



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Fred Carberry, Juan Yepez

Members Absent: Kevin Page, Joseph J. Bevilacqua, Ron Contrado, Atty.
Robert LeBlanc

Staff Present: Betty Kirk, Ralph Abislaiman, Odanis Hernandez, Ruth
Marrero, Deborah Andrews

Guests Present: Mayor William Lantigua, Arthur Chilingirian, Lisa Coy

I. Approval of Minutes of August 18, 2010

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. Peter then called for a motion on the minutes of the August 18, 2010 meeting.

Fred Carberry made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 15, 2010 meeting as submitted. Mike Munday seconded the motion and motion passed.

II. Addition of Eligibility Barriers for Youth

Ralph Abislaiman said that after discussion, the Youth Council approved the increase in eligibility barriers for youth at their last meeting.

Mayor William Lantigua, MVWIB Chief Elected Official, said that he was pleased to be here. He said that he had previously and repeatedly voiced his concern that we were not able to help good students in the summer program and through job training. He noted that it is difficult to understand and that it seemed that bad behavior was always being rewarded. Mayor Lantigua said that other areas of the State have changed the eligibility criteria to help offer more kids get job training and job opportunities and that he is glad that the MVWIB is addressing the issue. He strongly supported increasing barriers to make harder working economically disadvantaged kids eligible for youth services.

The proposed additional barriers were recapped. They are 1.) Designated poverty area by Census tract; 2.) Non-traditional household; and 3.) Public housing resident. The addition of these barriers will open opportunities to more poor kids. The MVWIB will continue to serve 95% economically disadvantaged people as required under WIA, which is federal law. We will not deny youth with prior service eligibility.

Ralph said that though it looks as if we are increasing the number of potential eligibility barriers, we are actually increasing the number and type of youth that can be served.

Questions were asked on how the newly eligible census data map information would be found. Fred Carberry mentioned that Community Development had a census map that shows the poverty area within the census tracks. Chili was concerned that it would be difficult to make up a data base of poverty area by census track. Fred said that he felt that Community Development may have the capability to develop a data base. Ralph said that in a city like Lawrence it is probably easier to determine which areas are not eligible. In Methuen and Haverhill, the poverty areas are smaller and could be added.

Motion by Fred Carberry seconded by Mike Munday to approved the addition of the eligibility barriers for youth as submitted. Motion passed.

III. OSY Education & Medical Assisting Program Slots & Funding Level

Deborah Andrews said that board members have a copy of the Youth Council minutes from the last meeting in which the Youth Council voted to recommend continuing the LARE OSY Education and Medical Assisting Program 8 slots for a total of \$52,000-\$53,000.

Fred Carberry requested more background and Deborah said that this program previously was not recommended for funding by the Youth Council but voted by the Planning Community to fund for a second year. The problem with this program is that it was determined that there were jobs but employers were looking for experience. Odanis said that this is the second year of this training program. Peter Matthews said that of the 12 participants in the first year, 8 have been placed in training related jobs. Deborah said that their entered employment rate is 67% in training related jobs but it took a long time for the placements which were not achieved in the allotted time. Lisa Coy said that the Youth Council recommended not funding initially because LARE did not meet its placements. They just recently made their placements. The Youth Council then recommended that they continue with 8 slots and not 12 for the second year.

Juan Yopez asked if this was the same program and Odanis Hernandez said that the original program was for 12 slots. Because the vendor didn't meet their placements and LARE said that they need a minimum of 8 slots to run the program after making placements in July and August, it was decided to let them have the 8 slots and monitor their progress. Chili said that the first year of the contract ended on 12/31/09 and they were given a 90 day extension to 3/31/10 to place clients.

Ralph Abislaiman said that because of the disagreement between the Planning Committee and the Youth Council, it was decided to split the difference and fund one of the two recommended by the Planning Committee at a reduced cost. The Mayor decided to fund one, not two. He also restated that youth program funding is contingent on the recommendation of the Youth Council and the approval of the Planning Committee and general board. Ralph said that that the Youth Council must recommend but that the Planning Committee decides on the budget amount. The compromise was reached due to the issue with the process. In this instance the Youth Council has approved funding so the Planning Committee can decide what it considers to be the appropriate amount.

Motion by Fred Carberry seconded by Juan Yopez to approve the Youth Council recommendation for the OSY Education & Medical Assisting Program for 8 slots at \$52,000 - \$53,000. Motion passed.

Peter Matthews said that, for the record, he feels that placing 8 out of 12 participants is a good result.

IV. High Performing WIB Action Items

Ralph said that the list of action items were presented at the last planning meeting and have been discussed many times over the last couple of years. He said that they are presented in category and sub category. The following items were discussed: increasing minority owned private sector business on the board; diversifying our youth vendor base as we only have one vendor, LARE, who is doing a good job in this economic climate; increasing the Career Center group and ITA referral numbers, noting that though the CC is doing a splendid job, we are striving for continuous improvement; strengthening board capacity through increasing understanding of WIA; defining a clear grievance procedure.

Ralph said that currently the grievance procedure goes back to DGA and he would like to see some board entity take that on. He mentioned that the Career Center and WIB are doing a good job during difficult economic circumstances and he would like to increase our profile.

He said that one half of the WIBs have been approved as High Performing WIBs and one half haven't. He is hopeful we will have approval soon. He mentioned that two of our chairs have served as state chairs and Len Wilson has served as national chair. Other board members have like potential. Ralph also said that we are on the right track by redefining the youth barrier criteria and that we next need to clarify 'client employability' to get folks into training in a streamlined way. The next item is to look at client numbers as they relate to employment sectors. The executive committee would like to include these in the High Performing WIB package.

Peter Matthews said that the Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union has a radio show on Mondays and Thursdays in English and Spanish and welcomes our participation. Chili said that David Souza and Larry Snow have taken advantage of this show.

Fred Carberry asked if these action items have been discussed with Undersecretary James and has she had any comments. He said that the High Performing WIB designation has been one of the most frustrating experiences of his career. Fred said that he felt like he has been dealing with a moving target and once he answered one set of questions they would come back with more.

Ralph said that Undersecretary James had sent him a copy of Hampshire's package. It did not include these specific items but similar ones. Betty said that what they are looking at is information regarding Board participation and answers structured to respond to the stated questions in a clear way. Ralph stated that the process, as difficult as it is, adds value.

Ralph said that he had spoken with the Mayor regarding getting board support and positive additions in membership. Mayor Lantigua said that he has had conversations at the state level regarding the High Performing WIB certification and hopes to have more discussion in the near future.

Motion by Mike Munday seconded by Fred Carberry to approve the list of High Performing WIB Action Items as presented. Motion passed.

V. Adjusted Entered Employment Rate for ITA Training Vendors

Betty Kirk explained that the material she passed out on performance goals had been distributed before. The state renegotiated the employment goals for 2010 and 2011. She said that we are looking at the entered employment rate which is based on clientele and the local employment rate. The original FY2010 goals for adult entered employment was 75%, dislocated worker 83% and older youth 76%. Revised goals are adult entered employment 65%, dislocated worker 70% and Older Youth 71%. The 2011 entered employment goal for adults is 68%, dislocated workers 72% and older youth 74%.

Betty said that we would like the committee to consider adjusting the entered employment rate for ITA vendors from 75% to 70%. The 75% is the highest in the state. The completion rate and average wage should remain the same, but it doesn't seem fair and reasonable in this economy not to adjust the ITA entered employment rate to 70%. Lisa Coy said that since most of the youth funding is now going to ITAs, she is concerned that the entered employment goal for older youth is 74% while the ITA goal would be adjusted to 70%. She will need to achieve 74% placement and the ITA vendor just 70%. Betty said that most ITAs go to adults with 22% to youth.

Chili said that the way the goals are calculated is that DOL met with all the states to calculate the figures for entered employment for youth. Betty explained that many vendors struggle with an entered employment rate of 75%. Some programs are borderline and vendors may be more inclined to come in at 70%, which is more in line with the reality of the economy and unemployment in Lawrence. She said that we can definitely revisit this in the future. Ralph said that we need to enforce what we set.

Fred said that looking at the chart, other WIBs who have received HPW status have entered employment rates at 60-70% for ITA vendors.

Mayor Lantigua said that the city has definitely been dealing and is still dealing with some serious issues. Putting that aside, the Mayor said that he will try to be more engaged. There is a lot we can do and a lot we are doing. He said that he has received some recommendations for people on the board and hopes to expand as best we can. He told committee members if they know of someone who would like to serve to please let him know. He also said that he will soon propose confirming Ralph as Executive Director. He invited board members to contact him with any concerns and to feel free to call or e-mail him any time.

It was agreed to continue with the next agenda item and then vote on both items after discussion as they are related.

VI. Establish a new ITA Review Policy

Betty Kirk said that right now when we review an ITA we look at the course performance in MOSES. One course she brought up had 500 participants which are not all from the Career Center and some reflect part time jobs that count as entered employments. One of the new vendors is Clean Edison which has a 100% entered employment rate because they are all working. We want to look at people who are career center participants in the northeast region to review courses and see if they are placing This population.

Peter Matthews wondered if the question should be the same for adults and youth or whether they should be slightly lower for youth given the difficult population we serve. Betty said that with the increase in the eligibility barriers and the flexibility in this policy it shouldn't be a problem. We can look at programs and provide technical assistance, working with the vendors.

Lisa Coy expressed concern with being held to a certain standard and the responsibility to get jobs. Chili said that the state ITA system has the information in MOSES and cited a report with that information. Betty said that report is not very helpful because the entered employment figures are based on exits and if, out of 18 participants, 5 are exited and placed, then they have a 100% entered employment rate. Ralph said that is not a true representation of the success of the program.

Fred Carberry said that the downside of the higher entered employment percentages is that it excludes some vendors which may be placing 7 out of 10. These are good vendors. Betty said that the ITA entered employment rate is a local decision. Chili expressed concern that if he doesn't hit the WIA performance goals for this area, it will affect his incentive funds. The Career Center has received these funds every year. Ralph said that we are trying to make the standards enforceable. Mike Munday asked what happens if the goals are not met and Chili said that they would receive technical

assistance the first year and if they didn't meet them the second year, there could be sanctions.

Fred said that the Career Center has consistently met their performance goals year after year and we know what they can do. We don't want to exclude vendors and want to expand our vendor base. Ralph said that we only have one vendor for youth and we need to think about sustainability.

There was discussion on looking at ITA program performance in three or six months and Chili said that involves a lot of work since there are staggered starts. He suggested looking at the end of the year and if there is an issue, we then send out the monitor.

Ralph said that he thinks it is more doable to do it in an ongoing way that discovers data inputting, performance or other problems early and systematically. Chili said that data is listed by start date, estimated end and end date as well as completion date.

Motion by Juan Yopez seconded by Fred Carberry to approve the ITA Policy as submitted. Motion passed.

Motion by Juan Yopez to approve adjusting the ITA Vendor entered employment rate from 75% to 70%. Motion passed.

VII. Adjourn

Having no further business Fred Carberry made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mike Munday. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder