



# YOUTH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

Wednesday, October 12, 2011  
11:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union Street  
Lawrence, MA 01843

### Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Nicole Austermann, Lisa Coy, Brad Howell, Linda Piergeorge, April Lyskowsky, Michael Strem, Megan Shea, Ed Warnhuis, Cal Williams

### MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:

Janet Allison, Tom Casey, Tom Connors, Irene Chalek, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Steve Noroian, Vinnie Ouellette, Heidi Riccio, Barbara Richards, Donna Rivera

### MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Deborah Andrews, Rafael Abislaiman, Barbara Zeimetz, Mary Kivell

### OTHERS:

Arthur Chilingirian

#### **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 September 14, 2011 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion on the minutes of the September 14, 2011 meeting.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Howard Allen to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2011 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

#### **III. Membership Recruitment (Parent)**

Deborah reported that Rafael Abislaiman has identified a possible parent candidate for board membership but she said that we would welcome more parents if they are interested. April Lyskowsky asked about youth representation. Cal said that we have encouraged youth participation but often scheduling has impacted their ability to participate. Ralph said that YouthBuild youth would have to recuse themselves regarding funding issues and also noted the fact that we can't have more than one voting member from an organization on the council.

#### **IV. FY2012 Program Plan Recommendations**

Deborah said that we have 33 ITA slots saved for youth and we would like to change the ITA policy to require youth going into an ITA to have a high school diploma or GED. She said that we lose many youth in ITAs who, once they get a job, don't finish the GED component. She referred to a handout with the potential new policy. The motion read, "Effective November 1, 2011, no youth will be enrolled in an Individual Training Account (ITA) using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds unless he or she has either a high school diploma or a GED. Though in-house test results may indicate that a youth is at an academic skill level below that of a high school graduate or a GED holder, youth tested at grades between 7.9 and 11.9 will be eligible for appropriate WIA funded ITAs if they possess either credential."

Brad Howell questioned why change the policy now. Deborah said that we have lost a lot of youth once they get a job and we recently lost 15 out of the last 24. Chili said that someone at a 6 or 7 level cannot realistically get a GED in a six month program. We are trying to get them to where they can succeed and they really need a GED and a skill. Megan wondered how it affects the youth cohort and are we pulling partners around the table for a feeder program. Deborah said that many of the partners are at the table and we will inform the rest.

Barbara Zeimetz said that we are seeing getting a high school diploma and GED through the High Performing WIB pipeline as the primary thing that ensures that youth who attain a high school diploma or GED at a minimum and a credential will be successful. Megan mentioned the high dropout rate and Deborah said that we are working with schools on that through the Race to the Top. Chili said that what education has done is let youth drop out and we become the education facility. He said that we cannot be the education provider, but should be the job training entity. Barbara said that we have been the second choice for education by default. We are at the point that we need to focus on getting youth jobs that they can build on.

April Lyskowsky talked about her clients who complete their GED and haven't been able to get a job. Rafael Abislaiman said that many of these students have overcome barriers and problems and her program helped them get a GED. What we have been doing is remediating kids and we cannot make up several years of poor education. April invited folks to come see her program and noted that her youth have many transferrable skills and certifications.

It was agreed to look at the numbers every quarter and report outcomes to the council on a quarterly basis. Ralph said that we will continue to work to improve the pipeline to help persuade youth that a diploma is the way out of poverty. Megan said that we need the schools at the table.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Howard Allen to recommend to the Planning Committee that the new ITA policy be adopted as presented "Effective November 1, 2011, no youth will be enrolled in an Individual Training Account (ITA) using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds unless he or she has either a high school diploma or a GED. Though in-house test results may indicate that a youth is at an academic skill level below that of a high school graduate or a GED holder, youth tested at grades between 7.9 and 11.9 will be eligible for appropriate WIA funded ITAs if they possess either credential." Motion passed.**

## **V. New Policy Review**

Deborah said that the second policy is informational and addresses follow-up services and when youth are considered to be enrolled in WIA. The state is currently in discussions with DOL on this subject. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

## **VI. Program Updates**

Deborah Andrews referred to the WIA Title I Youth Fourth Quarter 2011 handout. She said that we enrolled 88% of plan, with 111% of planned new participants. The average exit wage was \$10.78, about \$2.00 higher than we anticipated. However, the 'entered post secondary education or training' outcome needs work as it is also one of the new common measures. Deborah also mentioned the participant characteristics with 80% female and 20% male. Cal Williams said hats off to ValleyWorks Career Center for a fine job. Deborah said that participants have industry recognized credentials such as CNA and medical billing.

Lisa Coy, ValleyWorks Youth Program Director said that we have a variety of grants and reported on the Bridging the Opportunities Gap Grant which provides DYS youth with work readiness skills from orientation through job placement. We have completed two cycles with 17 and 15 youth each and are now in the third cycle of 12 participants. The next program is Pathways which provides options for seniors and post 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from classes of 2003-2012 who need further assistance to pass MCAS. This is a DYS grant funded for high risk youth.

Lisa said that they will be working to connect school and work at Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen High Schools. With Year-Round YouthWorks we are looking to piggy back with Connecting Activities to do more one on one with 30 youth in two cycles of 15 each. Some of the ARRA Jag Funding was used for summer jobs and some will be used to offer jobs to Year-Round YouthWorks in school students. This will include MCAS remediation, career development and subsidized jobs and will end by December 31<sup>st</sup>. Lisa said that we need to get part time work for these kids who are in Lawrence High School and taking MCAS remediation on Saturdays. There are 10 kids who can work 15 hours per week. Discussion followed on the transportation needs to work. Mike Strem spoke of the disconnect between business and academia and impractical youth program designs in grant requirements. Howard Allen agreed. Chili said the counselor works 15 hours per week and the youth work 25 hours per week. Brad Howell asked about transportation and Lisa said most of the participants don't have a driver's license.

Lisa reported that there is extra funding in Connecting Activities to support one full-time staff and 1 part time staff for 15 hours. We will also be providing teacher externships through Connecting Activities.

Deborah said that we are looking for business and professionals to address the youth workshops for the YouthWorks in school program. She also said that employers provided 226 jobs at 50 worksites. Deborah said that we plan to provide 33 youth with ITAs with our WIA funding and have reserved about \$80k for a group or other program.

## **VII. Other Business**

Megan Shea mentioned the funds for summer youth that were taken out of the state supplemental budget and advised council members to educate their legislators about how important those funds are for youth.

Cal Williams asked about the Safe and Secure Streets grant and Rafael said that we haven't received word yet. Rafael said that this is the governor's initiative to prevent serious crime and is part of a three legged stool (jobs, counseling, and remedial education).

April Lyskowsky asked about Job Shadow Day and Lisa Coy said that there is a lack of funding but that the difficulty has been transporting youth to the various job sites. April said that they own their buses. It was agreed to help find places for her youth to go.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder