The Children’s Cabinet Career Cluster Initiative Town Hall Meeting brought over 400 business, education, community, and youth representatives together with policymakers to strengthen relationships, share ideas, identify common priorities, and build a stronger workforce in New Mexico.

The 21st Century Town Meeting Aimed to:
- Provide an opportunity for youth & business leaders to define what their needs are and to build a bridge between them.
- Allow participants to learn more about New Mexico’s emerging markets and the Career Cluster Initiative.
- Develop recommendations for the Children’s Cabinet to use in preparing for the next legislative session.
- Identify people who will continue to be involved in building a more powerful workforce in the state of New Mexico.

What Are Career Clusters?
Career clusters are groups of related industries that share common resources, like raw materials or equipment, and employ workers who have similar interests and abilities. New Mexico has identified seven strategic market sectors or “clusters” as the foundation for its future economy—its careers and businesses.

New Mexico’s Seven Career Clusters
The following seven New Mexico career clusters help the state prepare workers who have the talent, skills and passion to work in the state’s top industries:
- Arts and Entertainment
- Business Services
- Communications and Information
- Energy and Environmental Technologies
- Engineering, Construction, Manufacturing, and Agriculture
- Health and Biosciences
- Hospitality and Tourism

Sectors Represented
(‘Which best describes you?’)

- Business 17%
- K-12 Education 17%
- Higher Education 12%
- Non-Profit Community Group 30%
- Youth 9%
- Private Philanthropy 1%
- Other 15%
Why was it important for you to participate in the discussion today?

- Advocate for specialized training and education for jobs that are focused on specific fields
- Represent my organization/agency
- Define the workforce need of the business community
- Make valuable connections
- Make my voice heard - especially youth voice
- Learn from those from other walks of life
- Learn about different career options
- Looking to become more involved in my community
- Make sure that “under represented” groups are included – e.g. tribal & rural communities
- “Bridge the gap between community and education” – especially with the business community

How Did the Town Meeting Work?

The Children’s Cabinet Career Cluster Initiative Town Hall Meeting was designed and facilitated using the unique 21st Century Town Meeting® format developed by AmericaSpeaks, a national non-partisan non-profit organization. AmericaSpeaks is well known nationally and internationally for engaging over 130,000 people in complex public policy and planning issues, including New Orleans recovery, designing of the World Trade Center site after 9/11, and social security reform.

To increase participation and input, participants were seated in small groups of 10. A trained facilitator worked with each small group throughout the session to ensure each person had an opportunity to share their opinion. The meeting’s lead facilitator presented discussion questions to the group and the ideas from each discussion were collected through networked computers stationed at each table. A team of data analysts reviewed the comments from all of the tables simultaneously and reported the common ideas back to the group almost immediately.

Then, using polling keypads, the participants reviewed and prioritized these ideas. The results from the polls were reported instantly to the group via large video screens. Polling was used both to gather demographic information and to give participants the opportunity to prioritize their comments.

Key Policy Recommendations for Building a Stronger Workforce

Participants offered their suggestions to the Children’s Cabinet for their consideration on how to build a workforce today for the jobs of tomorrow.

- Develop service learning opportunities in all schools (32%)
- Provide funding to increase internship/summer job opportunities within government and businesses (41%)
- Develop a statewide mentoring initiative to connect students/schools with businesses (39%)
- Introduce career preparation curriculum (career path) that follows students from K-12 to higher education to employment (34%)
- De-emphasize testing and “teach towards a goal of workforce competency” – eliminate No Child Left Behind (57%)
- Provide incentives for businesses to train and hire youth (e.g. tax breaks) (33%)
- Increase access to quality early childhood programs (19%)
- Provide infrastructure for integrating technology into curriculum and teaching – e.g. distance learning (22%)

Who Participated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meeting Participants</th>
<th>All of New Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your gender?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and better</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your racial background?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you live?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moving Forward

Participants discussed recommendations that will help build a vibrant and diverse workforce by assessing the needs of each community and brainstorming opportunities for partnership.

Youth and Business Employment Needs

What do youth want the business community and others to understand better about their employment needs?

- Need for business community to become more involved in education:
  - Provide hands-on resources to students, such as internships, mentorships
  - Make learning relevant – business to help educators transform classroom into work environment
- Perceived resource and job inequity – e.g. fewer opportunities in rural communities
- There is a disconnect between students/youth and employers – “look past stereotypes of young people”
- Understand that youth workforce has different challenges – e.g. school, family, transportation obligations
- Provide more information about actual jobs, responsibilities & opportunities

What does the business/professional community want youth and others to understand better about their employment needs?

- Students need to have a “clean background”
- Ready to work with basic skills – e.g. communication, time-management, writing, teamwork skills
- Students with a good work ethic, attitude & goals
- Business needs to create work environments that students are interested in joining
- Youth need to better understand the importance of education in preparing them to work
- Help us understand the disconnect between youth and business
- Greater partnership with schools – “classroom connections to workforce”

Partnership Opportunities for Building a Stronger Workforce

Participants also considered opportunities for stakeholder groups to work together in partnerships that would create a workforce today for the jobs of tomorrow:

- Parents/Educators/Students
  - Parents need to be involved – “create a family involvement plan” or “contract for expectations”
- Business/Educators/Community organizations
  - Provide internships, mentorships, & apprenticeships
- Chamber of Commerce/Businesses/Schools
  - Chamber to serve as liaison and align activities between business & schools
- Policymakers/Community organizations
  - Provide an on-line inventory of available resources to enhance collaboration, reduce redundancy & point users to available services
- Family/Policymakers
  - Provide opportunities for parents & youth to influence policy
- Government/Business
  - Create a New Mexico “My Space” page focusing on workforce solutions & opportunities
- Faith Based Organizations/Schools
  - Leverage existing relationships with families & underserved groups

Next Steps

Secretaries of the Children’s Cabinet agreed to review & consider the policy recommendations generated at today’s meeting. The Children’s Cabinet will send email updates about its work in this area. Here are upcoming meetings where participants can continue the conversation:

- Engage New Mexico – August 27-28
- Higher Education Summit – October 1-3
- Governor’s Career Fair – October 28-30
- Graduation Summit – March 2009

The Career Cluster Initiative is really about the jobs that are being created, if it’s in aviation, if it’s in film, alternative energy, health occupations, those various clusters of opportunities, really, not just for careers but opportunities for kids, is what we want to concentrate on and we want kids to know what kind of skills they need in order to move into those careers.

-Lt. Governor Diane Denish