



## **Emerging Trends Task Force June 28, 2018 Meeting Summary**

Task Force members participating: Andy Switky (chair), Van Dang, Hilary Goodkind, and Micah Merrick

NOVA staff: Kris Stadelman, Luther Jackson and Eileen Stanly

### **I. Welcome, Introductions, Review Charter and Meeting Agenda**

The task force chair convened the meeting. The Emerging Trends Task Force, as with the purpose of NOVA, is to help workers transition and align industry needs (demand-side) with the labor market (supply-side). Today, employers and the labor market are grappling with the skills versus credential dilemma and hiring biases that impact the marketplace. The task force will be looking at current changes in the economy and workplace and how these changes impact our customers' ability to obtain relevant education and training and compete for future jobs. While staff works directly with the customers, this task force will be looking at the big picture and at major changes that can impact job seekers and employers, but in a practical way.

If one looks at lessons learned from previous industry-specific initiatives, the initiatives were intended to address a specific identified issue at that time. For example, the solar industry project addressed an issue that was identified by the industry - a shortage in solar professionals - so the project trained chip engineers (a declining occupation) to become solar sales specialists, project managers and engineers. The SlingShot initiative targeted the tech industry and emerging industry sectors (e.g. digital advertising and DevOps) and designed demand-side intervention strategies to address talent needs in these sectors.

The Emerging Trends Task Force's work could be as tangible as launching a training program to target a specific need or advancing workshops, advocating for benefits and security for contingent workers, or exploring other job search tools for customers that may have some of the features offered by LinkedIn and other companies, but at a lower cost. It's important not to rush to a solution that may be solving an anecdote rather than an identified issue. What we hope to get out of the task force's work is a better understanding of the shape and scope of the issues and a strategy that may better inform or tackle the issue. The task force will be guiding staff on what it needs to make decisions that may include research, convening experts, etc. Then we can prototype ideas, make adjustments based on findings, and finalize an approach, but first we need to identify the problem.

### **II. Brainstorm on Defined Work and Develop Work-plan**

Highlights of the discussion included:

- The talent marketplace is evolving and has approached another transformative time. When the economy moved from agriculture to the industrial era, new rules were implemented that included the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) with defined work hours, overtime rules, etc. Now the labor market is embarking on a new era, with the line between employee and contractor blurred and the relationship between worker and employer changing. But we are still required to follow the old rules that are getting in the way of these new developments.
- Hiring bias: In this new economy and new way of doing business, older workers are being left behind and are unemployed for a longer period of time (although NOVA-funded trainings are trying to fill in the gap for these job seekers). Employers are hiring younger workers who are new graduates with less experience, offering them lower wages than those with more experience, and are hiring workers who are similar to workers who have succeeded in their company. Although the population is more diverse and foreign-born, the current tech workforce does not reflect this diversity. A recommendation was made that although the hiring bias is an important societal issue, it is one that the Board will have a difficult time impacting and that it might be best to focus its time and efforts on the skills gap issue. It will be difficult to approach the hiring bias on a large scale and perhaps will be better to tackle it through workarounds and on an individual basis. Task force members asked that at the next meeting staff provide data on demographics, labor market and NOVA's customer base.
- Skills vs. Credentials: There has been a lot of discussion about the use of badges or micro-credentials to shore up job seekers' qualifications to make them more marketable to employers in their chosen industry. However, some industries don't recognize these badges, so it will be important to align badges with industry-recognized credentials. Also, even for those workers who have the recognized skills required for a position, companies are finding that they don't have the broader approach or foundational skills necessary in today's workplace for problem-solving and decision-making in order to succeed. Other soft skills are also critical. It's important to not just focus on changing the prospective employee (supply-side), but the employer's approach to hiring, specifically, changing the way an employer looks at minimum qualifications and to consider accepting other "nontraditional" credentials.
- Through the SlingShot initiative, the company Ten-X has launched an apprenticeship program where a current worker who has not worked in a non-tech area of the company will now work as an apprentice in the tech area. This provides the company with an opportunity to try someone out with "nontraditional" skills for that job without incurring any risk. It is a form of "try before you buy." Employers will be more inclined to hire someone from a "nontraditional" background if it is perceived as a low risk.
- Networking is another way for job seekers to demonstrate their skills. The message they are giving to employers through networking is that if they are also good at sales. NOVA can and has worked at providing the tools to job seekers to improve their networking skills.
- The small business sector is the likely sector that will take a risk at hiring candidates from "nontraditional" backgrounds. Can NOVA become a viable talent channel for smaller companies? Developing a database of small businesses would be a good first step, but it's the relationships/contacts with these small businesses that will facilitate access to opportunities in this

sector. By looking at the intersection between small businesses in this community and ProMatch alumni, NOVA customers with “nontraditional” backgrounds will have an avenue for exploring opportunities that will increase their chances for employment success.

- We need to create the conditions where employers view NOVA as the place to get qualified candidates that may be “nontraditional” and hire them either full-time or as contract workers. NOVA can serve as a convener, intermediary and/or facilitator for both groups, connecting the job seeker to the company or small business and vice versa.
- Another area that the Emerging Trends Task Force should explore is new and emerging industry trends and a mechanism to stay abreast of these trends, ongoing. One suggestion was utilizing the a16z podcasts (produced by the Andreessen Horowitz venture capital firm). It may take a lot of work tracking emerging trends. Perhaps tracking trends on a higher level and then focusing on a select sector may be the best approach. NOVA stays abreast of emerging trends through its business services program from employers who are seeking assistance with layoffs and recruitment of talent, through employer recruitment events/job fairs and through the length of time customers remain in the NOVA program.

### **III. Wrap-up/Next Steps**

- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 25 to precede or follow the Board meeting. Possible times will be sent out to task force members to poll availability.
- Data will be compiled on the NOVA customer base, demographics, labor market and economic landscape, and other information that is pertinent to the task force’s work.
- A Google drive folder will be created as a means for members to share information. Task force member, Van Dang will explore Zoom videoconferencing as an option for members for those meetings that are held in the Sunnyvale Room, which has a computer screen set-up.