

Bellevue Communications Group Pepperpots Entry

Entry Category: Editorial/Op-Ed Columns

Title of Entry: Philadelphia Works Industry Partnership OpEd

Client: Philadelphia Works

100-Word Description

In June of 2015, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association asked local workforce investment boards to support additional funding for the Industry Partnerships program in the state budget. Philadelphia Works chose to submit an OpEd commentary to local news outlets in support of the program. Using a fact sheet provided by the state, Bellevue Communications penned a commentary that was submitted under the auspices of Philadelphia Works CEO, Mark Edwards, and two local employers that are co-chairs of the local Industry Partnership. The commentary was published by the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Tribune.

Two- Page Summary

Program Overview/objectives:

In June of 2015, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association (PWDA) called upon local workforce investment boards across the commonwealth to support additional funding for the Industry Partnerships program in the state budget through a number of ways. The goal of the initiative was to keep intact a \$9 million proposed increase in funding for Industry Partnerships across the state. The initiative included a letter writing campaign, visits with state congressional leaders, and submitting OpEd commentaries to local news outlets across the state.

As the lead Workforce Development Board for the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Works decided the best course of action was to submit an OpEd commentary to local media outlets in Philadelphia. Given the city's stature as the largest media market in the state, the client felt the best return on a limited investment would be to garner attention through the commentary in order to use it as a legislative advocacy piece. Targeted media outlets for the commentary included the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Tribune.

The PWDA provided a fact sheet on Industry Partnerships as well as a template commentary that could be submitted "as is" to local papers. But the commentary was written from a state-wide perspective and would not garner attention from a Philadelphia media outlet without specific, localized information that would make it relevant to industry leaders and legislators in the Philadelphia area. As such, Bellevue Communications Group was tasked to re-write the commentary piece to be submitted under the auspices of co-signers Mark Edwards, CEO of Philadelphia Works, Frank Cettina, President of Computer Components Corp., and Victoria Myers, Director of Administration for Piasecki Aircraft Corp., the latter two of which are co-chairs of the local Industry Partnership, the Southeastern Regional Workforce Development Partnership.

Execution:

Bellevue Communications Group oversaw the creation of a new OpEd commentary using the fact sheet and elements of the template provided by the state. The first and most important task was to find a lens through which funding for Industry Partnerships could be relevant to the Philadelphia Market. Bellevue selected education funding, a perennially hot topic in Philadelphia, to begin the OpEd:

“Education funding is one of the most important issues affecting the long-term growth of our city. But the focus on paying for K-12 bypasses another pressing need in Philadelphia: providing 21st-century training and skills to the young adults who have been failed by our education system.”

Bellevue then mined research performed by Philadelphia Works in order to add statistical analysis to the opening. The data used included unemployment figures for Philadelphia youth, projected need for skilled workers, and media wage information for the manufacturing sector in Philadelphia.

The commentary continued with an overview of the local Industry Partnership, the Southeastern Regional Workforce Development Partnership, and provided context to its role as part of a state-wide network of Industry Partnerships. The commentary then detailed several success stories for the local Industry Partnership generally, as well as specific references to two member organizations that received national recognition from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions as “Young Adult Employer Champions.” These employers were recognized as a direct result of their work with the Industry Partnership to provide meaningful employment and advancement opportunities to young people, again drawing back upon the opening statement on the need to address unemployment among young adults who have been failed by the education system in Philadelphia.

The conclusion of the commentary included a specific call to action for legislators to support increased funding for Industry Partnerships state-wide.

Evaluation/Results:

The commentary was picked up and printed by both target publications, The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Tribune. The Philadelphia Tribune published the piece on June 30, 2015, and the Philadelphia Inquirer published the piece on July 8, 2015. While the overall results have yet to be realized due to the impasse on the state budget, the commentary was shared across a wide spectrum of affiliates and legislators, as well as through social media.