



## **PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, August 18, 2015**

8:00 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman  
Rosalin Acosta, Ron Contrado, Abel Vargas, Bob Westcott

Members Absent: Dennis DiZoglio, Andrew Herlihy, Mike Munday

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell

Others: Arthur Chilingirian, Lisa Remington

### **I. Approval of Minutes of July 21, 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 July 21, 2015 meeting.

**Motion by Rosalin Acosta, seconded by Abel Vargas, to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2015 Planning Committee meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **II. Performance Summary as of 6/30/15**

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman called on Arthur Chilingirian (Chili) to give the performance summary. Chili said that there were 9,819 total job seekers with 473 persons with disabilities and 525 veterans served. There were a total of 666 total employers of whom 249 were new to the Career Center, 417 use services before. He mentioned that the Career Center is working to get better qualified job seeker and service referrals.

Rafael explained that the total number of job seekers served dropped due to the implementation of UI on line. People can do what they previously did at career centers either by phone or via the Internet. He explained that three years ago we received the gold award for the best in the state in veteran's services. Since then a new law came out in 2014 and now we can't dedicate veterans' staff to serve a veterans unless he/she has some sort of dysfunction.

Chili then reported on the participant characteristics. He said that the economy may be getting better but there are area companies that are closing up. That's another reason we are seeing fewer people. Bob Westcott asked if the 55 and older group is easier to place and Chili said that when a company closes the majority of employees are older. Rafael said that, if there's no language barrier, 55 and older people often have skills and a work ethic which makes them easier to place.

Abel Vargas asked if the population is changing and Chili said that we are seeing fewer youth and more over 55. Rosalin asked how the minority population has changed and Chili said they often have a lower level of skills. English is often an issue Lisa Remington explained that the requirements of UI dictate that we are not allowed to complete clients' answers we can only recommend. Family members can assist them.

Chili said that limited English people would benefit from a training program with academic remediation or ESOL and an occupational skills component. Under Trade, we can put people with a wide range of levels into ESOL and into high school equivalency programs. Rosalin said that she would be interested in learning what the skill sets are and the success rate.

Abel wondered if having a resume was a benchmark for training and Lisa said that a resume is required by the state but we now have a resume worksheet and individuals can work with bilingual staff. Lisa said that they have implemented a bilingual resume workshop. Clients who participate in the Career Center Seminar can also use the resource room and put together a resume.

Rafael said that the number of low level jobs will ultimately go down due to automation. Abel said that there is a natural pipeline for entry level jobs that don't need the Career Center or much training.

Rafael said that WIOA is universal access so we have customers from New Hampshire and other regions. Chili noted that the majority of clients are from Lawrence, Haverhill, and Methuen. In the Title I Adult program new enrollments are at 83% (ITAs) and participants are 73% female and 55% Hispanic. Chili said that many Dislocated Workers have some skills and may just need a certification. The Dislocated Worker Program has an 87% entered employment rate and participants are 56% male.

Lisa Remington mentioned a new state program to boost reading and math skills called Work Keys. Discussion followed on local automotive businesses and the grey economy. Lisa noted that automotive programs are very expensive. Rafael said that manufacturing people are trying to draw folks into the sector but with 80% of youth going into college when there's only a 30% national college completion rate, and with parents thinking that manufacturing is dying, manufacturers are having a difficult time recruiting people.

Because we have a full agenda, Chairman Yopez said that we would move on to the WIOA Low Income Definition.

### **III. WIOA Low Income Definition**

Rafael explained under WIOA the low income definition is based on a 1969 formula which in today's dollars equals \$45,000 per individual. Rafael said that, if we used that standard we could service everyone who made less than \$45,000.

### **IV. Youth ITA Policy**

Rafael explained that he had mailed out the additional barriers for the Youth ITA policy. He distributed a copy to the committee. Rafael said that there six additional definitions as WIOA Low-Income Youth Barriers to employment to supplement existing WIOA youth eligibility barriers. Youth may be assessed as WIOA Title I Training eligible if they have any one of the following barriers: A limited work history (less than 4 months in the past year) or no work experience; Involvement with any state agency providing special services, support or oversight to the youth or to the youth's immediate family; Residency in a Designated Census Tract Poverty Area; A non-traditional household member i.e. a single parent household, or with an unofficial guardian, or with a grandparent; or with a maternal or paternal domestic partners, etc.; Residency in public housing or Section 8 subsidized housing; or Less than a 2.0 GPA while in school.

Lisa Remington explained that under WIOA youth are 14-24 but we are only offering ITA training to 18-24 year olds. She explained that locally we can broaden who we can serve by adding additional criteria. Youth may be basic skills deficient or within the age of school attendance but not attending school since last calendar quarter. Bob Westcott asked how we know if we have helped the youth in the program and Lisa said that there is a sheet in the performance packet with the objective that they get a job.

Rafael said that historically the program was obliged to work with youth with significant issues or performing below grade level. He explained that here the board has allowed us to train poor and low income youth who don't have other significant barriers. Our expectation is that the additional criteria will mainstream more poor and low-income youth. Rafael said that the state doesn't track youth long term outcomes. Chili said they only track 9 months which will now be 11 months.

Juan Yepez said that at the next meeting we will have an update on what training youth are getting and what number are not completing so we may be able to reduce the number of training dollars dedicated to people who don't work out.

**Motion by Bob Westcott, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the Youth ITA Policy as amended and presented. Motion passed.**

### **V. Manufacturing Sector Discussion**

Juan then called on Brian Norris, Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) Director, to speak about the manufacturing sector. Mr. Norris said that NAMC is supported by four WIBs: Greater Lowell; Merrimack Valley, Metro North, and North Shore. He handed out excerpts from a power point presentation and said he would also email the presentation to everyone. Brian said that in the MVWIB area there are a total of 630 manufacturers with a

high concentration of fabricated metal products, computer and electronics, machinery, food and chemicals. In Lawrence alone there are a total of 109. They include Zolin Technologies, Nexcelom Bioscience, FlowServe, Sekisui Voltek, and Key Polymer to name a few.

He said that he is trying to educate manufacturers that this is a good place to do business with the state Workforce Training Fund (WTF) and is meeting with manufacturers to explain the WTF and how it could benefit existing employees. Although a number of businesses are moving back from overseas. They are going to the southern USA and Mexico. Some firms are looking for a closeness to customers and supplies.

Mr. Norris noted that his principal role is to reach out to manufacturers in the region. He spoke about a training program at area Community Colleges that educate unemployed adults in CNC and electronic technician. There were three cycles with 65 enrollees and 51 have so far obtained jobs in the \$18 per hour range.

Brian said that the 630 local manufacturers listed in his report were here yesterday and are here today, but they may not be here tomorrow. Things are changing fast and technology will affect the number of people needed in the sector. Our training is needed to help employers meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. There is a need for critical thinking and ESOL. The middle skills are going away but there will still be a need for a lot of low skill, cognitive jobs that are not routine.

Brian said that there are four areas of growth: Digital manufacturing, visualization and informatics; Advanced sensing, measurement & process control; Advanced material manufacturing; Industrial robotics. These markets will use new materials (nano materials) and new processes (additive manufacturing). Soon there will be driverless cars. He said that these companies will be hiring fewer workers, but they will need smarter, more versatile workers who show up and problem solve. Brian said that compartmentalized skills are blurring in the 3<sup>rd</sup> industrial revolution and people are starting to talk about Mechatronics.

Rosalin suggested putting the manufacturing information into a video to make it more enticing for youth. Brian said that he is going out to schools and business owners to put together a Manufacturing Day on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Abel said that a generation of youth have been visited only by doctors, lawyers and office worker. His generation didn't get info on manufacturing jobs in school and he thinks that bringing information on manufacturing is timely.

Brian also said that he is lining up companies to conduct tours so youth can see that manufacturing is more about technology today. The vocational schools don't have enough room to bring in more kids and many vocational graduates are going to college today. Rafael said that we need to continue to attract young people.

Bob Westcott spoke about visiting a Ford Motor Company where workers dress casually but in a clean, pleasant environment very different from earlier days.

Juan then thanked Mr. Norris for his presentation.

**VI. Other Business**

Bob Westcott then reported that there is a budget sheet in the meeting packet and that he has met with Tracy this past week. He said that he has wanted to prepare graphs etc. but he said tracking and the accounting methods are difficult to put into graphs. He said that we are fortunate that we have Tracy as Fiscal Manager who understands the system and does an excellent job. He said he is looking forward to presenting a financial report at the Annual Meeting.

Chairman Yopez said that he wants to be respectful of people's time and for the next meeting would like to keep items to a set period of time.

**VII. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Rosalin Acosta made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ron Contrado seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell,*

Recorder