



ACTING IN COMMUNITY TOGETHER
IN ORGANIZING NORTHERN NEVADA

Platform for Founding Convention: Improving Education and Creating Jobs

Who We Are

ACTIONN is a multi-faith-based community group that was founded in 2011 to leverage the shared values of its diverse member organizations to achieve greater justice and fair dealing in Northern Nevada.

In the past 18 months, ACTIONN recruited and trained 250 leaders and clergy from 19 different faith communities in community organizing techniques.

ACTIONN is responsible for perhaps the most comprehensive “survey” of Northern Nevada residents in history. ACTIONN leaders held one-to-one conversation with almost 700 individuals in our constituent faith communities to learn their deepest concerns about life in our region. With this information, ACTIONN’s leaders agreed that two initial issues would be the organization’s top priority - improving education and creating jobs in Northern Nevada.

ACTIONN then conducted 24 “research actions” in which members met with leading experts in the region to identify the root causes that hinder educational achievement and job growth here. ACTIONN analyzed this information and developed “issue cuts” – specific projects - for our founding platform. ACTIONN’s Leadership Council ratified these issue cuts on August 30, 2012.

Why Improve Education?

- Nevada has the highest high school drop-out rate in the nation!
- Ninety percent of Washoe County students entering Truckee Meadow Community College and 50% of Washoe County students entering the University of Nevada at Reno require remedial classes!
- Too many of Nevada’s children are relegated to large classes in decrepit schools that ill prepare them to enter a modern workforce of increasing complexity.

Why Jobs?

- Nevada has suffered the highest unemployment rate in each year of our Great Recession!
- Industries that once led the region, gambling and construction, are in a state of permanent decline.
- Employers cite an unskilled workforce and a culture that devalues education as major reasons that corporations do not move or expand here.

ACTIONN'S VISION FOR CHANGE

ACTIONN members examined “best practices” - proven programs and methods – used nationally to create the kind of positive change that is needed in Northern Nevada. Based upon this review, ACTIONN advocates the following vision for change:

IMPROVE EDUCATION

- **Parent/ Teacher Home Visits** – A successful model, Sacramento’s Parent/ Teacher Home Visit Project, demonstrates that parent/ teacher home visits end the cycle of blame between families and school staff by building trust and respect, instilling cultural competency and improving outcomes for students. This program is an inexpensive and easily replicated way to engage families in education.
- **Linked Learning** is a program that connects rigorous academics with opportunities to participate in real-world professions. Internships make education personally relevant and a wholly engaging experience for students. Students discover career and college opportunities they never imagined. Linked Learning is powerful because it is guided by student interests and workforce opportunities.
- **Smaller Schools** – There is overwhelming evidence that small schools work better for students, both from the perspective of safety and academics. Many studies also find a correlation between small school size and achievement for poor and minority students. Large schools tend to be depersonalized, rule-governed institutions while small schools are more likely to be close-knit, flexible communities where everyone knows your name.

CREATE JOBS

- **Healthcare Jobs Coalition** - Despite the highest unemployment rate in the nation, Northern Nevada health care organizations are suffering shortages in trained workers! ACTIONN will convene a diverse coalition of health care stakeholders from educational institutions, health care providers, workforce development and community members to expand the region’s health care career pipeline.
- **Community Benefits Agreement** – Workers in Northern Nevada can and should benefit from area development projects. A Community Benefits Agreement is reached through negotiations between a developer and a community group prior to approval of a proposed development. In exchange for the community group’s support, the developer may be asked to insure local hiring, create training programs, pay a living wage, provide day care, build affordable housing or permit increased community participation in the planning process.