



Emerging Trends Task Force August 8, 2019 Meeting Summary

Task Force members participating: Andy Switky (chair), Sinead Borgersen, Ladan Dalla Betta, Van Dang, Hilary Goodkind, Steve Levy, Cindy Springsteel and Judy Sugiyama

NOVA staff: Kris Stadelman, Luther Jackson and Eileen Stanly

I. Welcome and Review Agenda

The task force chair Andy Switky called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the agenda to set the stage for the meeting's discussion.

II. Proposed Plan: Employer Ethnographic Interviews

At the last task force meeting, members recommended conducting employer ethnographic interviews to obtain qualitative information about their talent needs, hiring strategies, etc., which would be used to design prototypes to shape career advising content, workshop programming, business services outreach strategies, customer networking activities, the Slingshot 2.0 apprenticeship initiative, and to strengthen relationships with employers, among other possibilities. As a result of this recommendation, a plan for these interviews was developed and distributed to members at the meeting. Highlights of comments included:

- Changes to the proposed plan document: the term “outcomes” should be changed to “strategies” as strategies come first and inform outcomes; under the “outcomes” heading, change “inform” in the third bullet to a more proactive term, for example, “shape prototypes according to what we hear from the customer.”
- In clarifying the target audience: The focus of the project is on interviewing employers. NOVA primarily serves dislocated workers from the technology industry, as well as low-income adults. One of the goals of the interviews is to identify how both these two target groups can move up into higher-wage occupations. The challenge is skill training.
- There are a variety of different outcomes that could come out of this venture impacting how NOVA works with customers, how NOVA works with employers, how we might better inform the Slingshot 2.0 apprenticeship initiative, and how we might better align job seeker skills with the talent demands of employers. What do we hope the outcome will be and how will we know that it's been successful? The outcome should be a set of targets.
- There is a mismatch between employer needs and workers' skills. It will be important to also consider quantitative data: LinkedIn database looks at the people, but other databases, such as Talent Neuron, look at the jobs that some of the larger companies use. Many companies, such as Adobe, have developed rich data analytics that will provide invaluable information during the interview process.

- In considering possible questions to ask during the employer interview, it will be important to also include an open-ended question, such as “What are your needs?” and “Where are you seeing retirements coming up?” The proposed plan will be good for the short-term mobility issue, but we should also consider other opportunities for information gathering, such as about apprenticeships in a nonunion environment. It will be interesting to see how the information collected from these employer interviews could change in a recession.
- Online training: What stops workers from accessing free online training? The answer is that workers don’t know what employers want. Also, employers provide few incentives for workers to utilize online training. Workers also don’t have the time to complete these trainings. What is the realistic time to train employees?
- Do we have a way to bring in new employees who don’t have the skills needed? Different forms of creative internships are avenues for employers to bring in workers, who don’t have the specific skills that are needed, and train them. Companies are exploring opportunities to recruit retired workers through “returnships”, where they recruit workers to return to work as interns. The Neurodiversity initiative has provided internships for individuals on the autism spectrum that have been very successful and have resulted in job offers from Ernst and Young (E&Y), among others.
- There are a variety of different industries and sectors that should be considered as potential participants in the employer interviews, such as: technology, healthcare and other high-skilled industries, construction, and manufacturing (including warehouse and distribution); small, medium and large companies; and maturing companies, as well as entrepreneurial/start-ups. Staffing agencies specializing in these sectors should also be included. It’s better to start with a large group of different interview subjects first because not everyone will agree to participate, so the list will narrow quickly. Task force members volunteered to provide specific contacts that would be interested in participating in the interviews and would introduce NOVA staff to these contacts. The goal is to complete a maximum of ten interviews in the next month to six weeks.

III. New Partnerships: Digital Promise Micro-Credentials Initiative

Digital Promise is a national nonprofit that seeks to accelerate innovation in education by working with education leaders, researchers, and technology developers to improve learning. In July, Digital Promise hosted a Challenge Institute in Monterey with a focus on big ideas for learning and invited NOVA to bring a team to participate. Digital Promise also approached NOVA to explore the question of “To what extent can micro-credentials play a role, in lieu of college degrees, in demonstrating to employers what a worker knows?.” NOVA will further flesh out a proposal about this and Digital Promise will approach funders to support this initiative. Community colleges and the nonprofit, Building Skills Partnership will be partners in this initiative. Micro-credentials could be of value to both the technology, as well as health care sectors and could be applied to occupations such as those that Building Skills Partnership works with (e.g. janitorial services.) Another question that could be added to the employer interviews: “Are employers looking at micro-credentials as an asset and a way to learn who is the best candidate?”

IV. Updates: Apprenticeships, Employer Engagement Initiatives

In keeping with the Task Force’s charter of exploring emerging trends opportunities in different venues, NOVA is partnering with a variety of initiatives in the community that are targeting emerging trends. A

summary of the eight initiatives was distributed to the task force and discussed. These initiatives include: 1) Amazon Web Services cloud technician certificate program, in partnership with Foothill College and the College of San Mateo; 2) Apprenticeship Bay Area to create a platform for tech and other high-skilled nontraditional apprenticeships. San Jacinto Community College in Texas was awarded a national grant, in partnership with IBM and Cisco, to train and place 6,000 workers. Locally, IBM approached NOVA to work with them on software engineering apprenticeships; 3) ApprenticeSIP has introduced a new model and approach for apprenticeships through a MeetUp group to promote tech, high-skilled and other nontraditional apprenticeships; 4) Digital Promise is supporting a NOVA-led adult education skill initiative and exploring a future micro-credentials initiative; 5) Neurodiversity Career Pathways Council is coordinating with workforce and training service providers, statewide, who are serving individuals on the autism spectrum; 6) Opening Doors Bay Area is comprised of a diverse coalition seeking to increase employment and retention of individuals with disabilities; 7) Project Backyard represents a coalition of 21 Silicon Valley companies addressing issues of housing, hunger and skill development challenges; and 8) Working Up represents a coalition of Silicon Valley elected officials, workforce and training agencies, employers and educators to create a more efficient, equitable and accessible regional workforce system.

V. Wrap-up and Next Steps

- NOVA staff will forward a draft email to the task force members to send to their respective contacts for the employer interviews. (This was completed after the meeting.) For those contacts that have agreed to participate, an interview will be scheduled.
- After the interviews have been completed, information obtained from the interviews will be synthesized and analyzed in preparation for the next step of design and prototyping.