



February 2, 2011 Danielle Switalski, Staff Writer, *Elko Daily Free Press*

School Officials on board for Dream It, Do It

ELKO — As far as the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority is concerned, developing a local workforce is the key to keeping Elko County economically strong and thriving.

When Executive Director Pam Borda first heard about the Dream It, Do It program through the Northern Nevada Development Authority, the organization that was asked by the state to pilot the educational initiative, forming a partnership and becoming a program co-pilot was a “no-brainer.”

The campaign was created by the National Association of Manufacturers as a way to produce a labor force with the right skills to fit the jobs that are available around the state.

Since the program was introduced at a meeting in January, Borda said seven out of the nine invited organizations have signed on to be a part of the task force.

“I’m ecstatic because they’re the ones we needed the most and clearly they got the message,” Borda said.

Borda said the first to sign up were Jeff Zander, superintendent of the Elko County School District, and Bret Murphy of Great Basin College, along with other GBC staff.

She said without the schools on board there is no point for ECEDA to move forward.

“This is truly a program that can’t happen if it isn’t a total partnership in the community between education, business and us and everyone else who has a stake in training and hiring,” Borda said. “I knew that once they saw what the program was they wouldn’t have any issues because I knew both GBC and the school district are doing things very similar to this, so this is just another tool for them.”

The program will be a potential funding source to implement additional training programs.

Members of the task force also include Small Business Development, Department of Employment Training and Rehabilitation, Nevada Industry Excellence, Nevada Cooperative Extension and regent for the Nevada System of Higher Education Kevin Melcher.

At the next meeting in February, Danny Campos from NNDA will come to Elko to discuss more details.

“He’ll talk about how the statewide program will work and the organizational structure, what we need to do locally and interact with the statewide group,” Borda said.



She said he will also discuss ways ECEDA should go after funding once the program is ready to take off.

First, members of the task force need to inventory the curriculum already in place and any training provided through organizations around the area.

After that, ECEDA and members of the task force will take an inventory of the employer base, particularly those in manufacturing, to match the incentives listed in the Dream It, Do It program.

“With preliminary research we’ve done, it’s scary we don’t have a better mechanism to track business out there. We have a lot of literal leg work to do and to go out and contact, meet with people, explain the program and see what skill sets they have and need,” Borda said.

Once these inventories are complete, Borda said they will conduct a gap analysis to see what training is needed and what this program can provide.

Borda said the program is not something that is designed to happen overnight. It is also not a quick fix to the problem of workforce development, it is a long-term solution.

For this reason, funding will not be sought until the needs have been fully identified.

“I don’t think there is any urgency to ask for something before you really know what you need and how to approach it,” Borda said. “You can’t go wrong with this plan. It addresses issues articulated to me as a problem, and it made all the sense in the world.”