



Bay Area Workforce Development Board

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LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS of the Bay Workforce Development Area

MEETING MINUTES

November 29, 2007

Present: Don Markwardt, Jim Gilligan, Arlyn Tober, Jim Barlow, Cheryl Wruk, Bruce Osterberg, Charlie Most
Absent: Elmer Ragen, Tony Waupochnik, Tom Hinz
Others: Bambi Yingst (Congressman Steve Kagen)

Mr. Markwardt called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM at the Northeast Wisconsin Job Center. A quorum was present. The Minutes of the September 6 meeting were adopted as submitted on a motion by Mr. Most, second by Mr. Barlow.

Mr. Golembeski led discussion about workforce issues, beginning with a diagram he had created to map out where focus needed to be to ensure a skilled workforce in the Bay Area. There are three areas of focus: 1) the K-12 school pipeline, 2) incumbent worker training, and 3) the pool of available workers. There was discussion around each of these areas. Regarding K-12, there has to be a renewed emphasis on preparing all K-12 students for some level of postsecondary training and connecting them more closely to jobs in the regional economy. Incumbent worker training is not an issue that has been on the public agenda, but the business sector is acutely aware of the need for updating the skills of the current workforce. This had been the area we focused on when the Bay Area WDB received the \$1.2 million federal Earmark grant in 2002-04, and it is an important reason why we need to push for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act by the US Congress, a task that is now five years overdue. Lastly, the current job seeker pool consists predominantly of individuals who do not possess the “life/work skills” much less the technical skills that employers require. The Bay Area WDB has developed a “Work Readiness Plan” that we hope to pilot in 2008 to address the deficiencies of this segment of the available workforce. Members agreed that Mr. Golembeski’s diagram was useful to help frame the current workforce issues.

Members reviewed a financial report for WIA during the first quarter of the program year. The federal budget process remains deadlocked at this time. Congress had sent President Bush a budget for the Department of Labor

that contained a \$235 million rescission of current year WIA funding but also restored \$10 billion in funding for domestic programs that Mr. Bush had cut in his proposed budget. The President vetoed that spending bill and Congress was not able to override the veto. Mr. Golembeski anticipates continued cuts in WIA funding for the next year as this process unfolds. He regretted the message such cuts send to the hard working people in our One-Stop system, especially knowing how hard everyone worked to meet the challenges of retraining so many of our rank and file workers during the economic recession 2002-05. The One-Stop system in NE Wisconsin rose to meet that challenge and it performed admirably. Now it seems as if the political powers in Washington have no regard for what we accomplished. In October the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development laid off 33 employees statewide, most of them from Job Service, due to budget cuts. Two key people were lost in the Bay Area as Job Service downsized. The Bay Area WDB is planning to experience further funding cuts in 2008.

Next, the LEO members reviewed the proposed Work Readiness project that the WDB hopes to pilot in 2008. This project is based on the experience that a significant percentage of our job seekers in NE Wisconsin are not prepared for the high demand/high wage jobs that are available. Not only do they lack the technical training, but they do not possess the life/work skills necessary to even be considered for being hired. This project would utilize the "Work Certified" curriculum developed by a workforce board in Florida that has proven successful in several parts of the country. Trainees would receive 90 hours of training in life/work skills, followed by short term technical training in a high demand area and connected to a specific employer or group of employers. Services would continue after initial employment through an employer-sponsored mentor program so that trainees would receive additional training and assistance as they moved up a career ladder. In the future, WIA training will focus less on one and two year programs, and consist more of short term training focused on specific employer needs.

With fewer staff and resources to operate the One-Stop system in NE Wisconsin, the Virtual Job Center project has become a more vital part of future planning, and members received an update on that project. Right now, four of the eleven workforce boards in the state are involved with the Virtual Job Center which is a website that brings together a variety of information on employment and training services for job seekers and employers. Currently it consists of hyperlinks to partner sites as well as links to written information on topics such as resume writing and interviewing. Soon it will include instructional videos on pertinent topics as well. In the Bay Area, we received a \$25,000 grant from Georgia-Pacific and a \$10,000 grant from AT&T which will be used to enhance the website with the ability to connect job seekers with case managers through a video link. We also hope to broadcast job clubs and other workshops live over the Internet in the near future. This should benefit our rural areas because it will make the services in our large job centers available on the Internet. Staff also hopes to have self-paced instruction on basic skills and computer

training available on the website as well. The goal is to make the website as much like visiting a physical job center as possible.

Mr. Golembeski provided a summary of the Northwoods 3 Summit roundtable discussion results. The Northwoods Summits have been an attempt to keep our northern counties involved in NEW North projects as well as to address the unique challenges of economic/workforce development in those counties. A little more than 100 people attended the Summit this year and the focus was on better alignment of education with business needs. The roundtable results gave the planning team some key things to focus on even though there is no dedicated staff for these projects. Still, the series has been successful in bringing people together, including partners from the Michigan side of the border, and energizing them to work together more effectively for economic prosperity in the northern counties. Northwoods 4 is being planned for October 2008.

There was also an issue paper on WIA reauthorization that Mr. Golembeski had put together which had resonated with the WDB members. WIA was authorized for five years beginning in 1998. WIA Reauthorization has not been a political priority over the years and it is now five years overdue. This means that the country has not had the kind of discussion that it needs to have around workforce development issues during that time. The issues that were important in 1998 are not the same ones that need to be addressed in 2008. The issue paper outlined these pressing issues. The Bay Area WDB will be speaking with our federal representatives at the January meeting to promote the reauthorization of WIA.

Mr. Markwardt suggested that we invite representatives of the economic development offices to the next LEO meeting for additional discussion. That meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, 2008 at NWTC. The meeting adjourned at 2:35.