



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, March 8, 2010

8:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Anne Randazzo, Ron Contrado, Michael Munday, Kevin Page, Juan Yopez, Charles LoPiano

Members Absent: Robert LeBlanc

Staff Present: Betty Kirk, Fred Carberry

Guests Present: Odanis Hernandez, Arthur Chilingirian, Amy Weatherbee

I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes of November 24, 2009

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:25 a.m. and introductions were made around the table for new committee members. Peter then called for a motion on the minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting, noting that they were in order.

Anne Randazzo made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting as submitted. Kevin Page seconded the motion and motion passed.

II. Recommendations for Funding ARRA Group Training Proposals for Adults and Dislocated Workers and Older Youth

Betty Kirk said that with the ARRA (stimulus) funds we have the opportunity to do group training for adults and dislocated workers. We are looking for new, innovative, and creative programs. Betty said that we conducted a survey of employers to see what skills they are looking for and whether they will be hiring. We held focus groups and provided technical assistance and Betty said that we were pleased to receive sixteen (16) proposals for consideration.

Staff members from DGA, the WIB and Career Center participated in the staff review. Betty then began with the first grant from Clean Edison, LLC for a Green Job Skills Training with Next Step Living for 90 slots for a total funding request of \$142,812. This is a critical and emerging industry of the MVWIB. The occupational skills will result in a nationally recognized credential of BPI Energy Auditor. This is a short training program with direct employer

involvement, Next Step Living, Inc., with a commitment to hire. Although there are some areas of concern, reviewers recommended the program be funded subject to negotiation at a reduced rate for 30 slots for a total of \$47,604 as a pilot.

The second proposal is from Custom Group Center for Manufacturing Technology for Intro to General Machine Shop Practices for 24 (12 each in two sessions) for a total of \$94,800. This program presents training in General Machine Shop and has a cutting edge manufacturing technology center for hand-on training including, workholding, materials, shop essentials, metal cutting, abrasives, CNC, and inspection. Two employer partners are identified and a nationally recognized credential would be NIMS certification (National Institute of Metalworking Skills). This is a high demand area for the MVWIB. This program is recommended for funding subject to negotiation for 24 slots for a total of \$94,800.

The next program is from the International Institute of Greater Lawrence (IIGL) for Green Handyman Training for 15 slots for a total \$70,341. This program is for a Green Handyman Training with and ESOL component utilizing the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) curriculums. Participants could achieve various nationally recognized credentials. The organizational background of this vendor is good. There are some concerns regarding employer commitment. There are questions regarding the budget, wage rate, and schedule and timeline. This program is recommended for funding pending clarification of concerns and contract negotiations for the 15 slots for a total of \$70,341.

The fourth program is from LARE Training Center for Automotive Technologies & Certified Automotive Appraisal for 12 slots for a total of \$89,554. This vendor has a strong organizational background and good collaboration with the local technical school (Greater Lawrence). Although not a in a critical/emerging industry, the employer survey was comprehensive and documented real local demand. This is a new area of occupational skills training and may be attractive to male participants. This program is recommended for funding pending clarification of concerns and contract negotiations for 12 slots for a total of \$89,554.

The fifth proposal is from LARE Training Center for Certified Electronic Health Record Specialist for 16 slots for a total of \$89,882. The reviewers determined that this program is similar to multiple currently offered MVWIB ITA programs and therefore is not recommended for funding.

The sixth proposal from LARE is for a Certified Patient Care Technician for 32 slots for \$166,072. Reviewers determined the program is similar to currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s); specifically Certified Nurse Assistant/Certified Home Health Aide (CNA/CHHA) Medical Assisting, with no significant enhancements and therefore is not recommended for funding.

The next proposal is from LARE Training Center for Certified Pharmacy Technician for 30 slots for a total of \$128,463. This program presented a new occupational area in health care. The program had a comprehensive design, and the occupational skills result in nationally/industry

recognized credential of Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPHT). The employer connections were good. This program is recommended for funding for 30 slots for a total of \$128,463 subject to contract negotiation.

Betty continued with LARE Training Center GED Prep & IPC Assembly, Soldering & Rework/Repair for 15 slots for a total of \$65,710. Reviewers felt the program presented similar to multiple options currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s) and is therefore not recommended for funding.

Next is LARE Training Center Education & Certified Medical Assistant with Medical Interpreting Training for 32 slots for a total of \$159,996. Reviewers the program presented similar to multiple options currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s) and labor market information presented did not identify the need for Medical Interpreters. Therefore this program is not recommended for funding.

This program is from LARE Training Center for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Basic Training for 30 slots for \$106,366. This is a new occupational skills area for this vendor and there is a partnership with Action Ambulance. Cost reasonableness and liability on ride alongs needs to be explored. This program is recommended for funding for 30 slots for \$103,366 subject to contract negotiations.

The next proposal is from Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School for Adult Biotech Training for 30 slots for a total of \$134,781.36. Although an interesting occupational skills area and with a technical school, the proposal is non-compliant with the RFP guidelines, as the occupational skills does not result in a nationally and/or industry related credential as required. Other issues: There is only one (1) employer partner, and there were questions on the actual ability for one employer to absorb successful completers. In the MOA with the employer, there was no commitment to hire therefore this program is not recommended for funding.

This proposal is from Notre Dame Education Center for Office Skill Training for Growth Industries for 24 slots for a total of \$88,800. Reviewers felt the program presented similar to multiple options currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s) and is therefore not recommended for funding.

PLS Staffing Solutions submitted a proposal for PLS Hands on Electronic Soldering for 120 slots for a total of \$296,968.70. Reviewers determined the program presented is similar to currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s): specifically, IPC-610 and J-STD Soldered Electrical and Electronic Assemblies certification training with no significant enhancements. Therefore, it was not recommended for funding.

The Marquin Consulting Group LLC submitted a Back To Work proposal for 200-300 slots for \$600,000. The proposal presented was non-responsive to the RFP. There was no occupational skill component presented; this was primarily an OJT proposal with duplicative

services as provided by the Career Center (i.e. the components presented were classroom training in job readiness, job search, employment support, and micro-enterprise). Therefore it is not recommended for funding.

The New England Institute of HVAC, Inc. submitted for Heating, Air Conditioning, Heat Pump & Refrigeration for 21 slots for \$150,921. Reviewers determined the program presented is similar to currently offered MVWIB ITA program(s): specifically, HVAC Service Technician, with no significant enhancements. Therefore, it was not recommended for funding.

William George Associates submitted a proposal for Project Management for Green Construction for 20 slots for \$159,900. The program design presented was for Project Management. The past performance was geared to incumbent workers. The target population was also more like incumbent workers, or dislocated workers with marketable skills and thus, potentially not eligible. This training is in the green industry, which is a priority for the MVWIB. It results in a LEED Certification. The employer commitment was weak and this program is not recommended for funding.

Discussion followed on the timeframe and process for negotiating contracts. Fred Carberry explained that the Career Center will recruit for the programs and said that ARRA funds expire in 2011. Betty Kirk said that if there is no additional funding for group training for adults she hopes that these programs can become part of the ITA pool.

Juan Yopez asked about funding for transportation and was informed of supportive services that are available for clients.

Fred explained that this RFP was an effort to drive innovative programs. We are also looking to do some customized training through an RFP to employers for new hires.

Motion by Anne Randazzo seconded by Ron Contrado to approve the recommendations to fund the ARRA Group Training Proposals for Adults and Dislocated Workers as presented. Motion passed.

III. Recommendations for Funding of WIA Out of School Youth Group Training

Betty Kirk then presented the six Out of School Youth (OSY) proposals for consideration.

The first proposal is from Boston Career Institute for Certified Registered Central Technical & GED Prep for 36 slots @ \$5,803.61 for a total of \$208,930.00. This occupation skills area is in the healthcare field and results in a nationally recognized credential. The program has a weak education component; employer connections are limited, with no local employers and no identified labor market. The work experience is lengthy and costly and not in line with stepping stone methodology. The average staff rating was 46 and the program is not recommended for funding. A concern of reviews was also that the training and the jobs were identified as being in Boston, not accessible to MV youth.

The second is Boston Career Institute for Hydroponic Farming & Adult Basic Education for 12 slots @ \$9,510.12 for a total of \$114,121.40. The vendor has experience in the provision of

occupational skills, yet no experience with youth population was articulated. The industry is neither critical nor emerging and there is no credentialing as required by the RFP. There is only one employer and it is not clear if there is a labor market for these students. The length of work experience is inappropriate and the program is over staffed for 12 people. This program is not recommended for funding with an average staff rating of 24.

Deborah explained that the next program is from Everblue Energy for Energy Efficiency Training for 24 slots @ \$3,030.98 for a total of \$72,743.73. This program presents a “green” occupational opportunity, with the occupational skills resulting in a nationally recognized credential, BPI Building Analyst/Energy Auditor. There is an education component geared more to light math & reading remediation, (initially only 20 hours), as the entrance criteria is high (9th grade reading and math). The occupational skills component is only 1 wk @ thirty hours; and there is a question on work experience length as it is seven weeks in length. The employers cited are not local, but labor market exists for these positions. Budgetarily, there was a concern on a \$1,500 per student training cost, yet there was also instructors’ costs built into the budget (and instructors wage rate was very high). The average staff rating was 34 and this program is not recommended for funding.

The next program is LARE Training Center for Education and EMT Basic Training for 12 slots @ \$5,567.83 for a total of \$65,614.00. There is a strong organizational background of provider, both with occupational skills training and with youth population. All required components are presented in this design, and there is a partnership with Action Ambulance. This is a new occupational area for youth programming. There were strong employer connections presented, including commitments to hire. An Employer Advisory Board is included in the design, which is a good plan and may help recruitment. There are concerns as to accessibility (and recruitment) i.e. the need for a Driver’s License, no history of Drug & Alcohol, clean CORI, and ability to lift 125 lbs.

Concerns that would need clarification: There would need to be a breakdown provided of the Action Ambulance costs for review for reasonableness (only a lump sum amount was provided); there is a question on how the initial assessment will be done (lift 125 lbs); there are staffing issues/concerns – job developer charges/hours were high and the program had a guarantee from one employer for hiring all of the program completers (who meet their hiring guidelines); concerns on overlaps in staff (LARE and partner); licensing of staff conducting the educational remediation activities; question on ride-alongs (insurance/liability) and overview issues with space, student conduct and attendance policies and communication with the VWCC staff. This program received an average staff rating of 77 and is recommended for funding with **10** slots pending clarifications.

Deborah continued with the next proposal also from LARE Training Center for Education & Food Service Training for 24 slots @ \$5,601.50 for a total of \$136,436.00. Once again, a strong organizational background of provider, both with occupational skills training and with youth population. The program presented has all required components; and is a good partnership with Greater Lawrence Technical School. The Employer survey identified a number of jobs; however there were concerns about the reasonableness of the cost per participant. The concern was also raised as to whether this would be value-added training.

Concerns that would need clarification: There would need to be a breakdown provided of the GLTS costs for review for reasonableness (only a lump sum amount was provided); there is a question on GLTS' performance and placement in this industry/occupational area; there is a question on the need for a CORI and the Health Testing (how is this to be done in an assessment); there are staffing issues/concerns – job developer charges/hours were high; concerns on overlaps in staff (LARE and GLTS); licensing of staff conducting the educational remediation activities; and overview issues with space, student conduct and attendance policies and communication with the VWCC staff. Would require clear guidelines on allowable placements (training related) defined by the MVWIB. The average staff rating was 71 with funding recommended pending clarifications.

The final proposal is from PLS Staffing Solutions for PLS Hands-On Electronics Training for 120 slots @ \$2,474.73 for a total of \$296,968.70. This proposal is for the provision of Electronics Training which would result in two certifications - IPC and JSTD. These are nationally recognized certifications. However, there are significant issues with the program design. First and foremost, the proposal presented does not have an education component, and therefore, is not in compliance with the requirements of the RFP. Additionally, there is little to no employer commitments documented and no labor market presented supporting the occupational skills areas; one of the Instructors is not certified; the site is not ADA Compliant; the training is located in Tyngsboro, which presents transportation issues for our customers; and the Training Impact section presents a plan for 40% Entered Employment, well below our placement goal. The work experience component is designed for 12 hours per week for thirteen weeks at an \$11.00 per hour rate; this is not a stepping stone design, and some concern was relayed because this vendor is also a Staffing Company (and that the work experience component was actually subsidizing work of the staffing company). The average staff rating for this program is 27 and the program is not recommended for funding.

Motion by Anne Randazzo seconded by Mike Munday to approve the recommendations for funding the 2010 WIA OSY Proposals as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Proposed Modification to Lease

Fred Carberry explained that the lease we entered in December 2008 allowed us to occupy suite 102 and stipulated that we would move in May 2010 to suite 107 which, at that time, seemed adequate. We were given suite 102 which included extra square footage at no additional cost. Since that time, things have changed and we need to increase the capacity of the WIB with the High Performing WIB, ARRA summer youth, and grants which require a grant coordinator. Fred said that there are several possible needs that make it necessary to maintain this space. He spoke to Ozzy Properties, who said the cost would increase \$37,000 over the remainder of the lease. The city attorney, in conversations with Amy Weatherbee, and the Attorney General, agreed that if we wish to remain in this space, we are within the state percentage of 10% but would go over the \$25,000 cap. We spoke again with Ozzy Properties who said that they would be willing to reduce the cost to \$25,000 additional over the 44 remaining months of the lease and if we opt to renew after the five year lease expires then we would be paying at a higher rate of \$18.00 per square foot. The city attorney

recommended that this be placed on the public planning committee agenda and voted on by the committee.

Juan Yopez asked about the square footage and Anne Randazzo said that we are not locked in to renew after the five year lease. Kevin Page said that there are 44 months left to the current lease. Fred Carberry said that the monthly rental for the Career Center and WIB would increase from \$23,450 to \$24,018.

Motion by Ron Contrado seconded by Anne Randazzo to approve the lease modification for the MVWIB to remain in Suite 102 for the remainder of the lease for an additional cost of \$25,000 over the 44 remaining months. Motion passed.

V. Update on High Performing WIB Initiative

Fred Carberry reported that we are getting closer to being certified and said that Greater Lowell recently was certified. He said that they had met with Undersecretary Jennifer James and went over some issues. She said that she would do a markup of our submission and e-mail it back. We are hoping to hear soon.

Anne Randazzo asked about the HPW Initiative and Fred explained that this was initially a move by the Mass WIB Association to bump up capacity to be able to better compete for DOL funding and engage the private sector. There is a one time award of \$100,000 upon certification. We are in a group of three WIBs on the threshold for certification. Five others have been certified and some have not submitted. Fred sees this as a worthwhile endeavor and said that he is pleased to see the private sector represented on this committee.

Betty Kirk said that what this has done is caused us to focus on the things we should be focused on like talking to employers and finding out what they want. We would like our WIB to be board driven.

Fred said that the High Performing WIB gives us a road map of where we want to go.

VI. Update on ARRA

Fred Carberry said that we just approved the group training and with the ARRA funds and plan to do customized trainings similar to the Workforce Training Fund with the employer helping connect with the training provider. We plan to put approximately \$100,000 into that initiative.

Betty said that the main focus of this training will be for new hires.

Ron Contrado asked what ITAs were and how many we have. Any said that we have allocated \$640,000 for ITAs. Betty Kirk said that they are individual training accounts (ITA) from a pool of eligible vendors.

Chili then spoke about an amendment being added to the jobs bill in Washington by Therese Murray for \$1.5 billion. The state funding has been cut in half and without the federal summer jobs funding we would go from serving 700 youth this past summer to only 100 this summer.

Fred said that he has sent a letter to Senator Scott Brown asking for his support as Senator Kerry is on board. He said that he would forward a copy to the committee.

Peter Matthews noted that the Career Center did a great job last year. Chili said that we learned from last year and would do an even better job next year.

VII. Other Business

Chick LoPiano said that he was in Washington last week as Community Action is also a recipient of ARRA funds. He said that they were told to prepare for a political tsunami. He mentioned that years ago CAC used to run summer jobs programming and that the Career Center did a great job this past summer.

Peter Matthews then said that the next full board meeting is April 27th. He said that we have been meeting the third Wednesday of the month and that he tries to run it efficiently, noting that there is a lot of information. We need participation and a quorum. He asked what day and time is the best and committee members agreed that the third Wednesday is a good day but that meetings should begin at 7:30 am so that they can participate and then get into their work day.

Peter then said that as a follow up to the last board meeting he wanted to make sure that Tom Connors had gotten a response.

Anne Randazzo said that she has met with Tom Connors and Sheryl Scannell for 2 ½ hours. We are in receipt of a letter from Tom Connors requesting various information. Anne said that she has advised Fred to request the information and have the city attorney (other than herself) review the information. She said that she needs to meet with other individuals but, yes, the matter is being addressed.

Peter said that the implication was that LARE has been harmed in some way and the board needs to be informed that LARE was the number one and number two funded vendor the past two years.

Conflict of Interest forms were signed and collected.

Chili said that some folks may have been interviewed by Mt. Auburn Associates regarding the RIG grant from DOL working with manufacturing. He said that there will be a Merrimack Valley Manufacturing Advocates meeting in late March or early April and this committee will be hearing more on that.

Amy noted that we are getting ready to go into monitoring for the next four weeks.

VIII. Adjourn

Having no further business Anne Randazzo made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Juan Yopez. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder