



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

11:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

60 Island Street

Lawrence, MA 01850

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Megan Shea, Sr. Gwynette Proctor, Brad Howell, Melissa Hogan, Ed Warnshuis, Janet Allison, Joy Sabolevski, Ed Fitzgerald

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Steve O'Brien, Tim Connors, Cal Williams, Linda Piergeorge, Gina Bozek, Tom Casey, Tom Cuddy, Erin Kelly, Jeff Marcoux, Cindy Mejia, Erin Kelly, Bob Mazzone, Fred Shaheen, Dorothy Smith, Vinnie Ouellette, Sharon Marshall

GUESTS PRESENT:

Amy Weatherbee

STAFF PRESENT:

Chris Shannon, Mary Kivell

I. Approval of Minutes

In the absence of Co-Chair Cal Williams, Chris Shannon called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and called for a motion on the minutes of the May 16, 2007 meeting.

Megan Shea made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2007 Youth Council meeting adding wording complimenting Whittier on the excellent food. Ed Warnshuis seconded the motion and motion passed.

II. FY'08 Annual Plan

a. Plan Review

Chris Shannon said that the Youth Council's input on the FY'08 Annual Plan was invaluable. Chris said that now we need to review and develop a plan on how to achieve the outcomes. The Council identified five priorities that Chris said we can proceed to discuss.

b. Strategic Planning

The first priority identified was "develop better connection for front line staff to existing resources." Chris said that to that end the MVHUB is being modified and that there will be four (4) summer youth collecting data and working on this. Chris said that in the event that they complete this project before the end of the session and said that perhaps they could do an inventory of check cashing places and pawn shops in Lawrence in line with financial literacy. She asked for suggestions on how to employ youth workers and noted that Somerville did an excellent youth survey.

Sr. Gwynette Proctor said that she would like to see how we can galvanize youth in the coming year and use them to better inform us on youth input.

Chris also said that there would be trainings on how to use the MVHUB website for front line staff that should only take 10-15 minutes.

Amy Weatherbee said that at the recent graduation superintendents, principals and the disability group indicated that they want to know what resources are available for youth and said they also said that we need community buy in for the MVHUB site if it is to be the successful repository of youth service information.

The second priority is "develop better connections for front line staff to existing resources." Megan Shea said that perhaps we need a wider variety of folks at the table. One suggestion was from Sr. Gwynette Proctor who said that we could develop a network for e-mail alerts for advocacy to our legislative group and make it user friendly. Discussion followed and Chris said that she could send out the e-mails as high priority which could then be forwarded to constituents. Brad Howell wondered if the school doesn't have a network in place to put out alerts and the answer was "no." He noted that it is good idea to be pro-active but we need to pick our focus and be more specific. It was agreed to focus on issues that impact youth around workforce issues.

There was discussion on the drop-out rate and the fact that these figures depend on how they are reported. Janet Allison said that the drop-out figures are self reported.

The third priority is “create a more effective workforce delivery system through self-assessment and a more active youth voice to determine program effectiveness and regional priorities.” Chris Shannon said that at the next meeting that is education based she would provide an application for Youth Council members as a means to survey strengths and weaknesses and to be put in place for future members. Chris also talked about something she observed at the Forum for Youth Investment that highlighted a national initiative called “Ready by 21”. She said that we could use assessment tools and compare notes to educate and pool our knowledge.

Megan Shea said that the application process might identify gaps and the assessment tool could perhaps build on the MVHUB.

Janet Allison spoke about a site visit to a Vocational Technical School in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania and how involved the WIB and Youth Council are with businesses and the connection with schools.

Chris said that the intent of having meetings at vendor sites is to invite youth to the table noting that our next meeting is at Job Corps in Devens.

Melissa Hogan of Job Corps then explained that Job Corps is a federally funded residential program for 16-24 year olds with the goal of employability and teaching life skills. She talked about the barriers for some of the candidates and the issue of the reluctance to relocate of Lawrence youth.

Sr. Gwynette Proctor said that she feels that some of what we are doing is piecemeal and that we need to get a core of young adults and ask what their needs are but that we need to prepare first.

Chris said that we also need to act on any input so they know that we listened to what they say. She said that we can ask Job Corps participants during our next meeting what job readiness skills they are getting at Job Corps that they weren't getting elsewhere.

Amy said that we can pursue youth involvement concurrently through vendor sites and also getting answers from youth service agencies. Amy said we should design a uniform set of questions as we move around in addition to getting a more substantial youth voice.

Janet Allison said that after our questionnaires are answered the next step is focus groups and that it will take some time to build the bridge. Chris said that we need to devise a questionnaire and asked members to e-mail proposed questions or bring them to the next meeting.

The fourth priority is “construct a more regional, seamless and transparent youth workforce system.” Chris spoke about educating youth to use the Career Center as the single point of entry and creating MOUs or MOAs with other youth serving agencies stating that they provide the following services. She said that the MVHUB website will help with marketing the Career Center at the point of entry.

Brad Howell asked about a designated person that would meet with the high schools and guidance departments to let them know what is available to students. Chris said that was the purpose of the Connecting Activities grant which has been reduced from \$180,000 to \$76,000 for FY’08. Last year we had two staff working with eight schools. The Career Center has also suffered significant cuts and it is hard to expand based on the lack of funding.

Discussion followed on partnering with schools and Chris spoke about the externships for teachers which she said were the best advertising. Megan Shea said that they have held job fairs and brought guidance staff to the Career Center. They also had a workshop coordinator who went the schools. Megan said that we can build relationships a piece at a time.

Chris said that we need to find a variety of ways to get to the schools and Brad Howell said that other agencies have funding for specific target populations but could be encouraged to a partner with the Career Center.

Amy Weatherbee explained the intent of WIA and how the required partners were not mandated by the state to support the infrastructure as stated in the law.

Sr. Gwynette Proctor suggested sponsoring a one day Youth Conference with a drop-out focus. She said it would take some time and planning but might be effective.

The fifth priority is “develop more formalized partnering among agencies and regional partnerships with similar workforce missions.” Chris said that this goes back to the MOU’s and MOA’s and developing a level of partnering.

III FY’07 WIA OSY Youth LARE Program Update

a. LARE Contract financial modification request

Amy Weatherbee explained that the LARE Out of School Youth Program – Education and Medical Assisting originally budgeted the client salaries and wages at an 85% utilization rate. As students retained in the program, more enrolled youth needed the work experience component and as such, the utilization rate for the client salaries and wages was much higher.

They have requested the addition of \$643.00 to cover the costs of these wages and fringe costs for the youth enrollees.

Discussion followed and a motion by Ed Warnshuis seconded by Janet Allison to approve the recommendation for an additional \$643.00 to cover the costs as presented passed unanimously.

IV. Grants Update

Chris Shannon reported that we were successful in receiving a public safety grant to work with DYS and DSS youth. We asked for \$62,000 and received \$40,000 which adds 20 more summer jobs for youth.

Amy Weatherbee said that we are working with GLEC and Joey Fournier Services through this grant.

Chris then spoke about Connecting Activities and our award of \$76,521. Because of the significant reduction in funding, she has requested our grant RFP score and reviewer comments, as well as other region's allocations. She said that we will be working with Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen and will serve 350 youth.

V. Career Center 2007 Summer Jobs Update

Megan Shea reported in response to applicants for summer jobs there were 88 in Lawrence. Methuen had 15 youth for 10 slots, Haverhill had 90 for 56 slots and Salisbury has 6 slots. Orientation is the week of June 25-29 and the age group is 14-21 year olds. Megan said that Mr. Bonet, Lawrence Personnel Director, has 72 placement sites.

VI. Future Meeting Schedule

Chris then said that Co-Chair Cal Williams has a conflict with the third Wednesday of the month meeting date beginning in September and asked about changing the date. The consensus was not to change the day but to meet on the second Wednesday of the month beginning in September.

Melissa Hogan distributed fliers from Job Corps.

VII. Adjournment

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

The next meeting of the Youth Council will be held on July 18, 2007, 11:30 am – 1 pm, Job Corps, Devens).

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell
Recorder