

# The Business Partnership Council

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The Business Partnership Council was established to create a learning exchange between local businesses and the Robbinsdale Adult Academic Program (AAP). The AAP has been offering employment and workforce education for many years but wanted to increase the coordination with employers by partnering with local businesses in an advisory capacity.

In order to recruit businesses for this partnership, the AAP invited representative from local businesses to a "Business Coffee." During this event, the participants learned about the AAP and also had the opportunity of networking among themselves. It was from this event that the Business Partnership Council began. The council now meets five times a year with approximately 12 businesses attending regularly. The AAP Workforce Education Coordinator and one of the business partners share the role in facilitating the meetings.

The council is beneficial to both businesses and the AAP. Employers have benefited from participating in workshops given by the ABE workforce staff on communication in the workplace and customized ESL training. In addition, a job board is now located in the learner lounge allowing local businesses the opportunity to tap into a potential employee pool at the school.

The AAP has reaped considerable benefits from the council. Employers have shared with learners and staff sample applications forms, entry requirements and company policies. Business partners have presented at state conferences and local workshops on job-specific skills. Business partners have also advocated for ABE state legislation. Recently, the Business Partnership Council advised the AAP in the design of the new *Successful Employment Series* for ESL learners. Perhaps the most important benefit of the council is the opportunity provided for learners to start gaining contacts and paid internships with local business owners and potential employers.

The Business Partnership Council is replicable with limited funds spent for mailings and boxed lunches five times a year. The total cost for one year is approximately \$250. The most important element needed is a strong commitment from a qualified staff member, such as a workforce coordinator, who has an ABE background, workplace knowledge and a passion for workforce education. Strong communication linkages and on-going dialogues between the ABE program and businesses is the essential key.