

**GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE BOARD – RHODE ISLAND
YOUTH STRATEGIES TASK TEAM**

**RI Department of Labor and Training
December 9, 2005**

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chairman B. Melton, A. Orefice, M. Trueb, S. Moylan, R. Paniccia

Members Absent: J. Warner

Staff Present: M. Koback, L. Del Rossi, D. Miller, S. Petrarca

Meeting Agenda and Goals

Chair B. Melton called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. and reviewed the agenda, stating today's meeting would focus on youth summer employment and other opportunities such as apprenticeships and the creation of a Youth Development Office. He noted that the other agenda items included the organization of the work to be accomplished which might warrant discussions regarding whether the committee should continue to meet as a whole or form subcommittees around various youth initiatives. Chairman Melton added that D. Miller would also present a summer youth program outline (in draft form) for members to review as a basis for discussing options to move forward.

B. Melton then asked everyone to review the task team's goal statement. There was general consensus to include the words "employment opportunities" in the statement.

A. Orefice stated that the Governor was quite focused on supporting academic preparation for youth, but that the state lacked quality work experience opportunities for youth, and that a summer program and expanded apprenticeship program could help fill this gap.

Finalize Key Areas of Focus

The task team members then discussed the value of a Youth Development Office and questioned the existing capacity to house such an office. M. Koback gave a brief history of the School-To-Career Office structure formerly housed at the Dept. of Labor and Training (DLT) and some of the activities that took place before the federal funds expired in June 2004. A. Orefice added that she felt that it would make sense to have a centralized Youth Development Office that would include external programs, apprenticeships and WIA youth programs. She added that existing staff that operate youth programs could eventually be centralized in such an office.

M. Koback noted that the WIA focus was so narrow that eligibility requirements drove potential partners away. He added that the new agenda should expand beyond WIA funded programs since federally funded programs tend to have funding restrictions that drive the eligibility guidelines for participating youth.

M. Koback noted that the \$650,000 approved in the GWBRI budget was intended to be program (street) money and may not be available for internal overhead. He added he felt that options could be explored to use Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding to offset costs.

Chairman Melton asked if the members approved of the Youth Development Office concept as outlined by A. Orefice. Approval was unanimous. Chairman Melton asked that she prepare a detailed concept paper including staff and funding requirements and present it to the January Task Team Meeting for the members to consider. A. Orefice agreed to develop a paper on the design of a Youth Development Office.

The members went on to discuss RI DLT Apprenticeship Programs. The discussion included the following points:

- The current apprenticeship program process needs to be reformed before additional apprenticeship opportunities are developed.
- Some apprenticeship models include higher educational degrees allowing for the inclusion of a broader range of career areas.
- A big issue is teen safety in the workplace. Young workers need safety training and employers need to be educated on safety as it relates to young workers.
- There are disconnects with the requirements of some high school senior projects and work study programs and industry safety requirements and restrictions.
- Although the Department has a lot of creative talent, there are plans to consolidate all marketing, public relations and outreach functions and hire a staff person within the next 6-8 weeks to help raise the profile of all DLT functions.

Youth Employment Opportunities

Discussion then took place on previous and current youth programs run by or in conjunction with DLT. Chairman Melton asked for an overview. D. Miller referred to a program synopsis that was included in the meeting packet.

Youth Opportunities Demonstration Project

S. Petrarca provided an overview of the Youth Opportunities Demonstration Project based on the "Communities That Care" model. She noted that it was successful because of the strong connections with community-based organizations.

I Can Learn

L. DelRossi provided an overview of the new I Can Learn program at Central Falls High School that focuses on academic preparation and work experience. She explained that I Can Learn is a national model developed by a company that wrote the curriculum for this year-long tech-based pre-algebra program, designed to improve students' math skills. She added that the participating students will be required to find summer employment.

Additional Discussion

Discussion took place on how programs can partner with the business community. Members also discussed the work of the Rhode Island PK-16 Council regarding curriculum and their concern that high schools are not aware of many colleges' academic requirements for students.

S. Petrarca pointed out that the Rhode Island Children's Cabinet has discussed the difficulty of tracking youth throughout existing programs.

L. DelRossi mentioned that currently, the Youth Center in the Providence netWORKri was a type of One-Stop for youth. She added that although it was still in the developmental stages the model could eventually be duplicated in other One-Stop Centers.

A. Orefice stated that a Youth Development Office could be a place where all stakeholders could meet to discuss and formulate policy and centralize program information. B. Melton discussed the potential of having youth screened through the Providence Youth Center for the planned summer program. Members discussed the feasibility of a pre-employment training component that could be provided through the netWORKri offices to teach workplace success skills. M. Koback stated that DLT currently has the capacity to explore the possibility of a summer jobs fair through netWORKri.

Summer Youth Program Outline

Yes 2 Work

D. Miller introduced the Summer Youth Jobs program outline, with the suggested title of "Yes-2-Work". She noted that the model was based on successful programs in other states. She explained that the model was based on the commitment and involvement of the private sector, and that it was structured much like the Lifespan Summer Jobs program. She added that the model relied on a strong political champion to recruit large private sector corporations as supporters, and that in Rhode Island; Governor Carcieri would be the ideal champion. She explained that all participating companies would interview candidates, hire and pay youth wages, and provide pre-employment and ongoing training for the employed youth.

Discussion followed on the design of the program and the need for a February/March implementation phase if a program were to operate in the upcoming summer. Chairman Melton asked the members to review the outline before the next meeting so that the program design could be discussed in-depth.

Organization of the Work

Chairman Melton suggested that the Task Team would focus on defining the program components for a summer youth employment program and the creation of a Youth Development Office within DLT.

He added that A. Orefice would be preparing a Youth Development Office concept plan for the team to review at the next meeting.

Key Next Steps

Chairman Melton stated that he would contact members regarding dates for the next two team meetings. He asked if A. Orefice would arrange for a regional USDOL representative from the Office of Apprenticeship and Training to present information on various apprenticeship models. A. Orefice suggested that be scheduled for the March meeting, as there was a full agenda for the February meeting. The team agreed.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:07 AM at which time a video presentation on the Lifespan Summer Employment Program was made available for members to view.

Respectfully,

Lori Del Rossi