
> Smaller companies have a more difficult time providing this training and may not be able to compete with the larger companies.

> Without strategic ambiguity, workers may discover more quickly that they do not want to continue working at an organization.

2. *The economy now has a world focus. This factor increases the interconnectivity of all people in the world's economy. With the increase in technology and a growing number of multi-national mergers and acquisitions, the economies in every corner of the world impact the County and its businesses.*

Positives:
> This focus provides County organizations the opportunity to do business with a growing number of people throughout the world. This increases the potential for profit and growth.
> It also helps to further diversify the workforce and promotes companies with a better understanding of cultural differences.

Negatives:
> Loss of jobs due to relocation to areas with cheaper labor and business costs.
> Increasing competition with a growing number of businesses from all over the world may hurt revenues.

3. *There is continuing pressure to locate and retain quality employees in all areas of the labor force. This has resulted in the need to cultivate employees from a variety of additional sources, including people from outside the county.*

Positives:
> Businesses and educational institutions have incentive to work more as partners in providing skilled workers and attracting profits for businesses.

Negatives:
> Without workers in sufficient numbers who possess needed skills and the desire to work, the economy of the County will not grow.

Topic #3: Labor Force

The format of the final topic in the scanning session again had a group focus. People gathered in groups and discussed the materials provided related to the labor force. The following is a list of labor force trends nominated as most salient by the groups during the session, followed by some potential 'fixes' to the issues identified.

- *There is a concern that there will be a growing bipolarization of the workforce in the area of access and knowledge about technology.*

Potential Solutions:

> ➤ Continue funding and training opportunities for people to engage in and learn technological skills to contribute to the workforce.
> ➤ Coordinate efforts of organizations charged with workforce development services to maximize the effectiveness of these programs.
> ➤ Place a priority on 'getting the word out' about those programs already available.

- *There is evidence that the current labor force shortages will continue, at least for the next year. There are several factors driving these shortages including retiring baby-boomers, economic growth and job creation outpacing population changes in the County, and the need for people with specific skill sets in the job market.*

Potential Solutions:

> ➤ Provide and promote training opportunities to fill the need for workers trained in specific areas.
> ➤ Investigate affordable and expedient transportation solutions to get people into jobs in the County if they want them.

Conclusions from Scanning Session #1

Overall, the session helped in terms of enabling the group to come together and to share their thoughts on what are some of the most salient trends facing Oakland County, the state, and the nation on the next five to ten years. Many people at the sessions expressed their view that this time period of unprecedented prosperity in the County represents an opportunity that should not be wasted. Both this session and the next on August 23rd is an inclusive way to begin to identify important trends, and to using the information to create and refine a strategic plan to guide workforce development efforts for Oakland County.

2000 Environmental Scanning Report for the Oakland
County Workforce Development Board
Session #2

Prepared By: Kristen E. Salomonson
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September 8, 2000

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Environmental Scanning Session Goals

The goals of this second session were much the same as for the first session. Participants were given a brief overview of the workforce development planning process and heard a presentation that provided an overview of the next phase in the workforce development scanning process. At the session, there were five topics discussed by the diverse group of attendees. A variety of group participation strategies were employed to maximize involvement in the activities. The topics will be discussed in turn. For all topics, the main goals were to identify the most important trends and to discuss their implications.

Topic #1: Education

For this first topic, people were asked to form groups and discuss issues related to all levels of education. Groups were then asked to select a representative to present the group's ideas to the participants in the session as a whole. The following represents the most often mentioned issues regarding education suggested by the groups participating in the session.

- Participants identified the critical need to develop both soft skills and hard academic skills at all levels of education, but particularly in post-secondary education.
- The idea that education is a life-long process and that people should take a longer view of the process. The notion that people should never stop learning is implicit here in this idea.
- There is a need to be clearer as to what is the purpose of education is - is it gaining knowledge, career pathways, or what?
- The increasing linkage between technology and education produces a both opportunities and challenges. These include issues of who will find these technological needs, and how can the level of knowledge of the utilization of these technologies be developed and maintained.
- The growth of competition in the educational arena should be a wake-up call for people in the field.
- There is a need for societies to place greater value on career education, and workforce development career options.
- Education must change to meet the needs of society. This notion includes offering a variety of programs, and course options to better satisfy the customer.
- The issue of parental accountability and its importance in the educational process.
- The difficulty of two parents working and the increasing number of single parent households continue to strain the educational system.
- With the changing composition of the county, diversity and ESL training issues are primed to grow in importance over the next ten years.
- The issue of the deficit in teacher preparation and the increasing shortage of available teachers to staff existing classrooms.
- Status considerations continue in the county. The notion that a technical career is fine for others, but not for their own children was expressed as a prevalent one.

Topic #2: Technology

For the next topic, the format of the scanning session was altered to keep attention to the session's objectives high. The following is a list of trends in technology offered by the groups during the session. Each group selected the two or three issues they felt to be the most important to technology.

- There is rapid change in technology in all areas producing a number of implications ranging from social, educational, and environmental areas.

- Groups identified the following as the issues they viewed as most critical.

> E-commerce and its role in changing business practices and relationships.
> The need for constant updating of equipment and training. The monetary impact of these changes.
> Loss of the personal ouch in the world as a result of technology.
> Increasing importance of privacy issues – concern over strangers gaining access to private information.
> Concern for how technology is impacting the environment – there has been little focus on issues such as where does all the old equipment go?
> Desire to create an "internet village" which can help to provide services to all people in a wide area.
> Ethical and legal concerns with the internet are growing and legislation is having trouble keeping pace with the advancements.
> Growing separation between those who possess technological knowledge and equipment and those that do not.
> The increasing isolation of the workforce as a result of new technology.

