

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Communication, Advocacy and Oversight Committee

May 14, 2004
Minutes

WIB Members Present

Tom Macy, Chair
Greg Lambert, Vice Chair
Kathy Engesser
Gary Christensen
Paul Nelson
Teresa Tschida
William Lowe
Willie Nesbit
Jackie Mlynarczyk
Patricia Brady

Members Absent

Phil Saari EA
Hyon Kim

Staff/Guests Present

Kitty Gogins, WIB CEO
Kate Bates, WIB Staff
Terry Zurn, Workforce
Solutions
Jim Zentner, DEED

Call to Order

Tom Macy, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.

Approve Minutes

Motion made by Kathy Engesser with second by Gary Christensen to approve the minutes of March 12 as written.

Motion passed

Member Introductions

No new members were present so introductions were not necessary.

Vote on Chair and Vice Chair

Discussion on this topic focused on the desirable category of representation for the chair and vice-chair positions. Some wanted a representative from the public and private sector, while others thought having two private representatives would be beneficial.

Motion made by Willie Nesbit with second by Kathy Engesser to approve Greg Lambert as chair and Teresa Tschida as vice-chair of the CAO committee.

Motion carried

Discuss and Approve Local Plan

The local plan updates are due for the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and State Dislocated Worker programs by July 1st. After the CAO Committee recommends approval, this plan will go to the WIB Executive Committee yet in May, to the full WIB at the beginning of June, and to the County Board in the middle of June. Terry Zurn and Jim Zentner, both from Workforce Solutions, were present to go through the changes and answer any questions.

Two of the major changes in the plan from last year were to include WIB strategic priorities and to layout the change in funding for the resource room in North Saint Paul. Workforce Solutions was complimented on their integration of WIB priorities. For future guidance, the Oversight Ad Hoc group is going to discuss the challenge of where it is makes sense to implement WIB goals into programs that often deal with individuals with few skills.

In part of the plan, the State indicated that a regional profile is due by February 2005. With the work that the WIB has done on market driven priorities, much of this work is complete. There are just a few sections that will require further study such as translation to specific job skills.

Other issues discussed included:

- Continual improvement of program staff
- The new data collection system that is expected in the WorkForce Centers in the fall
- The desire to create a stronger link between adult basic education and the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs
- The need for schools to take a more aggressive role in math and science education
- The need to still get passage of the DEED legislation giving local areas more control. This legislation has passed the house and the necessary Senate Committees, but needs to be brought to a vote in the full Senate before adjournment. Committee members (particularly business members) were asked to call Senator Ellen Anderson, who cosponsored the DEED bill, and urge her to bring this bill to the floor before the close of the legislative session this weekend.

The CAO committee recommends approval of the local plan as written.

Discuss Program Goals

At the last full WIB meeting, there was some discussion around the goals set for state workforce programs. It seemed to many in the private sector that the goals were being set too low, and therefore, not challenging the system to constantly improve. This issue was discussed at the last Oversight meeting, and rationale for setting goals at the current level was identified. The program goals are dictated from the federal level, to the state level, to the local level. Achieving goals leads to incentive funds for the county and state, and setting these goals at a higher level than suggested would jeopardize incentive funds going to the county and state. In order to ensure constant improvement in these programs, it was suggested that the goals achieved at the end of the program year are compared with previous years to give WIB members perspective. WIB staff will compose a paragraph to include with the local plan executive summary on the consent agenda that describes the new reporting process and reasons behind it.

Update from Hmong Refugees Ad hoc

An ad hoc group met to discuss the Hmong immigration and possible WIB action. The three resulting actions coming out of the meeting were advocating for legislative action that would assist the refugees in their transition, strengthening services for English Language Learners (ELL) and assisting in housing services. Due to no House bill corresponding to the Senate proposal to exempt Hmong refugees from the MFIP Diversionary Work Program, this issue will definitely not be resolved this legislative session. The WIB needs to continue the work on this issue for the next session. The issue of housing is out of the WIB's direct scope, and ad hoc members were referred to WIB member Allen Hester of the Saint Paul Public Housing Agency for further focus. The biggest area the WIB can work to impact is ELL. Over 60% are the refugees expected are children with many coming without any formal education. The St. Paul Public Schools plans to have Transitional Centers that will allow integration to take place over 1-2 years, however there are capacity concerns and NO EXTRA funding. The capacity of the Adult ELL services is also of concern.

The following next steps were agreed to:

- There needs to be stronger communication and system linkage between the workforce system and ELL. Workforce Solutions is committed to this as reflected in the local plan.
- The WIB needs to advocate for change of the MFIP law to allow the County to decide on a case-by-case basis whether a new refugee should be exempted from the Diversionary Work Program. Blanket exemption is not considered appropriate since some refugees are coming with skills that make them employable. The WIB needs to coordinate with the County. It was recommended that the Marketing and Advocacy Ad Hoc begin advocating this summer to get it built into Governor Pawlenty's agenda.
- We need to work with businesses to hire foreign born generally and the new immigrants specifically. Willie Nesbit indicated we have a nationally recognized functional work program. The Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) has defined that the state's \$750 K incentive funds earned by meeting state goals for the workforce centers, adult basic education and vocational programs will be spent on existing ELL programs that are employer directed. WIB Staff will keep the group posted on developments as the GWDC plan gets finalized.
- The WIB needs to continue action on ELL generally, as planned by the ELL Ad Hoc Committee (under Workforce Committee, but Willie and Kitty are members)

Update on Recruitment

All candidates up for appointment through the City and County have been appointed. The board now has 49 members. The one vacancy is because Kevin Locke, who was representing Economic Development for Suburban Ramsey County, has accepted a position outside of the county. This opening was sent out to various Economic Development agencies in the area to attract applicants.

The biggest challenge currently for the recruitment committee is the reappointment of members through the City. Earlier this winter, the City Council expressed that they only want to appoint those living and working in the City of Saint Paul. Through education and lobbying, they have now agreed to broaden their scope of appointment; however there is concern that not all members up for reappointment will be reappointed. In the letter to the City requesting reappointment, WIB staff will communicate the WIB's rationale for wanting member reappointment and include a paragraph (developed with member input) outlining their individual commitment and contributions to the City and WIB.

Other

Terry Zurn presented the program outcomes for the Dislocated Worker and WIA Adult programs. The charts included placement rate, health benefits at placement, education level pre-enrollment, support services used, wage change, and racial and zip code breakouts for the participants. Of 452 served in the state Dislocated Worker program during the six-month period 7/1/03-12/31/03, 102 people exited, with 88 people getting jobs. 226 people were served in the Federal Dislocated Worker program between 10/1/02 and 9/30/03, with 67 people exiting and 62 getting a job during this one-year period. Of 226 served in the WIA adult program from 10/1/02-9/30/03, 68 people exited, with 59 getting jobs during this year period. With the tight labor market, program participants are taking more training and staying active in the program from 40-60 weeks.

Counselors reported the following trends:

- Participants found jobs in transportation, financial services, sales, administrative support, engineering, IT, construction, warehouse, production machinist, bank customer service, LPN and graphic arts
- Participants needed training in basic computer software, Six Sigma, truck driving and repair, HR and Project Management certification, APICS certification, medical billing, nursing and interpreting
- Participants utilized support services for mortgage/rent payments, health and auto insurance, car repairs, financial and personal counseling, child care, transportation, utilities and work clothes
- Dislocated workers are coming in to the program close to when their UI is exhausted
- Health benefits are difficult to obtain/maintain for Dislocated Workers
- Entry level positions are requiring higher skill levels

Adjourn

Motion made by Kathy Engesser with second by Patricia Brady to adjourn the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

Motion Passed

Next Meeting- July- date to be determined, Midway WorkForce Center