

WIB Open Meeting Reports

January 28, 2010

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Disability Committee - Maureen Craven, Chair

The Committee last met January 6, 2010.

Disability Navigator

Jack Patten reported that on December 1, the WIB received a Notice of Obligation from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development for \$70,125 to fund a Disability Navigator position. After exploratory conversations with Maureen Craven and NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development representatives, the WIB decided that funding could be used most effectively by retaining the previous Disability Navigator. New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development will use the funds to directly fund the expanded position.

[Subsequent conversations with NJ LWD resulted in the WIB/ETS agreeing to directly hire and supervise the Disability Navigator. Retaining the previous DN proved to be logistically impossible.]

The Disability Navigator will not only seek to assist clients with disability-related issues and facilitate the use of assistive technology, but also evaluate Temporary Assistance for Needy Families customers who have been unable to sustain permanent, long-term employment as a result of disabilities or learning impairments. Any newly-identified customers will be referred to the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for additional assessment and job readiness skills.

Census

Jack Patten and Olga Burns met on December 10 with Amy Gilthorpe of the U.S. Census Bureau. Her role is to increase census participation in Morris, Sussex and Warren counties. Olga arranged for Ms. Gilthorpe to visit One-Stop Career Centers to promote census activity.

Census 2010 questionnaires will be mailed to households in mid-March. April 1 is official Census Day; questionnaire responses should represent the household as it exists on April 1. More detailed socio-economic information will be collected annually from a small percentage of the population through the American Community Survey.

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census every ten years. The census will show state population counts and determine representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Jack also pointed out to the group that population is a key component of federal and state funding and it is in the interest of all social service agencies to promote census participation among target groups, including persons with disabilities.

Full information on Census 2010 can be found at: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>

New Business

Rachael DiCioccio announced that Employment Horizons would present a Wine & Food Tasting at Ruth's Chris Steak House in Parsippany on January 29 to benefit their programs and services.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2010.

Literacy Committee - David Hollowell, Chair

The Committee last met January 20, 2010.

Learning Link Report

Nadine Scala reported on the following for Claudia Sandanato:

- The Dover Learning Link is at full enrollment and there is a waiting list for new students. Most of the students are taking English-as-a-Second Language or computer skills training.
- Franklin has 20 new students, most taking computer skills training. Eight recent Learning Link graduates obtained jobs, one received a GED, and two are enrolled in additional training.
- Phillipsburg reports increasing student enrollments with the expectation of full enrollment in the near future.
- Nadine and Phillipsburg Learning Link Instructor Andrea Argilia attended training on communicative strategies for teaching ESL. The training was given by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Newark.
- Fifty-six Morris-Sussex-Warren Learning Links completers achieved employment since July 1, 2009, the largest number in the state.

WIA Title II Report

Miriam Faber reported on the following:

- The LACES management information system for WIA Title II Adult Education programs continues to be problematic. There are persistent discrepancies between reported numbers and report contents.
- Adult Education staff and students remain critical of the BEST test. It is expensive, time-consuming, marginally accurate and cumbersome to administer.

Jack Patten and Miriam Faber agreed to visit the Department of Education to address problems with LACES and BEST.

Learning Link Funding

Jack Patten reported that the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has notified the WIB that the WIB has access to \$53,000 in carry over funds from previous program years that can be used to fund Learning Links through June of 2010.

New Business

Polly Lacey reported on two programs available through the Morristown & Morris Township Library:

- Learning Express provides online tutorials in math, English and writing skills; test practice for academic licensing, certification, career and vocational tests; interactive computer skills courses; job and career help; and resources for Spanish speakers. Library patrons can use the program from the library or their home computer. Those without Morristown & Morris Township Library cards can use the program from the library only.
- The Library offers an online tutoring program in which an individual can get help with homework, preparing for tests, writing resumes, GED prep work, statistic problems, research papers, scholarship essays, biology lab and citizenship tests. To access the program, go to the Library website at www.jfpl.org and click on the "Get Help!" button.

The next Literacy Committee meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2010.

One-Stop Career Center Committee - Marie Betlow, Chair

The Committee last met November 10, 2009.

One Stop Operator Report

Olga Burns reported that the Summer Youth Employment Program was extended through October 31 for 18 program participants. Two of these are in On-the-Job training: one as a weatherization technician at NORWESCAP and one as a maintenance person at the Boonton Housing Authority. The Boonton Housing Authority was so pleased with the participant's performance that they provided him with an apartment as part of his employment agreement.

Olga also reported on a study being conducted by Princeton and Cornell Universities to learn how unemployed workers use their time and what strategies they use to search for jobs. Those invited to be a part of the study will be asked to complete a short online interview each week and will be compensated for participating. Participation in the study is voluntary.

Olga reported the following on Program Year 2009 Learning Link funding:

- Learning Links are funded by the Supplemental Workforce Administrative Fund for Basic Skills using funds redirected from the Unemployment Compensation Fund.
- Supplemental Workforce Administrative Fund for Basic Skills **cannot** be used for any program or purpose other than the Learning Link.
- The WIB **cannot** move Learning Link funding to other programs

- It cost approximately \$200,000 annually to fund the three MSW Learning Links
- The Learning Link Notice of Obligation for Program Year 2009 (Fiscal Year 2010) is for \$99,108.
- The WIB has approximately \$53,000 in carry over funds from previous **years**, not from Program Year 2008 alone.
- Carry over funds are “subject to rescission and **may** be reissued as Program Year 2009 funds.”
- On November 4, The WIB and ETS requested that NJ LWD provide an immediate determination of availability of carry over funds.
- With the projected carry over funds, the Learning Links can operate until mid April 2010.
- The WIB and ETS are seeking additional funds from NJ LWD to operate the Learning Links from April 17 to June 30, 2010.

[In mid-December, NJ LWD confirmed that the WIB has access to the carry over funds noted above and the WIB and ETS have identified additional funding sufficient to operate the Learning Links through June 30, 2010.]

WIA Funding / Legislative Update

Jack Patten reported that Congress will probably not address workforce legislation until early 2010. All indications are that funding will be flat for Program Year 2010, but there may be additional ARRA funding to address current high unemployment rates.

Health Service Site Coordinator Update

Jack noted that the North Jersey Partners WIRED grant has funded 800 e-Learning licenses for use by the Health Service Site Coordinator. Coordinator Robert Spellman is distributing the licenses to healthcare facilities in the WIB area. Genesis Healthcare and Van Dyck Long-Term Care are major recipients of the first group of licenses.

Business Resource Center Update

Ken Nerbak reported on the RETURN-to-Work program, which offers On-the-Job Training grants to partially reimburse employers for the training costs needed to bring a newly hired employee up to the skill level necessary to successfully perform the job. Eligibility is limited to unemployment insurance exhaustees.

Under the program, private sector employers can be reimbursed for a portion of an eligible new employee’s hourly wage rate for up to 12 weeks. The maximum grant is \$2,400 for each new worker hired. To be eligible, employers must provide full-time employment (32 - 40 hours a week) and pay new hires at least \$15.00 per hour for a period of 12 weeks, and must guarantee the new hires at least 12 additional weeks of employment after the reimbursement period.

Ken also reported on a series of job fairs targeted to workers who earned \$50,000 or more annually in their previous job. The events have drawn up to 450 jobseekers and 30 companies. Ken also noted that the Business Resource Center Representatives will be working closely with New Jersey Economic Development to target retention of current employers and to attract new employers to New Jersey.

ARRA Status Report

Jack presented the following ARRA report to the Committee:

- The Adult allocation was \$165,660. Of that, \$146,307 was expended, or obligated, which is 88% of the allocation.
- The Youth allocation was \$387,780. Of that, \$332,175 was expended, or obligated, which is 85% of the allocation.
- The Dislocated Worker allocation was \$1,456,962. Of that, \$1,193,985 was expended, or obligated, which is 82% of the allocation.

The Committee agreed that ARRA expenditures are ahead of schedule and that the WIB could use additional funding to serve Dislocated Workers and Adults.

Most of the ARRA funding has been expended. Jack will provide a complete accounting at the next One-Stop Career Center Committee meeting, scheduled for February 16, 2010.

Youth Investment Council - Karen Kubert, Chair

The Council last met November 12, 2009.

Review of the 2009 Summer Youth Employment Program

Jack Patten reported that the Summer Youth Employment Program began in early July and ended for most participants at the end of August. The program served 161 area disadvantaged youth aged 16 through 24:

- 84 of the 161 youth were out-of-school (the program goal was to serve about 48 out-of-school youth)
- 103 participants were youth with disabilities
- 89 were older youth, aged 18 through 24
- 97 had less than a high school diploma

The Summer Youth Employment Program was extended through October 31 for 18 program participants. Two of these are in On-the-Job training: one as a weatherization technician at NORWESCAP and one as a maintenance person at the Boonton Housing Authority. The Boonton Housing Authority is so pleased with the participant's performance that they have provided him with an apartment as part of his employment agreement.

Jack mentioned the following lessons learned from this year's program:

- Recruitment might have been facilitated by paying higher program wages to participants, especially older youth.
- The program started too late to engage public schools, which had been instrumental in previous Summer Program administration.

- Changing titles of summer interns hired to assist in administering the program would have allowed them to be paid higher wages and presumably attracted a larger applicant pool.
- Increased lead time for planning would have allowed for more robust work readiness preparation and workplace credential attainment.

Jack reported Summer Program expenditures as follows: The ARRA Youth allocation was \$387,780. Of that, \$332,175 was expended, or obligated, which is 85% of the allocation.

Planning for 2010 Summer Youth Employment Program

Council members suggested a variety of recruiting tactics for subsequent summer programs, including: radio and cable television public service announcements, newspaper advertising, engaging public schools earlier in the planning process, and recruiting through community based organizations.

Jack stated that the WIB will explore the possibility of paying higher wages to interns and program participants. The WIB will definitely begin Summer Program planning upon determination that there will be a summer program.

The members offered access to their resources and networks in support of subsequent Summer Program recruiting and operation.

ONE-STOP OPERATOR'S REPORT

Work Pays

On January 13, 2010, the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJ LWD) announced a new ARRA-funded Initiative entitled Work Pays, which is a subsidized employment program for eligible Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) participants. This program will operate for approximately 26 weeks from January through August 31, 2010.

The goal of the program is to create jobs for TANF recipients that may become permanent or provide the work experience that will lead to an unsubsidized job with a different employer. TANF recipients will be engaged in jobs with private or non-profit employers. Employers will be reimbursed 100% of the wages paid to the participants for full or part-time employment, as opposed to the traditional 50% reimbursement offered by the On-the-Job Training Program.

Eligible employers will include New Jersey and out-of-state private and public employers. NJ LWD state OJT staff will market the Work Pays Program and also develop the OJT contracts.

Disability Program Navigator

In January, the WIB received a Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Work First New Jersey Notice of Obligation to support a Disability Program Navigator for the tri-county WIB area. The responsibility of the

Navigator will be to not only assist clients with disability-related issues and facilitate the use of assistive technology, but also to evaluate TANF customers who have been unable to retain permanent, long-term employment as a result of disabilities or learning impairment. The Disability Program Navigator will serve as a resource for information on federal, state, local and private programs that impact individuals with disabilities and their integration into the workforce. The Navigator will train or provide training for One-Stop Career Center staff on such topics as: disability issues; facility, communication and program accessibility requirements and assessment tools.

Tools for America's Job Seekers

On January 6, WIB and ETS staff viewed a webinar by the US Department of Labor (US DOL) to participate in US DOL's "Tools for America's Job Seekers Challenge." State and local agencies joined other developers in submitting on-line job tools on the US DOL Challenge website. From January 4 to January 15, the WIB, ETS staff and some of our job seekers reviewed over 550 on-line job search and career advancement tools. The purpose of the challenge was to test-drive, comment on and recommend tools to help identify the top useful on-line job search and career advancement tools. The WIB and ETS will recommend the best job seeker tools and assessments and make them available through the One-Stop Career Centers and state job banks.

A large number of Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients with claim issues continue to come to the One-Stop Career Centers for assistance. The Newton Center staff has been particularly impacted. Bill Weightman stated that 175-200 people have been coming to Newton. The RICC phones are unable to handle the large volume of individuals attempting to get assistance. The ETS counselor in the Morristown Public Access Area also spends most of her time helping people file for UI online.

The Dover One-Stop Career Center will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the first two Tuesdays and Wednesdays of February. Overtime services will include additional Professional Service Group activities, Pell Grant assistance, Tuition Waiver and assisting GI Bill funded students. The Newton One-Stop Career Center will be open on the first Tuesday in February from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for Pell grant assistance, Tuition Waiver and Career Beacon group sessions.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Green Jobs Training Grant

The WIB is a partner in a \$5 million grant awarded to the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), AFLCIO. The grant will support green job training programs to help dislocated workers and others (including veterans, women, African Americans and Latinos) find jobs in expanding green industries and related occupations.

Training activities funded through this grant program will be individually tailored, based on occupations and skills identified as in demand in local areas around the country. Training

programs will seek to prepare workers for a range of careers including: hybrid/electric auto technicians, weatherization specialists, wind and energy auditors, and solar panel installers.

Union, Bergen and Middlesex Counties are also partners in the grant along with three California and three Massachusetts counties.

There will be meetings of the grant partners as soon as the Utility Workers receive the grant contract.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The WIB is part of a seven-county consortium, formed through the WIRED grant, which has been invited by the US Economic Development Administration to apply for a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) grant for economic development projects that will benefit the entire region. The consortium, pending official appointments to the CEDS Planning Committee, will prepare an economic development plan for the region.

It's often said that "workforce development is economic development" and the EDA invitation provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that area WIBs are enthusiastically committed to making that saying a reality.

Medical Billing and Coding Training

Robert Spellman, the WIRED-funded MSW Health Service Site Coordinator, developed an online medical billing and coding program with Essex County Community College. Over 500 northern NJ residents have been enrolled in the training, including over 200 from MSW counties. The training is free and leads to certification in medical billing and coding.

We estimate the value of Robert's services and training grants secured to be approximately \$430,000. Robert is a great asset to the WIB and we are pleased to announce that WIRED funding for his position has been extended to June 4, 2010.

NJLWD Commissioner

On Monday, Governor Christie nominated Sussex County Freeholder Hal Wirths for NJ Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development. Mr. Wirths is chair of the freeholder board's budget committee and helped found the Highlands State Bank.

The WIB congratulates Mr. Wirths on his nomination and is eager to begin working with him on optimizing the workforce development system.