



**ROCKVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INC.  
WORKFORCE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

August 19, 2020  
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
Via Zoom

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**ATTENDEES:** Raquel Bunai, Kathryn Davis, Steve Greenfield, Whitney Harmel, Ed Harrington, Jennifer Hester, Kim Kelley, Dawn Lang (CAEL), Josh Klein (CAEL), Carla Merritt, Cindy Stewart, Annica Wayman

**CAEL PRESENTATION**

Josh Klein, Director of Consulting Projects on the Workforce and Economic Development Team at CAEL introduced himself.

Dawn Lang, Senior Vice President of Partnerships with CAEL introduced herself. CAEL works with their stakeholder groups with higher education, workforce economic development, employers, and regions to align the connection between education and career advancement. Their focus is around adult working learners and helping them find pathways to rapid re-employment and lifelong learning pathways to ensure that people have access to skills advancement, especially as the economy shifts and changes in the workforce.

CAEL has done work in Montgomery County in the past as far as workforce and economic development within the region. CAEL is designed to see learning as a career pathway towards lifelong learning and recognize that there are different points of entry when people look at how they on-ramp and off-ramp during their journey. Since the workforce continues to change and evolve, there is a continuous need for upscaling and rescaling whether that talent is found internally within organizations or hiring externally, the skills are always in question as to whether an organization considers talent advancement or talent obtainment. With the pandemic, it has become very apparent that skills are in demand and there are gaps and opportunities for higher education to have a seat at the table to be a partner with adult learners.

How CAEL works is finding clear affordable pathways to how people are advancing and getting recognition with their experiences. A lot of institutions are seeing a rapid increase in summer student enrollment and some are seeing upticks with fall enrollments. There are some concerns about drop outs but are also pivoting towards skill advancement. CAEL also works on how they are mapping competencies to in demand jobs and how higher education not only has the curriculum and the course work but what the skills are for in-demand jobs. There's a common language of skills and competencies that begin to tie two ends together. CAEL also looks at applied learning experiences especially considering experiential learning, on-the-job training, and also building towards higher learning

credentials. As one gets into those higher and middle level jobs, a bachelor's degree, at a minimum, is necessary to help advance people financially.

CAEL worked on a report for Avalanche that was completed in 2019. The project goals were understanding local demand trends, examining graduate trends as it relates to regional trends, identifying graduate applicants to be filled by educational institutions in the county or region, and hearing what the future needs are. The voice of the employer is very important as one ties in the educational alignment. They also recommend new programs and collaborations to expand the pipeline. What they found in the report is they identified the demand and supply gaps in the key areas; healthcare, business, IT, science, engineering, and manufacturing. The gaps were found in the region and county level. Based on the information coming out of the data, the consultant looked at aligning program offerings, experiential learning opportunities, employer engagement, and career awareness. Leveraging this data in these key areas is how CAEL can leverage this as part of the movement forward for what they're recommending to the client. When CAEL looks at the identified areas in these key sectors and the gaps that are found, what is helpful in moving forward is to see how the technology platform in is this data still consistent today. Healthcare will most likely have expansion in that area or greater gaps if there is not much talent they need to fill. One of the things to consider is the industries that were negatively impacted by COVID, CAEL would look at crossovers of other in-demand industries where people can get jobs.

Ms. Lang also discussed a platform that CAEL built for the State of Tennessee. Tennessee was challenged with connecting their residents across the state within the key business sectors and finding accessible pathways. CAEL broke down the regions of Tennessee to help people connect to a career, education, employers, and advisors at a regional level. The website was set up for the end user. If a person wants to start with a career it will ask questions to find out what jobs match for that specific person and the educational requirements for that job. The data is pulled from the companies searching for employees. The website also enables a person to search by education or salary and it also enables the user to know the barriers to obtaining a job, for example, transportation issues or childcare in that area.

CAEL also created a website for the petro-chemical industry in Houston, which is set up differently from the State of Tennessee's site, but serves the same purpose for the user, however, it is solely for people interested in jobs in the petro-chemical industry. They wanted to make sure to promote the industry and let people know that there are more positions available than just in petroleum.

CAEL also partnered with CUNY and New York State to create a site similar to the petro-chemical site, however, its focus is on financial services positions available within the industry.

## QUESTIONS

- How long does it take to build a website?
  - It took two years to complete the site for the State of Tennessee.
- Has CAEL built websites on a smaller scale, for example, the City of Rockville or a county?
  - CAEL created a website for just employers at McDonalds.
  - CAEL is talking to other groups to build sites for specific regions.

- The technology platform can be very specific and CAEL can create the roadmap on how they want the user to navigate through their journey. They would need to consider who the user is going to be, what access they want the user to have visibility to, and how do they want to steer the user.
- In looking at Tennessee’s website, it looks like there’s a partnership with CAEL, the Department of Economic and Community Development, Complete Tennessee, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Do you recommend that an economic and development agency like REDI try to get grants through organizations such as Bill and Melinda Gates?
  - Anytime you can get funding it’s fantastic and helps support the cause. With the economic impacts happening in the region due to COVID, there’s a lot of federal funding being distributed but the challenge is that everyone is going after “the same purse.” You need to ensure you have the right data and a compelling reason as to why you want to put a project like this together is critical.
- What should our next steps be in our conversation about this? We’ve just been convening with people and acknowledge there are overlaps and needs. We are very strong in the technology, health, and cyber in this area because we are so close to federal agencies. What are suggested next steps to develop the data we need and move forward to being able to communicate coherently what these pathways are?
  - Some of the information you have from the Montgomery County research report is helpful as a foundation because you have data to start with and it informs the direction. You might want to add another layer of check-in just to see where is the temperature gauge is now versus where it was nine months ago and where have the gaps increased. If this group is the steering committee that would lead this project, the first point would be for this committee to align a vision and an outcome. What does success look like and what is the end goal. Is there data you want to track on the back end, what does that begin to look like? As you seek funders, they’re going to want to know what those data points are, what are the outcomes, and how are you measuring success.
  - Josh Klein mentioned that there are a lot of components and recommendations that are going to be even more important now. One of the specific recommendations was creating a dedicated website to house this information to display the local labor market demand and we need to look at it through the lense of where we are right now and which pieces can be moved to the back burner and which need to be front and center.
- Is there a way to get sponsors for this website where a university or company could advertise or have some placement on the site to generate revenue?
  - Ms. Lang is unsure if CAEL has done that with other sites and isn’t sure how to approach that because the sites are accessible to a lot of people and they’re focusing on the businesses that they’re promoting. She thinks it’s a conversation that REDI will need to have to promote the site and decide on what the end goal is. Funding might be a better way to promote the site versus advertising because it might question the motivate.
- Jennifer Hester mentioned that part of what REDI has been talking about with our pathway is the employer and the organizations that would be hiring those people but the piece that is critical is also having that employer have a way to reach in and connect with resources. She feels that there is another side of this that’s needed which is to connect those groups to the workforce and connect to educational facilities that have the training and capacity to provide

their existing employees to other portions of the city. If they want to expand or build they could help get information about how they would do things like for example, permits. In order for this to be more than for a place for people to find jobs we want this to be a reinforcing system we need the other side to. Is that something you have created for the business side of the community?

- That's the next step we're talking to Tennessee about.
- McDonalds has an app that CAEL created for them that has coaching and a live chat that is very specific to how McDonalds wanted their employees to access career pathways within McDonalds or outside McDonalds.
- CAEL is in the contacting stage with an organization that will have this intricacy as well because they will have a closed platform that requires the use of a password because they're tracking data based on the Department of Labor funding.
- Jennifer mentioned that the users from the employer's standpoint would not be the employees, it would be HR departments, recruiting departments, so they're looking into the talent pool that is in the system or they're connecting with people in the educational institutions to help create programs or help find training programs for their staff.
  - Ms. Lang responded that it is a different target audience to get altogether because then it gets into how much information and data is known about what the education institutions can offer as far as employee development and talent development.
  - Josh Klein responded that it's a more customized solution that needs to be built but if the top priorities are identified, CAEL can certainly look at how it can be done.
- If you had a potential employee that needed one skill to work in an organization and Montgomery College was offering that certificate course, would the organization be able to connect to that particular certificate that the employee would need through this website? Is there a contact there that could matriculate through the college and get back to the organization that needs it?
- Steve Greenfield mentioned that when The National Harbor and casinos needed to staff thousands of jobs quickly, Prince George's Economic Development had a skills matching platform so the employer would post the job along with the competencies and skills and the general public could come in and apply for that job. However, if for example, they applied for a networking job but weren't qualified they could take a course at Montgomery College and re-apply for that position.
  - Ms. Lang mentioned that Strata Education Network is CAEL's parent company. EMSI, a data analytics company, is also part of the family, so CAEL uses a lot EMSI data. EMSI has a program of skills matching functionality to their data so CAEL is leveraging that data with these platforms as well. They are able to look at that information and match it from a jobs perspective and even get it down to the curriculum level with institutions.
- What would the cost be to build a platform?
  - Ms. Lang responded that CAEL would need to determine what REDI is asking for and how it would begin to look like. They can pull some estimating pricing together.
- After there is a portal launch, what is the kind of staffing needed to keep it up to date?

- CAEL has an ongoing maintenance and hosting fee that helps with that. There is a process CAEL can help setting REDI up with that but it's CAEL's goal that there is at least one person or two people at REDI working alongside of them. CAEL would put together what the expectations are on both sides and would train the individuals from REDI. Ms. Lang suggested no more than two people at REDI working on the platform.
- Who commissions the Montgomery County studies?
  - The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC).

#### **COMMENTS FROM REDI WORKFORCE**

- Dr. Kelley thanked Dawn and Josh for the successful presentation.
- More information is needed on a proposal or what it would look like for getting involved with this project.
  - It would be a good jumping point to articulate what the scope is of what REDI would need.
  - REDI would need to decide if this a Rockville, Montgomery County, Prince George's County combined project. CAEL could work with REDI on this.
- REDI is interested in pursuing this project with CAEL.
  - Ms. Lang can connect this group with Tennessee if they're interested.
- REDI needs to have a scope and identify who needs to be at the table.
- REDI need to have a conversation with a group that has experience with proposals.
- REDI looks forward to continuing the discussion.