



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 20, 2009

8:30 a.m.

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Lawrence, MA 01840**

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Robert LeBlanc, Charles LoPiano,
Mike Lynch, Shirley Callan, Karen Sawyer

Members Absent: Pedro Arce, Sal Lupoli, Michael Sweeney

Staff Present: Fred Carberry, Betty Kirk, Deborah Andrews,
Augustine Ambe

Guests Present: Barbara Zeimetz, Amy Weatherbee

1. Approval of Minutes of 5/7/09

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and called for a motion to approve the minutes of the 5/7/09 meeting.

Motion by Shirley Callan seconded by Mike Lynch to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2009 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

2. Update on Plan for Utilization of Stimulus Funds

Fred Carberry distributed a handout with the ARRA funding for all entities. Fred noted that the youth funding amount of \$1,140,233 includes youth wages, youth stipends, and funding for ARRA Summer Youth Work and Learning projects. The total funding for the MVWIB is \$126,076; DGA - \$328,269; ValleyWorks Career Center \$595,198; and DCS o- \$685,372. Contracted Training funding is \$1,975,956 and total funding is \$3,710,871. Fred said that this is just an outline of the spending and we are working on a full plan for submittal for the end of the month. He explained that this is just the federal money (ARRA).

Fred said that the second page explains the recommended staffing changes. The MVWIB would add an Implementation/Training Specialist funded by all ARRA funding sources to assist in determining employer workforce demand, skills gap and working with training providers to determine and improve training capacity. The DGA would add up to three (3) Summer Monitors (these would be based on

need and depend on receipt of the RFPs and only be through 9/30/09). ValleyWorks Career Center would add a Youth Coordinator position and up to nine (9) Summer Youth Counselors.

Amy Weatherbee said that we currently have 250 worksites and hope for an additional 50. Deborah Andrews said that there is a meeting scheduled in Haverhill at Pentucket Bank next week to promote the program to employers.

Fred said that ValleyWorks would also add four (4) Career Service Advisors for support of ARRA Adults and Dislocated Workers in need of intensive and training services.

Mike Lynch mentioned that there is a possibility of DCS adding five (5) positions for employment services. Amy said that is still under discussion and the state hasn't decided yet.

Fred continued with page three which had two recommendations for funding. The first recommendation is based on 70% group training, 25% OJTs, and 5% customized. The second recommendation calls for 80% group training, 10% OJTs and 10% customized.

Bob LeBlanc asked which group has the highest potential for job placement. Fred Carberry said that job placement in this economy is most difficult. Bob said he would think placements would be higher in customized training. Fred said that we are trying to develop customized training but that it requires a lot of hands on with the company and candidates and it is difficult to get a guarantee from the company.

Bob LeBlanc said that he feels that the group training is the same old, same old and the OJT and customized training is for people who are temporarily out of work. We should invest more in those people. We should target them as they need temporary help and want to get back to work.

Betty Kirk explained that customized training requires the employer to commit to a 50% match so far, although they are looking at getting a waiver. We are looking at group trainings through partnerships with employers who will commit to at least interviewing participants.

Betty talked about an employer survey sent to over 1,000 companies with questions that include hiring trends. A copy of the survey was distributed.

Bob LeBlanc questioned whether personally meeting with employers would be more effective than a survey.

Fred said that they have gotten a rich mining of information from the surveys through personal contacts with employers.

Mike Lynch also said that the survey is the initial step and that the Business Service Advisors are following up and are marketing now.

Betty said questions included what positions they are hiring for and what skills are needed for those positions. Questions also included whether employers would be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss their training/employment needs.

Bob LeBlanc mentioned that vendors are laying off people.

Fred Carberry said that our strategy is to put people back to work. Some funding cuts from the state are not directly related to us.

Amy Weatherbee said that they can put the type of training as the ARRA pool is meant to be transformative. We have other allocations for dislocated workers and we are keeping ITA accounts. We are keeping this fluid so we can move money based on the demand over a two year period. She said that the stimulus money needs to be spent concurrently with other training dollars.

Mike Lynch said that one of the things about customized training is that it is costly and difficult to monitor.

Barbara Zeimetz said that ideally OJT and customized training would be the preference and Amy said that annually we have done 4, 5, or 6 with a hire rate of 89%.

Mike Lynch said that when looking for an employer to hire and meet the 50% match, we need a connect between government agencies.

Peter Matthews said that he has not been hiring over the past two years when employees leave. Now they are down to the need to refill positions and this would work for him. Peter said that his mortgage department is through the roof and they need the help for six or seven weeks. He said that he can't guarantee the business will be there to hire based on the economy.

Peter said that he has found that since the closing of Lucent (largest client) many companies in this area have ten or less employees.

Amy said that OJT is a good mechanism for small manufacturing companies.

Motion by Bob LeBlanc to approve the funding recommendations for ARRA funds with the first training allocation on page three. Motion

seconded by Mike Lynch with the understanding that funds are transferrable within categories. Motion passed.

3. ABE/ESOL Advisory Council

Fred Carberry said that at the last meeting the issue of a lack of dialogue with ABE/ESOL providers was raised. Since that time, a meeting took place and Fred distributed the attendance list and meeting notes prepared by Patricia Pelletier.

Fred went over the meeting notes explaining that Deborah Andrews gave an overview of the ARRA Summer Youth Program. The ABE providers raised several issues around building capacity for the ABE network utilizing only DESE-funded ABE providers. Fred explained that the WIB cannot mandate exclusive providers but that they could prioritize and recommend providers collaborate with ABE/ESOL providers.

In response to the ABE/ESOL providers being major contributors to craft the regional plan for the WIA ARRA funding, Fred said that a priority will be 'vocational education' and we intend to work closely with the ABE/ESOL providers in the region. Employers continually report that 'basic skills' are the most important criteria for employment in their companies.

The ABE/ESOL providers would like to recommend that group contracting be available vs. ITAs for the WIA ARRA funding. Fred responded that it is the intention to have all group contracting for ARRA Dislocated Worker and Adult activities funding.

Regarding waiving some of the job placement outcomes discussion followed on the fact that training programs are geared toward SPL levels of 5-6 at a minimum.

As Barbara Zeimetz noted regarding the suggestion to waive placement, it is a requirement that can't be waived. The suggestion was to strongly make a partnership with ABE/ESOL providers utilizing their funding to work with low level candidates to provide basic education services.

It was also noted that candidates must go through ValleyWorks Career Center eligibility and that any problems be submitted to the WIB in writing.

Shirley Callan said that higher level skills are necessary for participants to achieve employment.

Barbara Zeimetz said that we can drive the higher level skills through the RFP.

The final suggestion was the formation of an advisory committee to strengthen the relationship with the ABE/ESOL network and the Workforce Development

network. Fred said that he brought this to the MVWIB Chairman Joe Bevilacqua who agreed to the formation of an ABE/ESOL Advisory Council.

Bob LeBlanc questioned the role of the Advisory Council stating that he would like to see a more formal proposal and also suggested that they develop a mission statement before they are formed.

Peter Matthews said that he believes that the advisory council is a good idea but we want to be the driver.

Fred said that certain things are better suited in education and others in workforce development and where we can integrate is what we will work on.

4. Other Business

Fred Carberry distributed the WIA FY'10 allocations for informational purposes. He said that it is interesting to note that we received cuts across the board but especially in Title I Dislocated Worker funding.

Fred said that the next meeting will be to review and recommend funding for the Summer Youth Work and Learning proposals. We will poll the board regarding meeting on June 12th due to the timeframe for staff review and contracting to have the program up and running on July 1st.

Fred also said that the GAO has selected 16 states and DC for oversight of ARRA. There is a meeting scheduled today with DGA, ValleyWorks Career Center, the WIB and GAO. Amy said she feels that this initial visit is for information on what we are planning to do with ARRA funds.

Fred also talked about possible funding cuts at the state level in the Workforce Training Fund, Connecting Activities and Youth Works for next year.

5. Adjourn

Having no further business Shirley Callan made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Karen Sawyer. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder