



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

11:30 a.m.

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
60 Island Street
Lawrence, MA**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cal Williams, Megan Shea, Jenny Pickett, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Casey, Steve O'Brien, Janet Allison, Sharon Marshall, Brad Howell, Joy Sabolevski, Dorothy Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Melissa Hogan, Gina Bozek, Ed Fitzgerald, Tom Cuddy, Jeff Marcoux, Cindy Mejia, Sr. Gwynette Proctor, Erin Kelly, Bob Mazzone, Fred Shaheen, Vinny Ouellette, Joanne Sullivan, Ed Warnhuis

GUESTS PRESENT:

Amy Weatherbee, Tim Connors

STAFF PRESENT:

Chris Shannon, Mary Kivell

I. Approval of Minutes

Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and said the first order of business are the minutes of the January 17, 2007 and February 28, 2007 Youth Council meetings.

a. January 17, 2007 Youth Council Minutes

Janet Allison made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2007 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Megan Shea seconded the motion and motion passed.

b. February 28, 2007 Youth Council Minutes

Megan Shea made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2007 Youth Council meeting adding the language on Page 4 that "Amy Weatherbee presented an review of the Youth Council programs and the staff review and rating process for RFPs." Janet Allison seconded the motion and motion passed.

II. FY'07 WIA ISY RFP Recommendations

Amy Weatherbee reported that we were disappointed to only receive two proposals for the ISY RFP. Both submissions were from LARE working with Lawrence High School. Chris Shannon said that we have been trying to expand our vendor base and encourage new vendors but only got submissions from our largest vendor with our largest pool, although we did hear from interested vendors who were not ready to submit yet. Amy said that we did get some feedback and a provided a lot of technical assistance. She explained that the staff reviewed the proposals and the fiscal department reviewed budgets with their recommendations included in the meeting packets.

Amy said that the first proposal is for and Education & Electronic Certification/Manufacturing Program. The recommendation is for funding, increasing the number of slots to 12 and increasing funding to \$53,444 based on increased slots with a 5% negotiation leeway for potential increased hours for staffing, including supervision. This was a strong proposal and manufacturing is one of the WIB Blueprint industries which is also attractive to males. It is recommended that the drop-out prevention strategies identify a staff person at LHS and review the work experience component as well as increasing supervision.

The second proposal is for an Education and Clinical Medical Assisting Program. The recommendation is for 12 slots and a potential increase in funding on a 5% negotiation leeway for potential increase hours for staffing, including supervision. The proposal was strong and the provider has a good performance history. The health care industry is identified by the MVWIB Blueprint and the occupational skills training component includes the ability for students to take certification exams. The review team strongly recommends documentation of connection with Lawrence High School's Health Tech department and that the principal needs to be engaged and actively assisting in outreach, recruitment, and retention efforts.

Janet Allison questioned whether the first program was for males only and Amy replied that it is open to any gender but that this program appeals to males. She said that we have other programs that are more traditionally for females.

Brad Howell asked for clarification on outcomes with 90% attaining diplomas. He wondered if credentialing is the main goal, and if so, where is that factored in the outcomes. Megan Shea said that it is an implied positive. Brad Howell again wondered how many attain certification. Amy Weatherbee said that the issue with credentialing was pushed and with the new common measures we will want an 80% positive outcome going forward.

Joy Sabolevski asked for clarification on what is 'at risk.' Discussion followed on what constitutes 'at risk' such as pregnancy, homelessness, low income, poor attendance and court involvement. She wondered if someone has a disability if they are considered 'at risk.' Chris

Shannon said that usually a young person will have multiple barriers. Amy said that youth with disabilities would need to meet other criteria such as being at risk for dropping out. These ISY programs are geared to seniors who are not going on to secondary education and are going into employment. Megan Shea said that we students must meet basic WIA barriers.

Discussion followed on referrals and Brad Howell said that it is difficult to put together a proposal with the schools for occupational skills training if a relationship doesn't already exist. Perhaps there is a way to make alliances before soliciting proposals. Amy said that may be difficult without the funding to provide services for the schools and said that we might do a pilot RFP and get contracts in place in the next six weeks. Chris said this would be for five or six youth and may need to be obligated before June.

Motion by Linda Piergeorge to accept the WIA ISY RFP funding recommendations as presented. Tom Casey seconded the motion with Janet Allison abstaining and motion passed.

III. Youth Council Budget: Historical Review

Amy Weatherbee handed out a chart with historical information on youth funding. Amy explained that there is the funding amount and, in addition, that we are allowed to carry over funding into the next year so the amount for subsequent years may be greater than the allocation. She noted that there was a dip in funding in FY2004 and explained the breakdown between the training/client funds, VWCC frameworks, DGA administration and MVWIB oversight. Amy said that 40-50% of the allocation is for training and carry in.

Chris said that we are anticipating significant WIA cuts this year. She said that we always put as much money as possible into the training pool.

