

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Market-Driven Workforce System Committee

March 10, 2005
Minutes

Members Present

Craig Anderson
John Evans
Kirk Hayes
Scott LeMire
Mary McKee
Ginny Sullivan
Joe Richburg
William Yang

Members Absent

Phil Hanson
Nancy Hendrickson
Lorrie Louder
Jerry McElroy EA
John Mohr
Bob Veilleux
Tené Wells

Staff/Guests Present

Kitty Gogins, WIB CEO
Kate Bates, WIB Staff
Janet Guthrie, Workforce Solutions
Terry Zurn, Workforce Solutions
Tom Cytron-Hysom, Saint Paul
Community Literacy Consortium

Call to Order

Ginny Sullivan, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

Approve Minutes

Motion made by Craig Anderson with second by Kirk Hayes to approve the minutes of January 13 as written.

Motion carried.

Discuss Employment Services for Hmong Immigrants

Three guests came to the meeting to discuss employment services for our new Hmong immigrants. They were William Yang, Hmong American Partnership (HAP); Janet Guthrie, Workforce Solutions MN Family Investment Program (MFIP); and Tom Cytron-Hysom, Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium (SPCLC). Janet Guthrie represented Ramsey County MFIP, who contracts with HAP and SPCLC for services. Listed below are demographics of the immigrants, their needs, and the services available to them.

Who they are:

Minnesota will receive 5,000 refugees from Thailand in total, with 3,336 already here in the state and 1,905 in Saint Paul alone. The majority of those coming are school age (25% ages 0-5; 37% ages 6-17; 34% ages 18-65). The 18-65 year olds will need employment and language services- many of them are illiterate in their own language and have never worked before. Their skills are that they are young, can survive on their own and are motivated.

Services available:

Case workers at HAP develop plans with the clients, focusing on an end goal (generally employment). The client checks in with the case worker daily until the goal is accomplished. Job placement specialists create relationships with employers who hire Hmong immigrants- they are currently connected with 200 different employers. Many of these jobs do not require language skills- and are in the service, light manufacturing and printing industries. There are about 15 providers of English Language Learner services in Saint Paul, though there is a waiting list of 430 people who need English classes.

Needs:

Transportation, child care, mental health (many depressed), soft skills training, short term specific job training, literacy services, job coaching (i.e. how to do job interview, dress for work, behave at work, etc.), help negotiating MFIP system, safety training (how to live in a city), assistance living in different climate, financial help, and drivers licenses.

Agree on Next Steps from Hmong Immigrant Discussion

There was further discussion from the group on specific needs of the community. There was concern over the long waiting list for language classes- the longer people are on the waiting lists, the more discouraged and depressed they become. Most students stay in the class for a year, with a minimum stay of six months, making

the waiting period 6-12 months. Lack of funding is the biggest problem in providing more classes- the classes are held for 20 hours/week and require a ¾ time teacher- this costs about \$40,000/year. The group discussed ideas for attracting more funding to this issue. It was suggested that the Chamber of Commerce be contacted about their members' willingness to hire the refugees. Funds are more easily obtained when the end result of training is employment. William Yang, Ellen Watters, Mary McKee, Craig Anderson and Tom Cytron-Hysom will meet to discuss this possibility. It was also suggested that Matt Kramer from the Department of Employment and Economic Development be approached about reallocating funds to allow for more language services. Lastly, there is \$1 million over the next two years in the Governor's budget for training. Tom Cytron-Hysom will draft a letter advocating for these funds and will send it to WIB staff, who will then distribute it to the full WIB for sending to legislators. Next steps are: advocate federally for increased funds; advocate within the state for increased funds; identify employers potentially hiring Hmong refugees and work on getting training grants for the employers; and talk to Matt Kramer about the possibility of shifting money to help with this issue.

Discuss Status and Action Needed WIA Incentive Grant

There have not been as many employers applying for the WIA incentive grant funds as original interest would have suggested. Members expressed that there is a fear of something that is "free," that it would cause more work than it is worth down the line. Also, many of the smaller organizations who need the services do not have enough staff to develop a plan. Providers present were asked to market the funds to employers in their communities in attempts to develop more interest.

Discuss Proposed Future Agendas

The committee discussed possibly bringing in a guest speaker on services available to small businesses.

Update on Ford Plant

There was a meeting scheduled between the Ford Plant and the group at the City of Saint Paul that is working on this issue, but it was canceled. Craig Anderson will let us know when there is an update.

Adjourn

Motion made by Kirk Hayes with second by Joe Richburg to adjourn the meeting at 2:46p.m.

Motion carried

Next Meeting- May 12, 1:00-2:30, Conley Conference Room, Midway Hospital