DLLR
STATE OF MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION

DIVISION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AND ADULT LEARNING
1100 North Eutaw Street, Room 209
Baltimore, MD 21201
JEFF TRICE, BUSINESS SERVICES MANAGER

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Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) Business Services Team (BST) has been working diligently over the last two years to change its focus from the jobseeker to the business. This change has been supported by an Expanding Business Engagement (EBE) Grant from the Department of Labor (DOL). We elected to use a diagnostic and prescriptive model to best understand how the Business Services Teams operate in the twelve services areas across the state. By evaluating the services and the manner in which they are delivered, our department is now able to determine whether to replicate or eliminate services based on the needs of business. This demand-driven model is at the core of Business Services, driving our vision, focus and direction.

Standardization of core services and literature, and the use of business-friendly language allow staff to approach our service delivery in more of a franchise model. This allows for greater efficiency, cost reduction and faster service delivery while staying focused on the needs of our customers, the businesses. Through the incorporation of training provided to us through the EBE grant, BST staff members are now receiving regularly scheduled, demand-driven training on a quarterly basis. Our Business Services Team includes State staff, Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Staff, Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), Economic Development representatives, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) staff, Community College and Public Library staff, as well as staff from other agencies who may be calling on business in the state. The value of training and partnerships is beyond measure, especially when so fundamentally changing a model and culture. The BST staff is also learning about how to utilize Labor Market Information (LMI) data, analyzing commuting patterns and demographics to determine strategies to approach and assist businesses with growth and talent acquisition. Understanding that businesses are looking for the best talent possible may mean reaching out in a regional manner to other centers and partners to locate that talent. During this change, the BST members are also seeing that working with businesses in a more consultative role will allow them to think about retention of existing workers loss prevention, rather than focusing strictly on recruitment. The greater the service we provide to business, the more trust and rapport we will establish, leading to more job postings, better matching and reduced unemployment.

Systems change is not always easy, but we have been working persistently in all the right directions. We have completed a rewrite of the state's Business Services brochure, established a single point of contact phone number and email for business customers, started the quarterly training for all Business Services staff, and are working with the Governor's new Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) program to promote that program and connect businesses to training programs.

We hosted a Business Services Summit in June 2013 with over 200 participants from roughly 100 agencies throughout the state, as we had discovered that businesses were becoming frustrated with the multitude of representatives calling on them to place candidates. This "employer fatigue" led us to this summit, where we brainstormed and developed strategies to reduce these calls through better cooperation, coordination and data sharing.

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We have since been in discussion with other agencies, including Economic Development to share a contact management database, "Salesforce.com," which is cloud-based and would allow staff and partners to communicate more effectively. These types of partnerships are essential in this era of declining funding and rapidly expanding service delivery needs and demands. Effective use of technology has become more important than ever, and staff will need to understand and utilize it as we progress.

In May 2014, we held our first-ever Business Services Institute, conceived as the result of the conversations and feedback from last year's Business Services Summit. Our idea was to have each of the twelve service delivery areas bring a team of ten members to the Summit, where they would develop a business services plan or enhance their existing plan.

Our day started with Ken Messina, Rapid Response Business Service Manager from Massachusetts; sharing the business services model they developed by pooling funding sources and utilizing the EBE grant. This was followed by a "best practices" session from representatives of three local areas and a local economist. We were pleased to have five staff members from the Department of Labor (DOL) attend, as well as DLLR's Secretary Leonard Howie, Department of Economic Development's Secretary Dominick Murray, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning's Assistant Secretary Julie Squire and many other key staff. This show of support and commitment to the field staff is critical to the mission and to this changing model and is much appreciated by the Business Services Team.

The success of these cooperative efforts has been nothing short of astounding. People are talking, training is happening, data sharing is in the works and systemic change is moving forward. We would like to maintain this momentum by using this Innovation Grant to purchase technology, do some much-needed outreach, and work on data collection systems that will allow us to develop strategies for business engagement at a sector or individual business level. Much has been accomplished, but there is still much to do.

Jeff Trice
Business Services Manager