



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, November 17, 2010

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Kevin Page, Juan Yopez

Members Absent: Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Ron Contrado, Fred Carberry, Joseph J. Bevilacqua

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Betty Kirk, Odanis Hernandez, Ruth Marrero, Deborah Andrews, Susan Almono

Guests Present: Arthur Chilingirian

I. Approval of Minutes of October 20, 2010

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:38 a.m. Peter then called for a motion on the minutes of the October 20, 2010 meeting.

Mike Munday made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 20, 2010 meeting as submitted. Kevin Page seconded the motion and motion passed.

II. High Performing WIB – Strategies to Utilize Incentive Grant Resources

Rafael Abislaiman reported that he had met with Undersecretary James last week and she agreed that we should use a portion of the award to strengthen the board. He mentioned a day or weekend conference to talk about what to do going forward. We have also put out an RFP for a consultant to assist with the grant and Barbara Zeimetz was the sole responder. The Undersecretary liked using a portion of the grant toward different types of youth services and for youth with year round services getting preference to enroll in Summer Works.

Peter Matthews suggested proposing a single day session combining education and time set aside for board members ideas. He felt that with enough notice we could get better attendance.

Ralph also said that he met with Don Gillis, the Mass WIB Association Executive Director, who said he is available to come and do a presentation for board members.

He also mentioned that no two WIBs in the state are alike and we have the only Career Center with state and municipal workers who are unionized.

Chili said that funding has gone from \$8M (with the Career Center serving 5,000) to \$4M this year (with the Career Center serving 15,000). Come December he said that there will be some layoffs. He said that he would like a small piece of the HPW grant to fund one Career Center staff for 6 months.

Ralph said that one consequence of union staff is that when there are funding shortfalls frequently the youngest and most hard charging must go. He was asked when we expected the funds. Ralph said that once we finalize the plan, budget, and scope of work. He said that whatever the funds are dedicated to must be related to some element of the proposal.

III. Overview of Youth RFP

Deborah Andrews said that we went to the Youth Council with who we are serving, how successful our youth programs are, and who we would like to serve. We asked the Youth Council to re-evaluate the 70/30 OSY/ISY split keeping in mind that WIA law states that 30% must fund OSY services. After an extensive conversation, the Youth Council said that they would like to remain at the current split because OSY are less engaged. The RFP can serve ISY and Deborah said she is working with staff to design an RFP that will request proposals for ISY. The RFP will be designed along the lines of the HPW and include manufacturing, allied health, and also require GED instruction. We are putting this together this week and will have approximately \$100,000 - \$150,000 to fund one or two programs this year.

Ralph said that he was a little disappointed in the decision to maintain the current split given that we recently expanded the eligibility requirements. We have gone back to the 70/30 default system which, without ITAs, will cause the IS portion to be \$35,000. Ralph said that he knows change is sometimes hard.

Juan Yopez wondered how many OSY are high school graduates. Ralph said that the vast majority are non-completed. Chili then spoke about a youth who had graduated from high school and was testing at a 5th grade level. He said that this is a pattern he has seen over the years but did say it is getting better. Many youth are averaging below 9th grade level and need remediation.

Peter Matthews wondered if this is contradictory to what was decided at the meeting the Mayor attended on eligibility. Ralph said that is not a total contradiction as we can still get people in school and Chili said that the eligibility barriers discussed are now in place.

There was discussion on the process for reviewing proposals and the fact that the Planning Committee approves which programs to fund after the Proposal Review Committee makes their recommendations.

Deborah said that the Youth Council is willing to revisit the 70/30 split at any time in the future.

IV. Update on SESP Grant

Ralph said that the SESP Grant is the State Energy Sector Program for green programs to assist companies to go greener, get new or incumbent workers trained, and to have companies hire new employees. He said that we put out an RFP focused on companies doing remediation and also that it is difficult to get companies to commit to hiring when they don't know what their needs will be. He mentioned companies that were going green and having their manufacturing done in China. We are trying to tie hiring to training and can fund two \$25,000 RFPs for asbestos and lead removal. This is ARRA money that has been under spent and the urgency is to spend the money in this region and spend it well.

Discussion followed on who the RFP went to and Ralph said that the training needs to occur in our region with a commitment to hire. Mike Munday spoke about training for installers and companies that do energy audits. Ralph talked about Nexamp and a grant at the MV Chamber. He also noted that Orit Goldstein has installed solar panels but he also said that the money for this initiative is federally driven and can dry up. Susan Almono also said that a good place to look for potential jobs is with contractors since energy efficiency won't go away and electrical, plumbing, and HVAC are transferrable skills.

Kevin Page said that no one will guarantee to hire in this economy. Ralph suggested using us as partners with those companies that may be hiring to do company related training. Ralph mentioned Evergreen, the largest solar panel company in the region who installed the panels at Foxboro Place and then shipped jobs to China.

V. Update on Group Training Programs (discussion on expediting recruitment process)

Betty Kirk said that the WIB asks for weekly reports on the training programs. The report that was handed out is as of November 12th. She said that the second cycle of the EMT program begins 1/3/2011 and there is one person in the pipeline. The Pharmacy Technician cycle II has a start date of 12/6/10 and there are 8 in the pipeline. The Machine Shop cycle II has a start date of 12/6/10 and 7 now in the pipeline. Betty said that there is some concern with filling this cycle. She also said that she would like to see the Green Handyman cycle II move forward. Betty explained that in the pipeline means that once a package is completed it goes to Lisa Remington, WIA Coordinator, for review and approval.

Deborah reported on the OSY Food Service Program. One youth needs a birth certificate, one was rejected for low pre-GED test scores and one youth changed their mind and applied for a different program and there is only one in the pipeline. Chili said that he expects client action forms to be turned in today. The vendor also asked for open enrollments. Odanis spoke about child care concerns and transportation for

the new cycle since school is in session and there is a space issue. LARE has agreed to transport youth home.

Juan Yepez wondered what happens if a youth doesn't meet the criteria. Chili said that if they are no show for two starting days the Career Center understands the vendor rejecting them but if they meet the requirements and are rejected, we bring in the vendor to explain why. Discussion then ensued on Cycle I and Cycle II and attendance in Cycle I seeming better than Cycle II and the question, why not run one cycle with better enrollment.

Ralph Abislaiman said that Cycle I was delayed in order to fill up programs. This is our weakest point and a large part of the HPW is to address this problem. One of Tom Connors complaints was that referrals were delayed and sporadic. We tried to correct this by expanding eligibility. Both the youth and adult programs have a problem with referrals. In part, the Career Center staff are accustomed to doing ITAs and not group training. Ralph also said that in this job market and recession he feels that the definition of marketability should be narrowed.

There was also discussion on whether to pay a vendor if not fully enrolled. The matter of a threshold of fixed costs and the fact that both vendor and Career Center should share costs for full and partial enrollment was raised.

Mike Munday said that, in this economy, hundreds of people should be looking for employment. Chili said that we need to take into account that training is customer choice and they make the final decision. Betty Kirk said that the group trainings were funded based on a survey and focus group with employers for a new and innovative training that was not part of the ITA system. This brought in new vendors and collaborations. Kevin Page also said that group trainings are more cost effective.

Ralph said that without referrals it is difficult for a vendor to plan and run a program. The system needs to be overhauled.

Chili said that attendance is good and motivation is good in the OSY food program but most food service jobs are part-time and we are looking to place people in full time jobs.

Ralph said that the bottom line is that we need to make referrals in a timely manner.

VI. Other Business

Ralph said that he has been working with Chili and Tracy to facilitate changes in DGA polices which is difficult in a union environment.

Betty then reminded the committee of the Manufacturer's Informational Session scheduled at Arwood Machine in Newburyport on November 18th.

VII. Adjourn

Having no further business Juan Yopez made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Kevin Page. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder