

**GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE BOARD RI
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (YDC)
August 9, 2007**

Minutes

Members Present: Brandon Melton, Chair, Sharon Moylan, Adelita Orefice, Lorna Ricci, Martin Trueb

Members Absent: Robert Paniccia, Commissioner Jack Warner

Staff Present: Michael Koback, Stephen Schaefer, David Francis, Nancy Olson, Maureen Mooney

Others Present: Mr. John O'Hare, Administrator, State Workforce Investment Office (SWIO); Ms. Dottie Miller, Acting Executive Director, Workforce Partnership of Greater RI (WPGRI); Lori Norris, Chief of Youth Services (Workforce Development), Carlos Ribeiro, Coordinator of Youth Services (WPGRI), Sharon Petrarca, WIA Youth Lead, (SWIO) Nick Ucci, Acting Coordinator of Administration and Operations (WPGRI), Robert Ricci, Administrator, Workforce Solutions of Providence /Cranston (P/C), Anne Walsh, Coordinator Youth Services for Providence/ Cranston.

Chairman Brandon Melton called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and welcomed everyone. He stated there was a full agenda and thanked staff for the work associated with putting the agenda together.

Minutes of November 16, 2006

Chairman Melton asked for a review of the meeting minutes of the November 16, 2006 Governor's Workforce Board Youth Development Committee (GWBRI – YDC). He then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes.

Director Orefice motioned to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2006 GWBRI-YDC meeting as presented. Sharon Moylan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous; the motion passed.

Report on PY 06 Youth Funding Initiative

Chairman Melton asked Mr. John O'Hare to provide an overview of the PY06 Funding Initiative. Mr. O'Hare mentioned that Mr. Ricci, Administrator, Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, and Ms. Miller, Acting Executive Director of the Greater RI Workforce Partnership, would be speaking today as well as Lori Norris, Chief of Youth Services for the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

Mr. O'Hare explained that the Governor's Workforce Board allocated \$2 million this past year through the State Workforce Investment Office (SWIO) to the two local Workforce Investment boards to implement a youth program. He indicated that the result of this investment has been significant and has resulted in a change in the youth services landscape here in RI.

Mr. O'Hare indicated that currently we have about 30 providers of youth services compared to 8 providers last year. All areas in the State are being served. The programs are more diverse and, in some cases, are being provided by national vendors; and include occupational skills training, comprehensive guidance and counseling, summer employment opportunities, adult mentoring, leadership development, work preparation services, job development and placement, work experience and outreach, and intake assessment. These services are currently being provided to approximately 2600 youth, a significant increase from last year's figure of less than 500.

Mr. O'Hare referenced a handout that indicated the characteristics of the youth being served: 14% of 2600 youth are in foster care, 10% offenders, 9% disabled, 9% pregnant and 1% are homeless or in shelter situations. Mr. O'Hare observed that the current programs address at risk youth more than ever before primarily due to an all youth agenda.

A complete analysis on the 2600 youth population will be forthcoming as currently the program has been in progress for 4 weeks. Mr. O'Hare noted that both locals are currently bringing on line a youth case management system that should provide the capability to drill down into the data for the November meeting of the GWB. Mr. O'Hare mentioned that the first reporting period is for the period ending October 31, 2007. It was also noted that all sites and programs have been visited for compliance. Mr. O'Hare introduced Lori Norris to report on her monitoring visits.

Lori Norris, Chief of Youth Services discussed 3 recent site visits and the impact the current youth programs have on our youth. She emphasized that through the flexibility provided by this funding, that we have been able to provide new programming and services that are unprecedented. The programs are creative and introduce solid curriculum options and occupational skills training. These programs continue to engage youth and she reiterated the diverse spectrum of youth served. She shared the sense of hope that exists because there is now a place where the youth can make a connection. Ms. Norris felt the youth had a sense that they could take charge of their own destiny because resources were available to help them. Ms. Norris encouraged committee members and staff to go along on a site visit of the newly funded programs that are making an incredible impact on the youth of RI.

Ms. Miller provided an overview of the programs of the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island. She also emphasized the importance of the funding and noted it was an impetus to work together with Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston in developing and broadening youth services statewide. She added that the funding allows for the introduction of less traditional and more innovative and quality services, and also allows us to look at youth services systemically. It helps to address the stigma associated with youth programs that are directed at disadvantaged and poor youth. Ms. Miller also emphasized the importance of reaching out to all youth.

It was reported that proposals submitted to Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island exceeded available funds by \$9 million. Applications that service providers received from youth across the state were 1.5 – 3.0 times greater than what could be served. This is a concern.

Ms. Miller indicated greater involvement in the future with industry partnerships. An objective is that industry groups will forge a stronger connection to youth by offering internship opportunities as well as job placements. Should the Committee need any further information, Ms. Miller indicated Carlos Ribeiro has more specific details on each program.

Robert Ricci provided an overview of youth programs and the Request for Proposal (RFP) process of the Providence/Cranston area. He indicated that the RFP process was thorough and embedded with the best federal and local procurement safeguards. A single unified RFP was released by both LWIBs. The respondents submitted their proposals. The staff reviewed and made recommendations to LWIBs. Mr. Ricci noted that the awards were made by both LWIBs. All contracts would be eventually monitored by the State Workforce Investment Office (SWIO). Mr. Ricci noted that in Providence, they had millions of dollars in proposals that they were unable to fund.

Mr. Ricci indicated that in Providence and Cranston, they funded 18 programs with Job Development Fund (JDF) money. Many of the programs were aligned with the GWB industry sectors; in particular: health care, IT and construction. Programs also include the medical, Urban Arts, and construction fields; those run by the Chambers of Commerce in Providence/Cranston, and those serving youth with disabilities.

Mr. Ricci highlighted one program with considerable community support run by the Institute for Peace and Non-Violence based at St. Michael's the Arch Angel Church. This organization works with young people to reduce violent behavior and mitigate difficult situations in a peaceful way.

Mr. Ricci reviewed the programs listed in the handout "2007 Youth Programs" funded by the RI Job Development Fund and the Workforce Investment Act. Anne Walsh mentioned that the Institute for Peace and Non-Violence offers an exciting program because conflict resolution is so important. They received 362 applications for this program, interviewed 220 youth and had spots for 60.

Anne Walsh mentioned last year's Shared Vision for Youth Conference in Atlanta. The youth forum initiative made the planning process by the State and two LWIBs easier and also aided in the collaborative efforts to write the RFP. It is noted that staff from DCYF as well as Dr. Johan Uvin, State Director for the Department of Education (DOE) Adult Education programs, participated in drafting the RFP.

Martin Trueb appreciated the anecdotal information provided both in the meeting and in the materials presented. He, however, asked about the significance of the type of work opportunities available versus simply the opportunity to work.

Lori Norris responded that the significance of the work depends on the capabilities and desires of the individual youth. For some youth, you must ensure that an interest inventory is completed to better align their interest with the job opportunity. She noted that although some youth were placed in occupations where they had no interest, there is great value in any work experience. An assessment would be a valuable component to add to this current program.

Martin Trueb inquired about the youth workforce and opportunities for seasonal work. He was specifically interested in hearing about opportunities that enable us to match up the tourist industry with youth utilizing Industry partnership opportunities.

Lori Norris indicated she would be addressing this issue in the Business Engagement portion of the presentation.

Michael Koback mentioned the second year funding process for Industry partnerships and noted that a major component is to require our industry partners to align with our youth effort.

Lorna Ricci asked about outreach efforts for youth with disabilities.

Anne Walsh responded that due to time limitations, every group did its own recruitment. She indicated TV ads were ineffective currently because interest is higher than supply. The outreach will be more focused going forward.

Brandon Melton asked about the previously mentioned 42% of youth at risk. He wanted to know if that mix has changed from the past.

Mr. O'Hare responded that WIA primarily deals with at risk youth. By the GWB providing additional funding, the program was able to serve all youth and more youth at-risk. In the past, many youth would not be eligible due to small variations in income even though they would be just as needy.

Director Orefice elaborated on the sensitivity of this issue. She pointed out that a poverty advocate would want to fund 100% of the youth in the high risk pool. In her strategic role as Director, however, she has made a conscious decision to pursue an all youth agenda. The current funding program addresses the needs of the bell curve of youth. The youth who are coming to these organizations are primarily working class youth. They do not have high enough need to be eligible for the Federal program; however, they are not engaged. They are in need of support, training and information to secure a job.

A general discussion followed regarding the WIA program and income limitations. Anne Walsh indicated the large number of phone calls she received last year from parents who were not able to get their youth into the WIA program because they exceeded eligibility requirements. She noted that this year she did not receive one call. Carlos Ribeiro clarified that the WIA income guidelines for a family of 2 was \$7.40 per hour. He indicated that the current funding program allows us to create a systematic approach to services that align WIA programs with those most in need.

Director Orefice pointed out that there is a positive impact of not funding all requests. When there is a waiting list, both vendors and youth try harder which creates a more competitive program. Competition is important for balance as well as limiting the sense of entitlement that often occurs.

Mr. Koback noted there will never be enough money to fund everyone who applies. He agreed that competition raises the quality level of the programs and that agencies recognize they have to excel in order to receive funding. The WIA authorization request promotes making youth programs more open.

Sharon Moylan stated that this is a good beginning for forging partnerships with corporations as well as higher education so that we can continue to develop a workforce that stays here.

Chairman Brandon Melton introduced Joshua Laguerre, a summer youth employee at Lifespan. Joshua is a junior at Rhode Island College with an interest in health care administration and has been accepted to the Nursing school.

Mr. Melton complimented staff for all of the work accomplished with the youth initiative and sees it as a wonderful example of collaboration and partnership between state and city government. Director Orefice also complimented the team for blazing the trail nationally and for exceeding her expectations with this initiative.

Funding Request for PY 07 and FY 08

Michael Koback provided an overview for the current budget process. He also noted that the Strategic Investment committee is meeting next week and that the full board meets in September. Mr. Koback indicated that the books closed last week and that we do not have the final budget yet. Staff is working on carryout money from last year as well as on projected new funding for FY 08. He estimated that a preliminary budget will be in place for the next Strategic Investment committee meeting.

Mr. O'Hare indicated that timing is important; noting that we are 4 weeks into the program, it is important that we have a clear indication that the funding is going to be available next year so that work can continue.

Chairman Melton indicated he was surprised that the funding request was only for \$2 million dollars.

Mr. O'Hare felt that after meeting with the locals and reviewing the programs, that an increase in the request was warranted. He indicated the request could go to \$3 million.

Chairman Melton agreed that an increase in the request was both reasonable and justified. He emphasized the importance of pursuing the leverage and business collaboration that was discussed and thought increased funding would assist in this regard.

Chairman Melton suggested that in preparation for the Strategic Investment committee, he would like to see data on the targeted youth at risk, and this data should be made part of the presentation. He also added that after the discussion he would ask the committee members if they were comfortable with \$3 million request.

Mr. Trueb inquired about the number of youth returning for programs next year.

Carlos Ribeiro indicated that all programs have a follow up component based on a 12 month cycle and that it is estimated that 50-60% of youth will be repeaters next year.

Mr. Trueb followed up with the suggestion of contrasting the population served with their ability to stay out of trouble and evaluating positive outcomes.

Mr. Ribeiro explained that the Case Management system is currently being installed and training of providers is taking place. This system will measure outcomes to include the risk of youth dropping out of school, GED rates and youth wage rate gains. He indicated that the case management system will be a valuable mechanism to track the outcomes of other specific target groups.

Youth Provider Professional Development Initiative

Lori Norris began the discussion of the Workforce Development Statewide Training Plan by mentioning that the Youth system has been turned on its head in its ability to provide services to all youth. Through the new system, there was a dramatic increase in the number of youth being served as well as the number of youth providers who are new to the system. Through all of this change, Ms. Norris suggested it may be a timely opportunity to institute a training program and plan for youth service providers.

Ms. Norris stated that the end goal of this initiative is for professional development, capacity building, and the creation of policies for training providers. This, in turn, builds resources.

Ms. Norris cited the South County Satellite Site as an example of building resources. At first, the operator of this site was not aware of all of the resources available. Bringing providers together on a monthly basis affords an opportunity for training, informal resource mapping, and providing information about services offered throughout state. This was a successful effort to link and utilize necessary services.

Chairman Melton asked for a motion to approve the Funding Initiative Request for PY 07/FY 08 and the Youth Provider Professional Development CBO Initiative.

Martin Trueb made a motion to recommend approval of a request to the Strategic Investment committee for \$3 million for FY08 Youth Funding Initiative plus an additional request of \$120,000 to support the Youth Provider Professional Development CBO Initiative. (Subject to finalization and availability of the budget) Sharon Moylan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, the motion passed.

Workforce Development for Youth Statewide Training Plan

Lori Norris indicated that part of this training plan includes a monthly training opportunity which will align with a unified vision to serve youth.

Ms. Norris provided an overview of the PY 08 Training at a Glance Handout. Through this training program is an opportunity to professionalize youth workers. Also part of this plan is a three month evaluation period (July, August and September). Each training session will include an evaluation determining gains made.

Mr. Koback noted that the Youth Statewide Training Plan speaks to our role in developing a system which includes capacity, opportunity and congruence with the GWBRI mission.

Chairman Melton emphasized the importance of the connection between the Youth Statewide Training Plan and Industry Partnerships.

Youth Portal Website Initiative

Lori Norris provided an overview of the Youth Portal Website Initiative and indicated we are moving in a direction of universal access for youth to enter into our statewide youth workforce system. The goal is to ensure there is an entry point which will provide comprehensive information on youth services to all youth. Enhancements such as a self directed search option for occupational information will be added as the initiative progresses.

Mr. O'Hare explained that the Youth Portal Website Initiative is being internally developed and funded using WIA and JDF funds.

Business Engagement for Youth Opportunity

Lori Norris discussed the document: RI Dept of Labor and Training Business Engagement for Youth Development.

Ms. Norris reiterated that this initiative speaks to Mr. Trueb's suggestion regarding business engagement. As background, Ms. Norris offered that the employer community has indicated that youth are not entering the workforce fully prepared. She also explained that the youth data available indicates the same. This coupled with the Department of Education's (DOE) Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements (PBGR), which mandates proficiency before receiving high school diploma, calls for the need to incorporate the business engagement connection into youth initiatives.

DLT can play a critical role in providing services to the 3 key stakeholders; youth, RI High schools charged with meeting PBGR and employers facing a predicted skills worker gap by the year 2010. An overview of the strategic plan for Business Engagement was provided by Ms. Norris.

Director Orefice confirmed that the themes mentioned in the Business Engagement for Youth Opportunity correspond with departmental goals for all workers. She also expressed how pleased she was with the progress of the youth initiatives and that staff were to be commended for an outstanding job.

Other Business

Director Orefice discussed the State Apprenticeship Program and indicated there are significant issues with the current program. She indicated that current Apprenticeship programs in RI involved the traditional trades which is limiting. Another key issue surrounding the Apprenticeship Program is that the work of the Council is heavily legislated, and is very political. Also members of the council have been serving a long time. The perception is that the group has been controlled by organized labor. Director Orefice's goal for an improved apprenticeship program is to determine how we bring apprenticeships into the 21st century?

Director Orefice presented an overview of apprenticeship programs, which are the oldest form of training. In RI, there is a need to create a more vibrant and a stronger apprenticeship program. The Apprenticeship Council is looking forward to change and needs some direction. Expanding the council membership and adding other industries are important steps. Director Orefice has had discussions with Bill Holmes, Chair of the Council on these matters. Director Orefice mentioned an important first step is to assign a staff member to take the lead role strategically. Along with this, it is important to bring in an association or consultant for an assessment of the apprenticeship program. This will result in an expanded and more diverse council as well as providing a leverage of work with local workforce investment boards and the DOE.

Director Orefice stated another goal of convening a joint meeting of the Youth Committee and Board Members with a Department of Labor (DOL) representative and possibly another speaker. The topic of discussion would be the specifics of what an apprenticeship program should look like in the 21st century. This would be the start of an action plan from a strategic workforce perspective. The GWBRI and YDC would take the strategic policy lead with the Apprenticeship Council as partners, whose role would be more operational.

Adjournment

Chairman Melton thanked everyone for coming. There being no other business to discuss, Chairman Melton called for adjournment.

A motion was made by Director Orefice to adjourn. Sharon Moylan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Mooney