



How to Successfully Create a Workforce Development Plan

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Workforce development leaders, in our communities and in the workplace, are facing a shift in the world of workforce readiness. It's not simply the recent increase in employees working from home, or the pressing need to prepare individuals to succeed in a work world that's getting transformed by technology, or even the struggles that employers – from manufacturing to high technology – have finding skilled workers.

But the combination creates a perfect storm of challenges for even the most enlightened workforce development leaders. Some leaders are getting it right and closing the skills gaps in their communities. Here are some building blocks for a successful workforce development plan in your organization.



Types of Workforce Development Programs

Workforce development programs are designed to help individuals build the skills that are valued by employers. How you talk about the different types of workforce development varies, depending on your role.

Academic and economic development organizations tend to talk about:

- **Supportive Services:** Resume development and review, interview training and preparation, job counseling, and even transportation support to get to interviews.
- **Job Placement:** Matching potential employees with jobs and employers that require the skills of the individual.
- **Training:** Building the skills required in a job or career. Job training may support people who are looking for jobs as well as those who want to improve skills for their current job.


In the workplace, the strongest workforce development leaders are managing workforce development programs across the employee lifecycle:

- **Recruiting and Hiring:** Finding and hiring people with the right skills for the job – even if the company intends to provide training to build some of the essential skills.
- **Learning and Development:** Acquiring new skills through apprenticeships, training, and mentoring.
- **Career Development:** Building skills and experiences to progress along a career path.

Creating a Workforce Development Plan

Whatever labels are used to describe the effort, the most successful workforce development plans involve collaboration across industry, academia, and community.

For corporate leaders, creating a successful workforce development plan starts with identifying the skills your organization needs to thrive today. All while flexibly building the skills and competencies required for employee readiness well into the future.



A solid workforce development plan:

- **Identifies desired skills** – based on the company’s needs and goals. Each company’s skills inventory should be mapped to each job role, so individuals, managers and company leaders can see clearly which skills and competencies are needed for each job.
- **Maps current employee skills and competencies** – using an employee skills matrix, for an at-a-glance view of how well the workforce is prepared and where to focus on skill development.
- **Includes learning opportunities** – and a culture of learning, so employees have the access to a range of learning and development experiences that improve their skills and advance their careers. For an increasing number of companies, this part of the plan includes collaborative efforts with local community colleges, universities, and economic development authorities. Together, stakeholders create and deliver the classes, internships, apprenticeships, and recruitment activities needed to build the skills and opportunities for long-term success.
- **Calls for ongoing evaluation** – so employees and employers alike can monitor and measure progress toward achieving the desired level of mastery for each targeted competency. Ongoing evaluation also reveals exactly which learning and development opportunities are the most effective.
- **Must be flexible** – to adapt to changing needs, evolving conditions, and lessons learned along the way.

Making Your Workforce Development Plan Work

Successful workforce development programs are agile – designed to support near-term and longer-term skill development, even as the desired skills and competencies change with time and demands. To keep up, workforce development leaders need ready access to real-time and historic competency data of their employees. And, while it’s possible to manage such data on spreadsheets, nothing can compete with a robust competency management system.

Competency management is all about helping employees to be more effective for your business. To confidently gauge employee readiness or optimize a future workforce, workforce development leaders are assessing individuals, teams, and programs – every step of the employee lifecycle. A competency management system such as [Avilar’s WebMentor Skills™](#) can collect, store, manage, and provide reports on massive amounts of competency data that can inform critical workforce development and business decisions.

What enlightened workforce development leaders understand is that aggregate competency data doesn’t simply help businesses make good decisions. It can also be used with academic and community partners to:

- Develop and improve important learning and development programs
- Identify untapped talent pools
- Clarify economic performance tied to community skill development

Together, we are stronger. Together, industry, academia, and government workforce development leaders can better prepare individuals, businesses, and communities to thrive.

To learn more about how competency management can strengthen workforce development programs, [contact us](#) to schedule a demo of Avilar’s competency management system – [WebMentor Skills™](#).