



## **PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 15, 2014**

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Juan Yepez, Michael Munday

Members Absent: Robert Leblanc, Ron Contrado

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Odanis Hernandez, Mary Kivell

### **I. Approval of Minutes of October 30, 2013**

A quorum being present Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. and called for a motion on the minutes of the October 30, 2013 meeting.

**Motion by Juan Yepez, seconded by Mike Munday, to approve the minutes of the October 30, 2013 Planning Committee meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **II. Update on In-School Youth Proposal & Electronic Vote**

MVWIB Performance and Monitoring Manager Odanis Hernandez reported on the In-School Youth Proposal. She said that because of the time frame needed to getting these projects up and running we held an electronic vote. By Thursday December 5<sup>th</sup> we had enough electronic votes to move forward with the ISY proposals. The Review Team recommended and this committee approved funding for Haverhill High School (HHS) for services for 18 high school seniors at the requested amount of \$66,370. Contract negotiations were held with Haverhill High School (HHS) and we addressed any concerns that the Review Team had and established a contract with them. Odanis said that the program started the week of January 6, 2014.

Odanis continued stating that this committee also conditionally approved funding for American Training, Inc. /LARE Training for services for up to 20 high school seniors from Methuen and Lawrence High Schools pending receipt of additional clarifications. A letter was sent to LARE outlining the issues with the proposal and requirements necessary to obtain final approval. She said that they met with LARE program staff for contract negotiations to address the concerns that the Review Team had and requested that they provide us with a response to our letter dated December 9<sup>th</sup> and also other concerns which arose during our meeting with them. LARE informed us that the circumstances of the Lawrence portion of the proposal had changed substantially and would require a number of clarifications and assurances to be provided to

permit final approval. Upon reviewing their response which we received on December 20th, the Review Team still had a number of concerns and questions. On January 6, 2014 we sent LARE another letter requesting that additional information be provided by close of business on January 14. We received their response late Monday afternoon and after review are making the following recommendations to the Planning Committee on behalf of the MVWIB. The issues related to the Methuen portion of the program have been successfully addressed. The Lawrence portion of the program is not viable due to a change at the LPS which will require seniors at risk of not graduating to attend classes four days per week after school, therefore eliminating these students from participating in the proposed LARE program for Lawrence students. This was mandated by the receiver for at risk students. Juan said that they are probably trying to have students catch up on hours missed.

Mike Munday wondered what kind of training was being offered. Rafael mentioned that LARE was initially offering traditional after school training and we wanted support services and counseling. He said that we had good success with the program at Haverhill High School where we enrolled 23 and 21 either went on the college or got jobs.

Odanis said that carefully reviewing LARE's modifications we are requesting that the Planning Committee approve LARE proposal for their ISY Senior Success Program for Methuen High School for a minimum 10 high school seniors in the amount of \$36,880 with the flexibility to add more students and increase the budget as needed.

**Motion by Mike Munday, seconded by Juan Yopez, to reaffirm the previous vote for Methuen High School for a minimum of 10 students with the flexibility to add more students and increase the budget if needed. Motion passed.**

### **III. End of FY'2013 Performance Numbers**

Rafael Abislaiman said that the FY'2013 numbers haven't been officially released due to the UI problems with the state online UI site. They should be released soon.

Odanis Hernandez said that our job seekers for FY'13 ended at 16,974 which is 117% of Plan. In FY'12 job seekers were 14, 338 and FY'11 - 14, 570. Total Employers served was 1,255 a decrease from FY'12 @ 1,871 and FY'11 @ 1,749. The Employers Listing Job Orders has also decreased. Job Orders for FY'13 it was 387. Job Orders for FY'12 – 396 and FY'11 – 456. Rafael noted that he is grateful for board members who posted positions with the career center of close to 200. This is more than any other area.

Odanis continued with the Participant Characteristics stating that there are more males than females and an increase over the last two fiscal years for a total of 16,974 for FY'13. The majority are in the 22-45 age category with 36% having a high school diploma or GED, 15% having some college/voc degree and 15% having bachelors' degrees. She continued with the breakdown by city and other regions noting that we are spending a lot of resources on other regions and our demographics are changing. The majority of participants come from Lawrence (29.4%) with Haverhill the second highest in our area at 16.5% but our out of state

percentage is 17.4% (2,945) with FY'12 – 2,076 and FY'11 – 2,108. Raphael said that we had made a policy change that unless earmarked for everyone WIA funds would be held for our area.

Odanis said that WIA Adult has different funding streams with 170 served which is 92% of Plan. New Enrollments were 51 and Total Entered Employment was 54 which was 76% of Plan and may be an indicator that the economy is still slow. Female participants are greater than male with 45% Hispanic and 41% Basic Skills Deficient. The Dislocated Worker Program enrolled 381 participants with 156 Total Entered Employments and an Average Exit Wage of \$21.27. Of the Dislocated Workers 57% are male and 43% female. Additionally 67% of Dislocated Workers are White with 52% aged 40-54 and 34% having a High School Diploma/GED and 38% are College Graduates. Rafael noted that this group is 29% Basic Skills Deficient.

