



San Joaquin Valley Water Technology Cluster

November 20, 2001, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Central Valley Business Incubator
2555 Clovis Avenue
Clovis, CA 93612

I. Welcome and Introductions.

Co-chair Claude Laval welcomed the participants and self-introductions were made.

II. Action Team Presentations and Discussion

The chair of each of the Action Teams presented the results of the group's activity since the last cluster meeting.

A. Workforce Preparation Action Team. Bob Early (Chair), Russ Densmore, Richard Meno, John Showalter, Ashley Swearengin, Denise Stelling, Sheri Abercrombie.

Bob Early identified the objectives of the team: 1) Establish industry/education alliances to develop programs that meet the skill requirements of cluster companies, and 2) promote manufacturing as a career path in order to provide cluster companies with a larger pool of better trained applicants.

The recent industry survey showed the need for better skilled welders, maintenance mechanics, machinists, and entry-level factory workers. A grant application has been submitted to the State through the University Business Center for over \$1 million. The grant would focus on:

- Entry level factory employees (Fresno County Employment & Temporary Assistance Department, Fresno County One Stop, and Manchester Educational Resource Center)
- Advanced entry-level factory employees (water tech "Boot Camp")
- Maintenance mechanics (The "Medallion" program at The Training Institute)

If the grant is awarded, 100 entry-level positions must be hired and 40 maintenance mechanics must "graduate" and receive a pay increase by the end of the grant. Positions not included in the grant are welders and machinists. The governor's decision will be made mid-December with notification to applicants by the end of December. The grant would be effective on January 1, 2002 and last until December 31, 2003.

Concerns about the grant include:

- More emphasis needed on future employees about to enter the “higher” levels of the education “stream” (CART, FCC, Reedley, etc.)
- The need for more knowledge and better understanding of the programs at FCC, Reedley, The Training Institute, and other training programs.
- The need for more industry involvement in the committee.

Proposed next steps:

- Get more industry representation on the Workforce Committee.
- Schedule an “exploratory” meeting with FCC/Reedley and the Training Institute.
- Evaluate whether grant should be accepted if awarded.
- Possible uses of the grant money:
 - Develop and fund a “Manufacturing Technician” Certificate Program
 - Improve the skill level of graduates of FCC/Reedley in areas of maintenance mechanics, machining, and welding. (Since these areas are not included in the grant proposal, this cannot be done at this time. However, these areas could be given priority in future applications.)
 - Work with The Training Institute on programs for existing employees.
 - Work with some high schools (CART, etc.) to develop programs that will yield good caliber entry-level factory employees.

Discussion/Suggestions:

- There appears to be a mindset with high school counselors that students either go to a four-year college or go to “McDonalds”. Don Thompson is well acquainted with a school principal, and will follow up with discussions of how to change that mindset and encourage students to enter the training programs.
- There is a need for longer training/apprentice programs. If students are placed in internships, supervisors of the interns would have to be trained on how to utilize the interns.
- Can 100 trained people be hired by the end of the grant? It was suggested that a survey be taken to determine the anticipated hiring for that period. There was discussion on the confusion of the terminology “entry level”. It was suggested that the grant be allowed to continue through the application process. If it is awarded and it appears that 100 people cannot be hired within the time frame, the Cluster could contact other constituency groups to determine the possibility of success in meeting the hiring number. “Entry level” will be clearly defined in the survey which will be completed by Christmas.

B. Technology Collaboration Discussion – Angelo Mazzei (Chair), Claude Laval, Ray Dunn, Nick Dvorak, David Zoldoske

David Zoldoske reported that the business plan for The International Center for Water Technology has been completed. A meeting was held with President Welty, Provost Ortiz, Dean Karl Longley, Ashley Swearingin, Dan Clawson, and David to formalize the decision to move forward with the Center at Fresno State. At that meeting, President Welty approved the advancement of the ICWT.

Dan Clawson and Laura Ramos will provide support for the Center. Claude Laval suggested that David Zoldoske be appointed the interim director of the Center. The Cluster also wishes to have input regarding the industry representatives on the Board of Directors. Dean Longley has agreed

to provide \$100,000 seed money from the California Water Institute. A preliminary budget will be developed and distributed to Water Cluster members for their comments/input. The seed money is to be used to generate additional funding (\$10-\$15 million) for development of the Center. An architect has been contacted who will work pro bono on a set of plans.

Proposed Action Items:

- It was MSC that Claude Laval write a letter to Dr. Welty on behalf of the Water Cluster recommending that David Zoldoske be appointed interim director of the ICWT. He will also inform Dr. Welty that the Cluster is prepared to recommend industry representatives to serve on the Board.

C. Industry Advocacy - Sheila DeLany, Nick Dvorak, Ashley Swearingin, Don Thompson. Don Thompson emphasized the need to keep the committee going (develop articles, visits with city/state federal officials).

Discussion/Action :

- The survey results were discussed. The response to “Sales in the San Joaquin Valley” appears to be low. It was agreed that the question was not clear and there is a need to recall respondents regarding the question.

III. Overview of Workforce Connection Services.

Ken Wiseman, Project Manager for ACS Local State and Local Solutions, provided an overview of the services offered by Workforce Connection, the Fresno County “One-Stop” service provider. Workforce Connection will be involved in the grant program submitted to the state, if awarded. Ken encouraged the cluster to work with the workforce investment system, despite its difficulties, because there are substantial financial resources to provide training for cluster companies at no cost, and customized training programs can be developed to serve the industry’s needs.

Action:

- It was agreed that the request for the names of temporary agencies would be included on the workforce needs survey of the cluster.

IV. Update on University Programs.

- Job referrals to Workforce Connection are still needed from cluster companies.
- The UBC is planning a training session on securing federal and state research and development grants. More details to follow.

V. Wrap Up, Next Steps, Adjournment

- Eduardo Torres, U.S. Department of Commerce, is planning a reverse trade mission in February. The cluster offered to host a reception at the farm show for the involved parties.
- Eduardo Torres will schedule video conferences for cluster members and trade leads with Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Mexico. All those who are interested should contact him at eduardo.torres@mail.doc.gov.
- Next cluster meeting is February 7, 2002, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Central Valley Business Incubator.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