Topic #3: Political and Legal

The format of the third topic in the scanning session again had a group focus. People gathered in groups and discussed the materials provided related to the political and legal topic. Then they were asked to individually generate some trends and events relating to the topic and then share them within their groups. Then, groups were asked to cross off those events that were duplicated in the group to focus on unique ideas about the political and legal realm. The following is a list of trends which were left after the elimination process, as well as those items mentioned most often by participants.

- With technology there has been an increase in the potential for real time democracy in Oakland County.
  o E-canvassing
  o E-voting
    ▪ How will this impact the % of people voting in the County?
    ▪ What about terms limits and other outgrowths of public distrust?
  o Candidate websites as an informational tool.

- The increasing diversity in the Oakland County has resulted in several emerging issues.
  o There has been a shift in political ideals to a more moderate conservative electorate overall.
  o Racial and cultural divisions more apparent.
  o Geographical spread and the availability of services to handle different needs.

- Increased population growth has lead to a number of outcomes
    - Road Rage
    - Lack of respect
    - Inadequate sewer and drainage system

- In these unprecedented growth times, the County has been coasting along quite well, but what will occur when things slow down on the economic front?
    - What will local and regional government reaction to these issues be?

Topics #4 and #5: Transportation and Environment

The format of the final topics in the scanning session enabled groups to select from two topics around which to center their discussions. People gathered in groups to share ideas, and then selected a representative to present their ideas to the attendees of the session. People gathered in groups and discussed the materials provided related to either the transportation or environmental topic. The following is a list of trends that were identified for both topic areas.

Transportation

- Limitations on means of raising funds make it difficult to obtain the funds needed to provide adequate services.

    - State Legislative constraints
    - Reliance of mileage makes transit development more locally focused. Regional consensus more difficult.
    - Competition between road and transit needs.

- Transportation must be multi-faceted and there needs to be great effort at coordination.

    - Need a better dialogue between public/private entities.
    - Private transportation provides important to fill gaps in public transportation.
    - Geographic spread of business and residences complicates service delivery. More door-to-door service required for less dense areas, but more costly to provide.
    - Mass transportation system is needed. New approaches to solve this problem must be explored.

- Other factors may impact the need for transportation services in the County.

    - Telecommuting - - reduction of traffic?
    - Flextime reduce traffic at peak times
    - Change lane directions to relieve congestion but could be difficult because there is equal press in most directions.

- Transportation barriers for lower income sectors & labor pool.
- The terrible state of roads and bridges in the County, Region, and State as a whole. Where does the money go first? What are the priorities in the County in terms of transportation?

Environment

- Land use concerns are prominent - the need for balance among land for homes with land for parks.
- There is a feeling that there is too much cement and loss of farmland.
- Many issues related to water are important to the County.
    - Population increases have resulted in greater demand on storm sewers - - more runoff - - pollution problems.
    - Water pollution e.g. e-coli outbreaks and beach closures
    - Problem with standing water that is attracting mosquitoes – and corresponding mosquito-born diseases bring health concerns.
- Air quality issues related to pollution and industry – what is the balance between growth and maintaining a quality of life?
- Landfills and the need for recycling

Conclusions from Scanning Session #2

This session continued to build upon the progress made during Session #1 by delving into additional topics of interest identified by the Workforce Development Board. A diverse group of people from the County attended the session. This promoted varied opinions and ideas on what are some of the most salient trends facing Oakland County, the state, and the nation on the next five to ten years. The next phase of this process is to formulate a statement of salient goals. The two scanning sessions were designed to begin to sort through the issues, in order to achieve goal clarity in terms of what to focus on in the area of Workforce Development in Oakland County.

Developmental Education Purpose Effectiveness Measure Profile

Purpose   *Developmental Education: OCC will provide opportunities in developmental education to prepare students for college-level studies.*

1. Developmental Education Course Participation & Completion.

     a.   Percentage of FTIACs with ASSET reading and writing scores (combined) below 85.

     b.   Percentage of FTIACs with Literacy Score of 1 or 2.

     c.   Percentage of FTIACs with ASSET numerical score below 37, an elementary algebra score below 40, or an intermediate algebra score below 38.

     d.   Enrollment by Head Count in D.E. English, Math & Other courses, and all combined.

     e.   Enrollment by Student Credit Hour in D.E. English, Math & Other courses, and all combined.

     f.   Percentage of students with a Literacy Score of 1 or 2, who actually enrolled in D.E. English course.

     g.   Percentage of students scoring 45 or below on numerical ASSET, who actually enrolled in a D.E. Math course.

     h.   Percentage of students who successfully complete Developmental Education courses, with at least a grade of 'C' (English, Math).

Sources:
a., b., c.= SIS-1/10 day
d., e. = ACS-6
f., g.= SIS -1/10 day
h.= SIS-end of session

2. Subsequent Success.

     a.   Percentage of students (random sample) who completed D.E. English courses and subsequently, completed a course (s) in Non-D.E. English with a 'C' or better.*

     b.   Percentage of former D.E. Math students (random sample) who subsequently completed Non- D.E. Math course(s) with a grade of 'C' or better (vs. those who had Numerical ASSET of 45 or less, but did not take a D.E. Math course).*

     c.   Percentage of former D.E. 'Other' students (random sample) who subsequently completed the corresponding Non-D.E. course (BUS 101-107, CHE 100, LIB 120-250, SPE 129,161) with a grade of 'C' or better.*

     d.   Grades for former D.E. students vs. Non-D.E. students, in selected courses (i.e. top ten course taken at OCC).*

*   *denotes measure that is temporarily on-hold, but is to be completed shortly*