In the Title I Youth Program Total Customers Enrolled were 80 which was 67% of Plan. Total Entered Employments were 29 with the Average Wage of \$10.52. This category is dominated by females at 70% of which 81% are Hispanic and 39% Basic Skills Deficient. Also, 63% are Out of School Youth. Juan Yepez wondered how many are single moms and Rafael said many of them. Rafael said that since we changed the eligibility criteria to 7.9 and a GED or high school diploma for out of school youth the numbers have decreased but he feels it is better to fit the category rather than lower our standards. Mike Munday agreed stating that they will be competing with college graduates who are out of work for jobs.

Odanis said that the Sonoco/Debbie Staffing NEG and Solo Cup have concluded as of December 31<sup>st</sup> and she will have the final numbers on the grants soon. The last grant is the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>. She said that we enrolled 39 participants and exited 23. These numbers will also be updated soon. Odanis also said that she is pleased to report that we have been awarded another EPA grant and the first orientation to start the first cycle on March 25<sup>th</sup> is this week. This is a partnership with GroundWorks Lawrence who will be doing the recruitment, enrollment and overall training management for the five week environmental remediation and construction industry training.

Rafael then said that our WIB has the highest entered employment rate of 53% in the state. Two years ago it was 58% but the decrease may be an indicator of a soft economy. We are the eighth largest in performance but third or fourth in funding. He said that a better measure is to compare with other regions as we have better than average employment and wage numbers.

#### **IV. Update on Staff Integration & Career Center Charter**

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman said that we have hit a bump in the road with the staff integration issue. After many months of negotiation, we developed an integration plan which was driven by the Secretary of Labor. We made it a primary focus in our Annual Plan to the state. Subsequently, we were informed that we are the only one in the state who has developed an integration plan. We also learned that the other regions were integrating

administrative staff only. We were going from soup to nuts. A state employee in our region complained as they wanted new job descriptions and an opportunity for increased wages. Most are at the top of their grade. This effort was stopped as it was determined that their current job descriptions are broad enough to cover what they were being asked to do. Rafael said that we are the only career center in the state that has two unions (state and local). He also said that we have not had official notification from the state but he is in receipt of emails clearly stating that staff integration is on hold. We are in the process of trying to redefine what integration means and concentrating on a specific area. We need to revisit training and revamp the Career Center Charter.

Rafael mentioned that no WIA area has been unconditionally certified but we have no details on what we may need to address to be recertified. In the meantime, we are looking to prepare another career center charter.

#### **V. Update on Building Lease**

Rafael reported that he had spoken to Orit Goldstein who is upset that the city is refusing to pay the 50% premium in our lease agreement. Since we are beyond 12/31/13, our lease states that we must pay \$35,000 per month instead of \$24,000. Ralph said that one of her staff favored legal action but that Orit is mostly in favor of continuing our lease. She asked what she could do and Ralph said that he told her to appeal to the Mayor for a two year lease. We only have 4 or 5 months to do an RFP and moving costs could run between \$50k - \$80k. The worst case scenario is that we will have to pay the 50% premium as well as legal fees and fines. Both Mike Munday and Juan Yepez opined that the 150% premium is pretty much standard business practice. Ralph said that his thought was that with a brand new administration and economic development plan not fully formed, extending the lease for two years would not be unreasonable.

Peter Matthews asked if the new mayor was coming to any future board meetings and Rafael said that he has been invited to the next quarterly board meeting.

#### **VI. Other Business**

Rafael then said that there is some good news. There is a Working Cities grant for up to \$750,000 for improvement funded through the Federal Reserve. We have learned that Lawrence has been selected for one of the larger amounts. Rafael said that we were instrumental in the proposal which was submitted by of Lawrence Community Works. The initial idea was shaped to provide nutrition but we were instrumental in changing the focus to education. There was a meeting here attended by Barbara Zeimetz, Jessica Andors and others where we felt that the focus should be on education that is culturally transformative. That was when it was decided to focus on Lawrence High School students and parents to support academics. We should learn the amount of the grant today.

Rafael then referenced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the meeting packets between the MVWIB and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC). This agreement negotiated with Dennis DiZoglio from the MVPC is an agreement to encourage local hiring in

green municipal improvements. Some local town managers and officials see economic development as being more important than local hiring. The intent is to encourage local hiring without making it too onerous. We will be bringing this to the full board for consideration at the next quarterly board meeting and Mr. DiZoglio will be bringing it to his board for a vote. Rafael said that the municipalities can rely on us to help make it doable by referring workers and training funds. This is a partnership agreement.

**VI. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Juan Yopez made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike Munday seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell,*

Recorder