



Bay Area Workforce Development Board

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BAY AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

October 18, 2007

Present: Christine Jensema (Vice Chair), Larry Bergner, Louise Blankenheim, John Bloor, Marcia Christiansen, Amy Du Bois, Ben Grigg, Larry Harkness, John Haugh, Penny Helmle, Jill Hennessey, Holly Hoppe, Ed Kelley, Tony Marcelle, Don McAdams, Jesus Panalez, Ted Penn, Sam Perlman, Pamela Phillips, Chuck Rohlmeier, Pat Simonar, Casey Stephan, Ken Stubbe, Mike Troyer, Corky West

Absent: Shelly Ghere, Bob Guenther, Sue Hammersmith, Joe Hilke, Anne Hughson, Sue Kromm, Paul Linzmeyer, David Lisle, Terri Luebke, Brian Pelon, Noel Ryder, John Schwantes, Loretta Shellman, Peter Thillman, Alex Zacarias

Ms. Jensema called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM at NWTC Center for Business and Industry. A quorum was present. The Minutes of the September 20 meeting were approved as submitted on a motion by Mr. Bloor, second by Mr. Perlman.

WIA Program Reports and Updates. The Northeast Wisconsin Job Center in Green Bay had held a Job Fair on October 17. Fifty companies had booths and thirty-two more were turned away for lack of space at the Riverside Ballroom. About 1600 job seekers showed up to speak with participating employers. Ms. Hennessey was there at the Manitowoc Company booth and she commented positively on the quality of the job seekers she met with. She suggested that since her company only accepts applications online, that the planners look for a way to provide an Internet hook up in the future. Mr. Harkness also commented on the quality of the applicant pool that showed up at the Georgia-Pacific booth. Mr. Golembeski pointed out that events like this clearly demonstrate that employers are hiring and there are job seekers available, but there is a significant mismatch between the skills the job seekers possess and the skill sets that the employers are seeking. In all, the event seemed very successful.

Layoffs of state DWD employees occurred on October 13, and the supervisor position in Marinette Job Center (who also served Shawano) was eliminated. Ms. Schaible, who has contributed much to the work of our

board, has relocated to the Madison area and taken a position with the state Bureau of Child Support. Members expressed well wishes to her. In other job centers, the retirement or, in one case the death, of a DWD employee results in that position not being filled. This creates additional stress as the partner agencies take on more responsibilities to keep service levels stable. In the fifteen year history of our job centers, there has usually been a special grant or a rich partner to support the job centers. At the present time neither is available so WIA is increasingly relied on to support basic job center functions. This becomes very apparent when we see the significant drop in the number of WIA participants enrolled in training programs.

Mr. Golembeski had created a simple diagram to picture the scope of our workforce development efforts. The need for skilled workers due to retirements and business expansion is clearly the focus of our efforts. With the labor pool shrinking, the K-12 pipeline becomes more important than ever, and the need for every student to have some postsecondary training is becoming essential. Incumbent worker training is a demand that every business is very aware of, but there is little public policy or resources to address that need. The available labor pool is legitimately described by our recent recruitment experience in Marinette in which, out of fifty applicants, four were ready for skilled employment, twenty were prepared for training, and twenty-six were deemed not worth considering for anything but unskilled, low wage jobs. Our strategies need to address these workforce realities. Members found this depiction of the situation in the Bay Area useful for debate about the allocation of resources.

Members reviewed the WIA program performance in PY 2006 (July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007). Final performance numbers were available and the Bay Area WDB met or exceeded all performance standards. There was some concern about several areas, especially the WIA Adult Entered Employment Rate which was lower than recent past performance. Members reviewed a second chart which divided performance by each job center. Staff is asking for information and corrective action plans from each of the job centers that did not meet contracted performance numbers. The Performance Review Committee met and reviewed the information as well. They will follow up on the job center responses.

Staff reported that they are asking the state for additional Special Response funds for the nursing program in the Marinette area. That program services workers displaced from Emerson Electric and Bay Medical. No action by the board is needed at this time.

Mr. Golembeski reported that the Northwoods 3 Summit was a successful event with just over 100 attendees. This third annual conference serves to focus on issues that are unique to the northern counties in the Bay Area as well as to keep them connected to various NEW North initiatives. This year northern business leaders and educators got together for a day long discussion about aligning their efforts in those counties. WDB member

Terri Luebke's presentation on generational differences was very popular. Small group discussions generated a number of ideas that will be pursued as the Northwoods Planning Committee looks ahead. Feedback was very positive from the day.

Ms. Franz informed members that the Manufacturers Alliance has been focused on marketing itself to potential members and on creating connections with the K-12 schools. To the latter end, a laminated bookmark with information about the Alliance has been created and distributed to area schools. Plans are in the works to create a "cutting edge" DVD aimed at young people that will highlight the exciting aspects of manufacturing in the NEW North.

The lack of a state budget has created some concerns about the two programs in which we collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Our Adult program, Windows to Work, which serves individuals from the Oshkosh prison who are returning to our area is a 50/50 funding partnership with DOC that has been going on for several years now. With no state budget, we have not had a commitment from DOC for this program year yet. Staff is reasonably certain that Windows to Work will be funded when the political issue is resolved. Our youth offender program, Transitions, however, is a bigger concern. Last year was the first year of this program and Bay Area WDB funded it entirely. This year we had requested the same 50/50 partnership from DOC, but no commitment has been forthcoming. Staff will be looking at unobligated funds and at the possibility of renegotiating other contracts to see if funds can be identified to keep Transitions going if DOC cannot contribute to it. Staff raised these issues in the event that the WDB will have to make a decision on one or both programs at the November meeting.

Training Programs. Members received information in their packets about WIA training in the Bay Area. One handout described the DWD policy requiring that 35% of our WIA funding be used for "high wage/high demand" training. Staff described several consequences that have followed from this policy:

- 1. Training in health care professions remains a significant focus for WIA training;**
- 2. Training for employment in advanced manufacturing jobs is shifting toward shorter term training models based on employer input;**
- 3. Rural areas are struggling to utilize opportunities with WIA training because of a lack of high wage/high demand jobs;**
- 4. There is a renewed focus on how best to prepare unskilled individuals, who are not ready to take advantage of training opportunities, for family-supporting employment.**

Staff also pointed out that since DWD does not apply the 35% policy to the Trade Act program that it operates to serve dislocated workers, cooperation between WIA Dislocated Worker and the Trade Act program has suffered.

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Members reviewed a list of the “high wage/high demand” occupations in the Bay Area and also a listing of the training active WIA training vouchers for this program year. Looking at the individuals enrolled in our WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker training programs, it is obvious that the number of people in training has dropped significantly from past years. In the Adult program, there is reason to believe that many people want training in areas other than the demand areas, so they are no longer being served. In WIA Dislocated Worker, there are more enrollees than indicated because many individuals who began in WIA training have since gone over to Trade Act funding. Since Trade Act certification often takes time, WIA provides the first semester or two of funding and then Trade Act takes over. Nevertheless, we are training significantly fewer individuals than we have in the recent past because of the focus on high wage/high demand training but also because more WIA funds are needed to support the basic job center functions at the core and intensive service levels. Staff pointed out that for the 15 years in which we have had job centers, there has either been a special grant to support job centers or one of the partner programs has had significant resources to provide that support, just as W-2 did in the late 1990s and WIA did during the 2002-05 economic recession. Currently there is no ready resource to support the job center infrastructure, and there is no federal or state funding stream for that purpose either. WIA has stepped in at the sacrifice of direct training programs. Recent layoffs of DWD Job Service staff, which included the elimination of the Supervisor position in Marinette, have brought an even more difficult situation. The Bay Area WDB will have to continue to set clear priorities for the use of WIA funding. This will mean difficult choices.

Members also reviewed the draft “Work Readiness” project plan that staff hopes to pilot in 2008. This project will work with a group of individuals who fall into the “unselected” group—job seekers that employers are not interested in even with technical skills training because they seem to lack basic employment understanding and behaviors. The project is divided into five steps and requires significant systemic change throughout. Job seekers would be slotted into one of four in-demand occupational areas from the beginning, and receive intensive work readiness training. Staff is currently looking at a 90-hour training curriculum developed by a workforce board in Florida which has been successfully implemented in several communities. Members asked to receive a copy of that “Work Certified” plan. Staff will be meeting with partner agencies in the next few weeks to see what is already being done in the area and to get buy-in into a pilot project. Step 3 would involve integrating technical training, basic education, and vocational English together as needed in one of the four occupational areas. Lastly, services would not end with job placement, but a new partnership with employers will include an extended mentoring relationship to assist the trainee into higher levels of employment (i.e., “up the career ladder”). There was solid support for continuing to work toward a pilot project. Several companies, including some represented on the board, may be interested in working on this.

School to Work Issues. Referring back to the skilled workforce diagram, Mr. Golembeski belabored the point that with the baby boomers moving out of the workforce, the education pipeline is more important than ever. All of our K-12 students have to be better connected to the job opportunities in NE Wisconsin and they all need to be prepared for some kind of postsecondary training. WISCareers, a system developed by the University of Wisconsin, is a very promising vehicle for connecting students, job seekers, and companies. With the expertise of Nancy Schopf and Brian Johnson from the Green Bay Chamber, members got a short demonstration on how job seekers can take a variety of career assessment tests and get information about the careers that are appropriate for them. WISCareers provides a password secured “locker” for storing career information and helps the job seeker develop a resume as well. Even though WISCareers is focused on students, our job centers use WISCareers extensively with adults and find it very useful. A special grant allows job centers to have access. Schools have to pay a fee for using it, and about half of the Bay Area schools do so. Recently WISCareers added a Spanish language version, something that was noticeably lacking in the past. Mr. Golembeski indicated that the Bay Area WDB will be returning to WISCareers as we further discuss the connection between education and work.

What’s Going on in Washington. Members receive regular updates from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) about federal funding and the politics of workforce development. Recently both area congressional representatives, Tom Petri and Steve Kagen, signed the “Dear Colleague” letter being circulated in the House of Representatives asking for removal of the \$335 million WIA rescission in the House budget bill for Labor, Education and Human Services. There are still many battles ahead in the PY2008 federal budget that was supposed to take effect on October 1, with the President threatening to veto any spending bill that exceeds his recommendation. That recommendation included significant cuts to almost all domestic programs including WIA.

Another development in Washington is that introduction of a WIA reauthorization bill in the House. Members received an issue paper on WIA reauthorization in their packets. When the Workforce Investment Act was passed in 1998, it was originally given a five year life and was supposed to be reauthorized in 2003. The political will and/or consensus to do that has not emerged, so WIA has continued to operate under the 1998 economic vision that created it. Obviously, economic conditions and realities have changed much in the past decade, and there are many examples of policy being misaligned with the country’s workforce development needs. The issue paper identified some of these areas. In addition, the reauthorization process would require a much needed national debate on the priority of workforce development and how best to focus resources. Members discussed those issues and agreed that we should bring staff from our federal representatives’ offices in to a board meeting for a discussion on WIA reauthorization. Staff is working to set that up.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM. The next
The next Bay Area WDB meeting will be November 15, 2007.**

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