IV. Minimum Wage and WIA Program Impact

a. Minimum Wage Increase

Amy Weatherbee explained that due to the increase in the minimum wage to \$7.50 per hour, she is requesting a modification up to \$3,000 to increase client salaries to be in line with the minimum wage.

Motion by Janet Allison to approve the increase funding up to \$3,000 for current programming to alleviate the impact of the increase in minimum wage seconded by Jenny Picket. Motion passed.

b. CAI

Amy Weatherbee explained that due to later enrollment and additional time needed for outreach and recruitment, the CAI, Inc. WIA Out of School Pre-School Prep program has requested a modification to extend the program date from 6/30/07 to 8/31/07 and to use \$14,843 of the current budget to support staff salaries, overhead, payment for the Child Care Circuit CEU, and wages and fringe for subsidized employment customers.

Motion by Tom Casey seconded by Steve O'Brien to accept DGA recommendation to minimally de-obligate funding for CAI as presented. Motion passed.

V. Quarterly Program Performance Review

Amy explained the Quarterly Youth Program Performance Review highlighting that we are at 74% of plan with the breakdown of the numbers. She said that she also broke out the numbers by program for the committee and said that she wished there were a way for her to track DSS and DYS youth more clearly. Right now the MOSES program doesn't provide a way to track this.

Going to the participant characteristics Amy said that she is concerned with students attaining the high school diploma or GED given that there are basic skills deficiencies and reading level issues. Amy said that she will update this report monthly for the Youth Council.

VI. Connecting Activities

Chris Shannon distributed the Connecting Activities third quarter report stating that this has been a transitional year with the program moving out of the Career Center and into the schools. This has been very challenging training staff and developing curriculum. We have been working with GLEC and the Academy for Strategic Learning in Amesbury with some of the hardest to serve students. Chris questioned the accuracy of the Department of Education (DOE) database but said that no matter what we may know, whatever they say they have for numbers we are bound by. Marjorie has been working to clean up the records that are suspect. Students count towards grant-required outcomes in 3 categories: Level A (value added to any student), Level B (value added to a student who failed MCAS or passed with a "Needs Improvement"), or Level C (value added to a student in an integrated work-and-learning program).

Chris continued stating that this report is what our future funding will be based on. Program funding issues go back to FY02. Chris has lobbied every year for increased funding and this past year was able to secure an increase from \$75,000 to \$180,000. She feels that if legislators do not support a permanent line-item increase, we are in jeopardy of being reduced back to the \$75,000 previous funding amount. Chris said that something that is supposed to be a competitive grant awards the lowest funding to the region most in need of services. Fred Carberry has sent correspondence to legislators asking them to seek equitable funding for this region. This decrease in funding will affect staffing at the Career Center. Chris has tried to raise the level of visibility for the program through monthly reports to the schools copying the superintendents and legislators in hopes to secure increased funding. She asked Youth Council members to contact legislators and ask them to consider level funding for our region, or at least equitable funding that matches our level of need.

VII. Summer Jobs/YouthWorks

Chris reported that the Youth Works program received an increase to \$250,000 and we expect to serve 141 youth. The grant asks us to serve older youth. Chris Shannon is meeting this week with Arthur Chilingirian, Megan Shea, and Amy Weatherbee to look at how to proceed with Youth Works. Chris Shannon said that she is asking for Youth Council input on the target population and how to proportion the split between Lawrence and Haverhill. Chris also said last year we did a 45%/45% split of the youth jobs between Lawrence and Haverhill with the remaining 10% split between Salisbury (4%) and Methuen (6%). There have historically been more youth than we could serve in Lawrence and difficulty placing the numbers allotted to

Haverhill. Chris asked the Youth Council if the split should be reconfigured accordingly. Chris also wondered if we should try to serve the open up the program to any youth in the region for the remaining 10%. She also said that she would be discussing Haverhill numbers with Vinny Ouellette (a Youth Council member).

Discussion on the target population ensued. Also, there was discussion on the geographic representation for the remaining 10% of grant programming. Members mentioned that this would result in a low number of students who would be served by opening the program outside of Methuen and Salisbury and the transportation problems associated with that. Cal Williams talked about labor laws and barriers to employment associated with the younger group. Also, Chris asked whether we want to focus on serving DYS, DSS and DMR youth as recommended in the RFP and the problems associated with supervision of these populations.

The consensus was, since the WIB is encouraging private sector participation through our area Mayors' Summer Jobs Initiative for the 18-24 year olds, we should target the 15-17 year olds whom many employers will not hire in an effort to keep them engaged and to prevent dropping out and retention issues. Also, the committee felt that priority be given to youth who are referred by schools.

Chris said that there will be a 2007 Mayors' Summer Jobs for Youth Fair on May 1st in Lawrence and May 3rd in Haverhill for 18-24 year olds.

Chris then said that there would be discussion on the Annual Plan at the next meeting and distributed questions for members to review for that meeting.

The next Youth Council meeting will be held at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 16th.

VIII. Adjournment

Having no further business Megan Shea made a motion to adjourn seconded by Janet Allison. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell
Recorder