

WORKFORCE CABINET MEETING MINUTES

May 2, 2007

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI

MEMBERS

(*Denotes absence)

Jane Hayward *
Saul Kaplan*
Gary Alexander
Patricia Martinez
Peter McWalters

Adelita Orefice
Corinne Calise-Russo*
A.T. Wall
Jack Warner
Ellen Nelson*

Guests: David Cedrone, Lisa D'Agostino, Christine Grieco, Lois Hayes, Michael Koback, John O'Hare, Laura Hart, Dottie Miller, Lori Norris, Kathleen Partington, Sharon Petrarca, Sandra Powell, Steven Schaefer, Jean Severance, Roy Singer, David Tremblay, Dr. Johan Uvin

Director Orefice welcomed the Cabinet Members and introduced Steven Schaefer, the Chief of Operations and Development for the Governor's Workforce Board RI and Lori Norris the new Chief of Employment and Training Programs for Youth Services at the Department.

The members of the audience introduced themselves.

A.T. Wall thanked the Department of Labor and Training for assisting him on various issues.

PROJECT UPDATES

Work Readiness Performance Standards

Sandra Powell opened a discussion regarding the Work Readiness Performance Standards, aligning standards for graduation from high school and adult education programs with readiness for college and work. USDOL has developed a competency model, and they have provided some technical assistance to Rhode Island to develop a model specific to the needs of our local economy. There was discussion regarding the relevance of the model as it relates to Rhode Island. David Cedrone indicated that Grade Span Expectations (GSE's) are exceeding what has been described as basic workforce competencies. He indicated that industry groups should be able to look at the basic level of competencies and agree that this is what is needed.

Director Orefice expressed concern over the disconnect, indicating this is not helpful for either the workforce or educational systems. We do not want to convey that "work ready" is something less than what is required for a high school diploma.

Commissioner McWalters indicated that he was neither discouraged nor surprised as the standards we are promulgating are only being achieved by 30% of children... how we set rigorous and high quality for all children or do we only do it for some. Six or seven states have backed off the standards.

Johan Uvin indicated that one of the issues with the model is that it is too hierarchal. We need to acknowledge that different definitions exist, and as we move along a continuum, the skills required become increasingly more sophisticated.

Director Orefice suggested that the Competency Model be tested with one of the Industry Partnerships, perhaps Health Care, and this should be done with the appropriate Adult Education Staff.

RI Comprehensive Workforce Plan

Mike Koback indicated there will be a retreat on June 7th and 8th at Save the Bay including a cross section of agencies. As discussed at a previous Cabinet meeting, a request was made that the agency staff assigned to assist in writing the plan be policy oriented and have the authority to speak on behalf of their Director. Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) will be creating a survey and feedback process using an interactive tool such as "Zoomerang". This process will provide a framework and give direction to the strategic planning process from this point on. A state of the workforce report will be composed.

A draft plan should be available for September 2007. The GWB and the United Way are working to bring in a facilitator to develop an environmental scan of existing workforce programs.

Mike Koback further indicated the Governor's Workforce Board's annual meeting will be held on June 21st at the Crowne Plaza. The Governor will be in attendance and the Workforce Cabinet members will be receiving an invitation.

Consolidated RFP for Adult Education

Johan Uvin indicated that this is a new way of doing business and he was very pleased with the applicant pool which was diverse including Industry Partnerships and employers. There were 69 letters of intent and 47 proposals. The review process includes four teams with members from partner agencies.

There was discussion regarding the lack of an appeal process and whether or not it would be appropriate for the Workforce Cabinet to have a role in such a process. Director Orefice suggested DLT's Legal Counsel, Gail Theriault and the Legal Counsel from Perter McWalter's Office develop an appeal process.

Web Enabled Distance Learning

Johan Uvin indicated that the Office of Adult Basic Education has been interested in providing web based distance learning because access to basic skills development for a target population of 177,000 is very limited. It was suggested that three to five firms be identified and pursue a Request for Information (RFI) to build a public/private partnership to expand the accessibility of basic skill development opportunities. The RFI could include the entire workforce population.

Director Orefice suggested a presentation for the next Workforce Cabinet Meeting, and further stated, we should be creative about funding this initiative, perhaps consider company contributions.

Newport Interagency Project Update

The name has been changed to the Newport Skills Alliance, and includes state agencies, industries and employers with the purpose to create pathways to employment. A meeting has been scheduled for mid-June with 12-15 local employers to explain the initiative and announce the start of the pilot in late fall.

Foster Care Transition

Patricia Martinez indicated that 18-21 year olds will no longer be serviced by DCYF. Bi-weekly meetings have been scheduled over the last 2 ½ months to review the cases of the youth who will be transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the review is to identify the services they are receiving and the services they will need.

A group of providers have met weekly and a proposal is expected to go out Monday, May 7th. DCYF needs to save 22 million dollars, if these children were transitioned to residential or foster homes; the per diem would be cut by 2/3's. There is a need to approach this in a systematic way, new staff members are becoming familiar with the services offered by DHS and DLT

Director Orefice suggested a case management conference to include staff from a variety of agencies including DCYF, DHS, DLT and Guidance Counselors.

Youth Initiative

This agenda item was tabled until the next meeting when more information would be available.

WIRED

A summary of the two WIRED proposals submitted to USDOL by the Governor were included in today's packets. The proposals are entitled "Rhode to BIOTECH" and "HEALTHCARE: Linking work and Learning." Grant announcements are anticipated for June, 2007.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.