



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 11, 2012**

**11:30 a.m.**

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board**

**439 South Union Street**

**Lawrence, MA 01843**

### **Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Howard Allen, Janet Allison, Nicole Austermann, Lisa Coy, Linda Piergeorge, April Lyskowsky, Heidi Riccio, Megan Shea, Michael Strem, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Marina Acosta, Irene Chalek, Beverly DeSalvo, Tom Casey, Tom Connors, Ed Fitzgerald, Steve Noroian, Brad Howell, Vinnie Ouellette, Barbara Richards, Donna Rivera, Ed Warnhuis

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell

### **OTHERS:**

Arthur Chilingirian, Abismael Morales, Michelle Soto, Ellen Weinhold

#### **I. Call to Order**

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

#### **II. Approval of November 9, 2011 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion on the minutes of the November 9, 2011 meeting.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Howard Allen to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2011 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

Rafael Abislaiman said that Youth Workforce Program Manager Deborah Andrews resigned as of last week. She has gone to work in a nonprofit organization in Newburyport where she resides. We wish her well in her new position and look forward to working together some time in the future.

#### **III. FY'11 Career Center Youth Performance Report & FY2012 ITA and Program Updates**

ValleyWorks Career Center Youth Program Director Lisa Coy gave the FY'11 Career Center Youth Performance Report. Lisa explained that WIA funds flow through the Career Center for young adults 16-21 to move through training and receive occupational, industry recognized certifications and

obtain employment. If the youth test below grade levels then they must show improvement. She said that programs are monitored and rated on all of those criteria.

Lisa said that the FY'11 performance report for Merrimack Valley shows that we did extremely well in the older youth category. We had the second highest number of exits in the State. We had the highest entered employment number in the state at 52 youths and the highest in entered employment wages at \$11.25 compared to the state's \$9.50 average. Lisa continued stating that we also had the highest credential rate in the state at 61. We had 88 exits with 52 getting their GED or certifications. April Lyskowsky asked if the placements were training related. Lisa said that the jobs were unsubsidized and we did not do job development. We do follow-up for one year with case management.

Lisa then went on to youth customer demographics for July, August and September. 86% are Hispanics, 35% high school dropouts. Lisa noted that under the new ITA policy, participants must have a GED or high school diploma to obtain an ITA. 70% are reading/math computing below the 9.0 grade level, 36% are on welfare, 49% are pregnant or parenting and 86% require additional assistance.

There was discussion on what constitutes a disability as there are many barriers to employment. For example, Linda Piergeorge noted that having an IEP or 504 would count as having a disability. Lisa said that they need to be careful when screening youth and cannot ask outright about disabilities. They are asked if they have a disability they would like to list.

Janet Allison wondered who looks at these statistics and Chili said that when we do when we compile our Annual Plan and that the State also at the numbers, performance levels and the variances. Megan Shea said that several years ago, before the recent changes, it was decided to focus on the hardest to serve. Lisa said that the board sets the policy on whom to serve and every area has their focus. Chili said that doing OSY is harder the ISY. Rafael noted the female demographics and Lisa said the customer served at orientation are 60/40 female to male. Vendors offer more traditional female oriented trainings. She said that we would welcome more vendors with options for males.

Lisa said that with funding from WIA those who meet the eligibility requirements can get an ITA (Individual Training Account). We had \$154,000 to send youth to ITA trainings. We put 24 in ITAs and have 9 left for this year with three starting this week so there are 6 remaining. ITA clients were sent to school for training in health care such as Basic EMT, GED Medical Assistant, and Nursing Assistant to name a few. Lisa said that under manufacturing trainings were in Electronic Assembly, with remediation, and with GED depending on the need. Under professional, scientific, and technical services we placed a youth in an ITA in A+ with network. Chili noted that many of the trainings do not reach the cap for ITAs which has recently been set at \$6,000. He said that funds remaining will be utilized to enroll clients in additional ITAs.

Lisa reported that as of October 8<sup>th</sup> the policy for enrolling in an ITA requires that the participant have a high school diploma or GED. She explained that ITA providers are listed on Training Pro and counselors check on performance, entered employment, finishing the program and wages. Ralph Abislaiman said that the system was based on trust but we, as a WIB check, now to see if what is reported is reality. We now check and monitor ITA providers and have found some that are not up to our standards. Heidi Riccio said that she doesn't understand why one government agency can't transfer clients and information to another government agency. She said that Northern Essex and

Greater Lawrence are not being utilized. Ralph said that one consideration is that the college semester system hasn't always corresponded with when the unemployed look for training. Heidi Riccio said that NECC workforce development office is starting to address flexible scheduling for certificate programs. Janet Allison said that private vendors are free standing, for profit businesses. Some of these courses would be less expensive at the community college. Ralph agreed and looked to with the college more often.

He also said that TrainingPro outcome information updating is slow because the state has to input achievement information once a vendor updates it once. He said that ITA vendors delay inputting information because they can't update their achievements after their first posting. Vendors in any case need to be monitored and their numbers verified.

Discussion followed on professional and continuing study being the norm today and Howard Allen spoke of his experiences.

Rafael then reported that the MVWIB Quarterly Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 24, 2012 – 7:30 a.m. at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. He said that Youth Council members are invited them to attend.

Lisa then presented the program updates. She said that the ARRA/JAG grant beginning on 7/1/11 had 97 employment opportunities for Lawrence youth. They participated in workshops on job readiness and safety as well as learning soft skills and good work habits. Youth were placed in public, private and nonprofit businesses. There were 25 employers who participated including Apple Wiper, Auto Care, NECC, Rumbo, New Balance and the YWCA to name a few. In total \$100,000 in wages was paid to youth over the program and for many it was their first job.

Through Connecting Activities Lisa reported that we worked with LHS, HHS, and SES and the High School Learning Center with 67 students enrolled and have given at least one value-added service for each student such as on employment assistance and referral, labor market information, resume writing and work readiness workshops. Through Year Round YouthWorks state funding, 15 students from LHS were placed at the Lawrence Boys & Girls Club, NECC, NWCA, German House and Mary Immaculate to name a few. We are just finished the second cycle of three weeks of after school workshops then they are placed in a job. Six out of 15 got jobs at Yankee Candle and Staples for example. We continue to work with HHS on work maturity skills.

Upcoming events are Job Shadow Day in April and Construction Career Day in May.

Lisa said that through Pathways we are helping with certification for youth without high school diplomas due to MCAS. We are working with seniors back to 2003 in an MCAS class or GED program and helping them find work. From September through December, 2011, Lisa said that we enrolled 10 new Pathways members and provided information and services to about 40 members. As a way to encourage participation, we held 10 Saturday MCAS classes through ARRA as a requirement for a 15 hour job during the week.

The BOG (Bridging Opportunities Grant) began its third cycle on Monday. This is a DYS grant given through Commonwealth Corporation. This is for 12 youth interested in working on maturity for 12 hours over the next 2 weeks attending high school or a GED program who are in the custody of DYS.

Rafael then mentioned the Safe & Secure Streets Grant and discussion followed. Lisa Coy said that she has had no further contact with staff at Lawrence Community Development, which is administering the grant. Megan Shea said that she thinks it is still in process and they are answering and resolving some questions.

#### **IV. Other Business**

April Lyskowsky then brought up the subject of \$80,000 lump sum which needs to be allocated. Rafael said that there needs to be discussion on whether to allocate these funds to ITAs or to group training. He also mentioned discussing a new youth, self select computer-based GED program with some teacher guidance for those ineligible for ITAs.

Lisa said that there are certain outcomes every person who is enrolled is measured by such as getting a job or entering post secondary education, getting a credential (GED, high school diploma, or occupational skills certificate) and if basic skills deficient (below 8.9 reading and math), that they must attain above the grade 9 level. All three factors are judged for performance.

Megan Shea said that this is a big decision and there is not enough information. Lisa said that what we need as a group is performance measures, how much is spent and how much allocated. Discussion followed on when youth qualify for services and Chili said at the point of enrollment for training. Ralph said that we are talking with USDOL to determine the optimal enrollment point. USDOL currently thinks its when youth get any type of service. Chili said that the WIB can put out a local policy deciding when enrollment begins.

Cal Williams said that we should table discussion on this issue and put this item on the agenda for another Youth Council meeting.

Megan Shea then mentioned the Annual Resource Fair at the Boys and Girls Club on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### **V. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Howard Allen made a motion to adjourn seconded by Megan Shea. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder