



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

8:00 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Andrew Herlihy, Mike Munday, Abel Vargas

Members Absent: Rosalin Acosta, Ron Contrado, Dennis DiZoglio

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Mary Kivell, Brian Norris

Others: Arthur Chilingirian

I. Approval of Minutes of May 19, 2015

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Chairman Yepez then called for a motion on the minutes of the May 19, 2015 meeting.

Motion by Mike Munday, seconded by Andrew Herlihy, to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2015 Planning Committee meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Federal Regulations -WIOA

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman said that he would outline new WIOA youth legislation. The new legislation expands the age for youth out to 24 years old. 75% of expenditures are allocated for OSY age 16-24 and 25% to ISY age 14-21. Rafael also said that living in certain geographic areas may also be accepted as an eligibility barrier. That barrier is similar to the one created by the MVWIB several years ago. He said that we don't have to change a lot of criteria for eligibility but the full Board and Planning Committee will decide how we want to deal with our regional barrier criteria.

Chili said that geographic area barriers are determined by poverty in individual census tracks. There are two eligibility guidelines that local WIBs must establish in consultation with the chief elected official in formulating new policies. One is local parameters for the definition of Requires Additional Assistance and two is local parameters for the definition of Self-sufficiency.

Chili stated that there is movement to again prefer service to high school dropouts. We are supposed to be employer driven and are looking to fill the skills gap but WIOA seems to require that we have services for those youth. We currently don't.

Rafael said that older youth can qualify in the Adult category as there will be a six year overlap between youth and adult under WIOA. Youth 18 and up will qualify for Adult category WIOA funding. We have denied ITAs to 14-17 year old youth without a high school diploma or GED. Four years ago the Planning Committee decided not to give 14-17 year old youth an alternative to completing high school because a HS diploma is needed to get a good job and because education has significantly more funding than Department of Labor training programs. He strongly support the MVWIB's decision.

Ralph stated that our region has a lot of Spanish speakers who need English language training. We have ESOL and ABE partners will receive Title II WIOA funding. They include the Lawrence and Methuen Adult Learning Centers, Notre Dame Education Center, International Institute of Greater Lawrence, NECC and CAI in Haverhill.

The Board may want to consider using some WIOA Title I funding to help these Title II programs in their efforts. We could, for example, help by providing some of our supportive services funding to help their ABE and students get and keep jobs. This could include funds for transportation, daycare, clothing, and tools. It is better for WIOA Title II programs to do remedial ABE and ESOL training than for us to do it with WIOA Title I funds.

Juan said that we need to figure out how to help motivate drop-outs to get their GEDs. Maybe we could talk with employers and persuade them to motivate youth by reducing their hourly wage by \$1 and holding it until they finish the program. Juan said that he can see supportive service payments for clothes and tools but he feels that transportation and daycare are only temporary relief and should be limited as they need to find a solution to those issues.

Mike Munday said that he can see clothing and tools to help get a first job. He recalled getting clothing help from a kindly stranger who helped him get his first job. He was someone who grew up in welfare.

Chili said that there are youth who need bus passes and the current policy is to provide up to a total of \$500 for supportive services. He also said that we need more vendors in Haverhill. Chili also said that we need programs for males.

There was discussion on supportive services for ESOL or HiSET and whether they could be dual enrolled if they are enrolled at the career center and a stand-alone Title II program. Chili said that any money has to go through procurement but we may be able to do that.

Andy Herlihy said that, as someone who manages federal grants, he knows that DOE has very large amounts of money and that workforce development money through DOL Title I is very small by comparison. He doesn't want to take workforce money to subsidize education. Chili also said that including youth in Title II programs will impact career center performance.

Rafael said that we have to stipulate eligibility criteria and focus on ESOL and ABE enrolled youth who will go to work and stay at work while also continuing their education. Abel Vargas said that the need is so great that he is against providing additional out-of-school funds to youth without a high school diploma or GED. Even kids with them need remediation. Presumably those with diplomas have more basic skills, try harder and will be more successful. Mike Munday agreed and said that youth with a GED or diploma show that they have the values needed to become a good worker.

Chili said that we could prepare a RFP for youth education first and then training and work experience. Ralph said that we could guarantee that those youth who get their GED at Title II WIOA training will get occupational skills training that leads to a job if they want it. Once again Chili mentioned that we need programs for out-of-school males.

Rafael then said that it appears that the Planning Committee would like to continue our current policy of focusing on low-income youth with a high school diploma or GED/HiSET. There is currently a 6.9 grade level requirement for adult ITA eligibility. 18-24 youth without a HS diploma or HiSet are eligible for adult category training.

Abel Vargas said that according to U.S. census track information, all Lawrence youth with the exception of the ones living in the Mount Vernon neighborhood are low income so, with that exception, all unemployed youth with a HS diploma or HiSet are eligible for our WIOA training eligible.

Susan Almono asked if we are proposing the policy remain the same as far as high school diplomas and GED/HiSET but wondered about providing supportive services if someone achieves a HiSET. Once again Chili said that this could affect our performance and that maybe next year we can work with partners to look at putting something together. Rafael said perhaps we could do a small pilot of \$5 - \$10K for supportive services and work the bugs out.

Both Juan Yopez and Mike Munday said that they think there should be an inducement for work and training after folks get their GED/HiSET and we should work with vendors to that end. Rafael said that we have given preference to high performing ABE/ESOL Title II students recommended by their respective programs. They can go to the front of the line for our programs but we have so far gotten no referrals.

Rafael said that we can take the planning committee preference to focus on OSY with high school diplomas or GEDs as a recommended motion for board approval at next week's Quarterly meeting. Chili suggested keeping it the way it is and staying away from ABE providers until we can discuss what they want to do. He said that we already offer skills training and career pathways and a career center seminar to those providers. Mike said that we can visit Title II programs and tell their students that we can provide them training for available jobs if they succeed at their current Title II program. Chili said that youth who are trying to find a job can use the resource room but we used to serve 2,000 youth before and now we only serve 700 per year. Now we will need to serve youth up to age 24.

Rafael said that on a happier note we refer a lot of male youth to the Devens Job Corps. Our referrals fill 80% of their 400 slots. He said that we need to track those numbers and include some in our WIOA report.

Mike Munday suggested assembler training noting that one of his best assemblers is a young man who worked in maintenance and was always working. Mike said that Raytheon would be hiring again as they just got some large contracts. He offered to try to make contact with someone he knows at Raytheon.

III. Performance Summary as of 4/30/15

Rafael referred to the Performance Summary sheet as of 5/31/15 and said that he had previously made the committee aware of the issues with the Veteran's services criteria. The Career Center has two veterans on staff and the criteria states that services should be for those veterans under 24 or who have significant barriers to employment such as unemployed for more than six months or court involved.

Rafael said that he feels that we won't make our planned veterans numbers. He also said that we need to reallocate the WIA adult category services to dislocated workers because otherwise we will not reach plan. He also said that we have done well in the Dislocated Worker category but will end up with about 80% of planned Youth enrolled. Chili's team has a history of placing a high percentage of enrolled youth in jobs but there is a lot of room for improvement in both the adult and youth category recruitment.

Juan asked about the job seekers and whether we would meet our plan goal. Chili said that UI claimants served is still 72%. Chili said that prior months there were 1,000 claimants but this month only 550. Chili said that we are getting data that is nine months old and real job numbers are higher. He said that wage records contain real-time data and we need to try to get them.

IV. Budget Update

Rafael explained that WIA funds come as two-year money and that 80% must be spent in year one. We will have carry-out for FY'15-'16 which normally helps smooth out funding ups and downs. Funding for the new fiscal year is up slightly by 3-4%. Juan asked how much carry-over and Rafael said it may be as much as \$400,000.

Juan asked if there is any flexibility to transferring carry out funds to other line items. Rafael answered that, with the exception of training funds, there is flexibility to moving money. He said that the Executive Committee is meeting Friday and the budget will be discussed in detail.

V. Other Business

Rafael said that he would hold off the manufacturing sector discussion until a future meeting in the interest of time. Rafael introduced Brian Norris, Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) Marketing Manager, who will speak about our involvement in sector strategy at a future meeting.

Chili then mentioned several area companies who are laying off workers such as Yoplait, Ryder, Dow Chemical, and Genesis. As a result, we will be applying for a \$275,000 National Emergency Grant. He also noted that wages are going up slightly.

Rafael then said that it was thought that the Board would review/recharter the Career Center this fall but relevant WIOA guidelines from the feds and state have not been issued. Therefore, we will need to postpone rechartering until next year. Juan said that we may want to go back to the landlord to negotiate extending another year. Originally, the agreement was that we would be paying \$10 per square foot for three years but we are now paying \$15 per square foot for two years. He said that maybe the Mayor could call the landlord. Mike Munday also thought that perhaps we could negotiate the lease for another year.

Rafael said that he would be emailing correspondence Chili provided from the Conference of Mayors on suggestions for WIOA.

VI. Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder