



Planning/ Career Center Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

8:00 a.m.

255 Essex Street, 4th Floor

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Mike Munday, Bob Wescott,

Members Absent: Karen Sawyer-Conard, Abel Vargas

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono

Other: Dawn Beati, Linda Rohrer

I. Approval of Minutes of the August 1, 2017 meeting

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez, called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the August 1, 2017 meeting.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the minutes of the August 1, 2017 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of August 31, 2017

Ron asked about the money crisis and Rafael explained how we weren't awarded a \$300k NDWG because of hurricane Irma. On the plus side, Rafael explained that late yesterday he received notice that the MVWIB will be receiving about \$300K in funds owed under a Multiple Employer National Employer Grant (NEG). Receipt of other FY 2017 funds due does not look promising.

III. FY 18 Budget Draft as of September 15, 2017

Rafael said that the budget draft includes Polartec and that it's still uncertain if we will receive the funding. Linda Rohrer added that needs related and support services were also applied for. Rafael said he spoke to Ken Messina and that Polartec was approved months ago. One Polartec grant was received from Rapid Response and then more was approved but never received. Linda said she will ask Eddie and Alice when they visit on Thursday. Rafael said he's worried because if we don't receive the funding we will have layoffs at the WIB and probably at the Career Center.

Juan asked when we will hear and Rafael said he doesn't know. Juan suggested a timeline so the committee can know when the cuts will occur. Bob asked how long can we string along and

Rafael said our monthly outlay is about \$500K. New money is coming in but if it doesn't we currently only have a one month cushion.

Linda said many of the career center efforts have been dedicated to serving Polartec customers. There were over 180 Polartec customers in training and 229 enrolled. Bob asked how many of them we helped find employment and Linda said 29 have so far been placed making an average wage of \$17/hr. Linda added that Polartec was TRADE certified and that most of the customers will be in training for a very long time.

Juan said we should have a plan for layoffs and Rafael said before VWCC and WIB were unified but that now that we subcontract the OSCC, NECC will decide if and when their lay-offs occur. Juan said that if we don't have funds and only a month can be covered, they don't have much time to react.

Ron asked what would happen to customers in training if there were layoffs and Linda said the training is already paid for by TRADE but VWCC would struggle since their counselors provide case management for training.

Rafael referenced the income sources section on the budget and said that Polartec represents a little over 10% of the total FY 2018 budget. Other new FY2018 money is being received.

Juan asked what is the total building credit owed by the City and Rafael answered \$65K. The City paid the holdover costs incurred at our previous location and now the City is paying us half of the \$130K IT costs incurred at the new site.

Rafael said that this particular agenda item was included for today's planning meeting to again remind everyone of our current big financial issues. Historically, the WIB doesn't get a lot of money from National Emergency Grants like the one for Polartec – usually just about \$6K for monitoring. However, if we don't receive the expected Polartec grant MVWIB should also make staffing cuts.

In the new budget outline, you can see that though MVWIB gets a substantial amount of money, part of it comes from NAMC and NAMC provides separate multi-region services.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Bob Wescott, to include the following language with the annual budget submission "if the Polartec NDWG that is included in the annual budget is not received, lay-offs will occur at both the MVWIB and VWCC." Motion passed unanimously.

Mike Munday asked if the \$300K that we will receive for the MV Multiple Employer NEG changes this budget and Rafael said no because the MV NEG allocation was part of last year's budget.

Mike asked if the contract with NECC addressed the possibility of reduced funding. Rafael said yes and added that the contract is still being reviewed.

IV. Approval of 2018 Performance Numbers

Rafael explained that every annual plan has both budget and performance outcome components. For outcomes, we normally take last year's numbers and add a little bit. Rafael stated that the outcome numbers here listed are lower than those proposed by NECC in their proposal. But although the outcomes are roughly the same as last year's and though NECC will receive about the \$2.5 million budget outlined in our RFP, there will still be 24% less money overall. So our outcomes are premised on doing more with less.

Rafael said that the bulk of the participant numbers are carry-in and that the new client numbers are not large. Juan asked if the dislocated worker carry-ins are from the previous year and Rafael said yes but added that there may be a few from other earlier years as well. Some customers are eligible for two years of training and some continue to be served for more than one year.

We have to keep monthly contact with customers to consider them carry-ins and what constitutes a contact has become more rigorous. Before a contact could be an email, now it has to be a two-way communication. Susan added that the high number of dislocated worker carry-ins is due to the co-enrolling of Polartec customers.

Andrew said that in Haverhill they currently have low unemployment rate when in reality it's a low workforce participation rate. His primary concern are people who are not engaged in the workforce and who are not dislocated workers. Andrew said that our focus should be on WIOA Title I Adults – those who have never worked or haven't worked in a long time.

Linda added that the FY18 funding for adults is low and the performance numbers are based on prospective cash allocations. We should look for other resources to serve the population Andrew is referring to.

Susan said there is a funding opportunity the MVWIB is developing a program for called 'Learn and Earn' to help adults who are underemployed or on public assistance get trained for a job that makes more than minimum wage.

Motion by Mike Munday, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the 2018 performance numbers. Motion passed unanimously.

V. Comments on the draft NECC Career Center Contract

Rafael said NECC has a copy of the contract for legal review and that the City of Lawrence attorneys are also looking it over. Linda added that George provided her with comments. Juan asked when the contract will be signed and Rafael said that he doesn't know but that language in the contract makes it effective as of July 1, 2017. NECC has been notified that they can get reimbursed without the contract but they need to have charts of accounts for separate income flows. Right now everything is going into one account but they need to cost allocate.

Juan said it is important to see George's comments. Lisa added that NECC recently hired a budget analyst to work between the DGA and NECC to set up systems. Susan added that DGA is keeping track of everything, they are literally keeping two sets of books.

VI. Career Center Report

Linda Rohrer introduced herself. Previous to joining NECC VWCC, she was the Executive Director of a Metro North Career Center for almost 10 years. Before that, she worked at Commonwealth Corporation for almost 10 years focusing on dislocated worker programs, setting up career center system under WIA and working on industry focused sectors. She was very involved in the creating of the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF). Before leaving CommCorp, Linda was the acting President for 9 months before and after the Romney – Patrick Gubernatorial transition.

Linda started her workforce career at the City of Lowell, recruiting participants, employment counseling, writing grants and being the administrator for dislocated worker programs.

Linda said she's been onboard in the Merrimack Valley for 2 months. She has been learning the rhythm of the center and getting to know staff. She has had to deal with union, transition and building issues. Has been meeting with community partners and setting up cross-training for staff. Moving forward, Linda has some changes in mind. Priorities are moving career center staff to work in industry sector teams – both BSRs and employment advisors. The 2 industry sectors for now are manufacturing and healthcare; probably 1-2 other industry teams will be created. It will be a business sector driven approach.

Her second priority is that intensive assessments be made when customers come into the center. We have to figure out the best assessment tools so we can be clear where customers stands. This is required by WIOA and the state is looking for us to do this. Linda added that one of the strengths of having NECC as operator is that our relationship with the academic department can be strengthened and the center can work with graduates on job placement.

Her third priority is to improve the career center website. Linda concluded by saying that she has a really good team and the plan is to work with the staff and get their inputs.

Rafael noted that a key difference to the prior regime is that they had BSRs assigned based on geographic regions and not by industry sectors. Linda added that what she likes about the business sector approach is that it gets career center employees focused and learning about specific industry sectors.

Bob Wescott asked if there are going to be industry specific job fairs and Linda said most likely. It's something she did at Metro North and employers seemed to appreciate it.

Juan welcomed Linda onboard and asked Rafael about the ITA policy agenda item from the last meeting. Rafael said that the career center puts great and perhaps too much focus on process. He talked about a recent experience recruiting youth for summer trades training at an AFL-CIO union training site in Hopkinton. The site has successfully operated for years and the Metro West uses it to expose youth to jobs in the trades. The site lists itself as providing work experience but because it wasn't on the States approved training vendor list, the career center wouldn't conduct youth recruitment. MVWIB did it under a pilot contract which was never fulfilled because out referrals had last minute problems. An unwillingness to innovate for the benefit of clients is unfortunately the historic norm.

VII. Grants Update

Susan said that an EPA grant was just received. We will train and support unemployed and underemployed workers to be CDL drivers. Participants will also receive the hazmat and liquid waste tanker 'endorsements'. We are finalizing the contract with EPA. It is due by October 1st and the program will start around February 2018.

Susan continued by saying that the WIB also received funding from the WCTF to train ex-offenders to become construction laborers. The contract has been completed and we are in the process of working with the trainers. That will also start around February 2018. We've developed the idea and are working with partners to see if they will work.

Susan said the MVWIB has youth programs that are non-WIOA funded. The summer YouthWorks program just ended and now staff is in the process of submitting the YouthWorks year-round which will be competitive. We added a small Mass Housing grant to our Summer Youthworks program.

We are also exploring the 'Learn and Earn' funding with the career center. It has a planning period of three months and 21 months of implementation. Funding are to work with people receiving public benefits, to help them get off benefits. Our concept is to work with head start in Lawrence and Haverhill, probably single mothers, to get into basic IT positions.

VIII. Other Business

Rafael talked about the Rapid Response BizWorks Conference. Workforce development representatives from 40 states and four territories attended. MVWIB staff was there for a union presentation as requested by the AFL-CIO. MVWIB received terrific Union comments on our CDL program that was funded by CommCorp and now funded by EPA.

Susan and Matthias have sometimes needed to be very patient while working with union staff who are by nature unbureaucratic - they don't like paperwork and lots of process. We were praised but it hasn't been easy. Susan added that she wouldn't call this green jobs any longer but instead make sure area job seekers are not left out of low carbon technology jobs.

Rafael said there is a conference in Devens on October 25th and 26th. There will be a variety of topics and both Secretary Acosta and Secretary Ash will be there. The new director of CommCorp, LaRoche will also be present. If anyone would like to attend to please email him.

IX. Adjourn

Having no further business Andrew Herlihy made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mike Munday, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Almona, Recorder