



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

**Wednesday, October 8, 2014
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union – Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Michael Bevilacqua, Irene Chalek, Sonia Morales, Steve Noroian, Linda Piergeorge, Lisa Remington, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:

Janet Allison, Marina Acosta, Francisco Brea, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, Ed Fitzgerald, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyskowsky Maria Miles, Wilberto Mejias, Tom Raiche, Michael Strem, Donna Rivera, Ed Warnshuis, Ellen Weinhold

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

OTHERS: Robin Ellington, Huy Trivers

I. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of September 10, 2014 Minutes

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2014 meeting.

**Motion by Lisa Remington, seconded by Howard Allen, to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2014 Youth Council minutes as submitted.
Motion passed.**

III. Summer Program Lessons Learned

Youth Programs Director Cristy Gomez reported on Lessons Learned and said that staff are still gathering data to submit to Commonwealth Corporation in November. She said that they will meet and prepare some rubrics and comparisons. Cristy stated that staff

spent too much of their time doing paper work that took away from them visiting youth at the worksites. She also said that collecting timesheets every Monday was an extensive process – an easier way to obtain timesheets from employer needs to be explored. Through the workshops, staff established stronger/memorable connections with Youth and helped them transfer the learning material to their worksites. The new Signaling Success curriculum was very effective and easy for the youth to understand. These workshops are an excellent tool for youth, because it teaches them to prepare themselves for future jobs.

The amount of employers who demonstrated how grateful they were to have hosted our youth was higher than last year. Employers stated that this year's participants showed more professionalism and initiative than before. It goes to show that the Signaling Success curriculum was indeed more effective at preparing our youth for the summer experience and it was a valuable tool for the facilitators.

We have a network of great employers who are very supportive and help mentor youth. However, some employers needed to be constantly reminded that Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan needs to be completed for youth assigned at their worksite.

Mayor Rivera is very conscious of the plight of the youth in Lawrence and helped us out greatly through the "Mayor's Initiative. His initiative gave some Lawrence youth who were not income eligible through YouthWorks the opportunity to work. Recruitment of employers for next year Mayor's Initiative needs to start in January 2014.

Many of the at-risk youth out there can do great work with a little guidance and instructions. Some of these youth only needed a push and encouragement in order to succeed in their job placement. Cristy said that over-enrolling youth early in the program will allow us to fully and effectively spend funds.

Cal Williams mentioned expanding the Mayor's Initiative to Haverhill and Methuen if possible. Rafael said that he would talk with the Mayor's office and possibly with Mayors Fiorentini and Zanni. He said that in the group programs all youth except one completed the program. Group programs had 15-20 kids enrolled.

Cal then said that he would like to congratulate Cristy and her staff and recognize them at the board meeting as well as the companies involved. Ralph said that we could also recognize those who contributed money.

IV. 2014-2015 Year Round YouthWorks

Cristy Gomez, Youth Programs Manager, said that the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) and ValleyWorks Career Center's (VWCC) 2014-2015 YouthWorks Year-Round (YWYR) program will deliver work-based learning opportunities and employment placements to up to 43 low-income youth. Out-of-school youth from Lawrence, aged 17-21 will be the focus of this year's program. Program design is in

keeping with the Governor's workforce priority of strengthening youth education, training and employment to create a pipeline of new workers with the skills needed to succeed in our evolving economy.

The 2014-2015 MVWIB/VWCC YouthWorks Year-Round program will be a replicable work and learning model. It will include an expanded competency based work-readiness/career exploration component, subsidized employment utilizing the MA Work-Based Learning Plan, and preparation of a portfolio transition plan to guide youth in selecting future education, training, and employment opportunities.

Each youth will participate in 20 hours of workshops and will work approximately 100 hours over a 5 week period, 20 hours each week. Workshops will take place in the first week of the session for 4 hours a day, Monday through Friday. Program duration will thus be 6 weeks for a total of 120 program hours. All participants will receive hourly stipends in the form of a gift card for the work readiness / career exploration instructional portion of the program and hourly wages for the hours of subsidized employment. The rate for both is \$9.00 per hour. An additional 1 hour unpaid orientation will be included for all youth.

All targeted youth will meet the family income eligibility requirement of being at or below 200% of the Federal family income poverty guidelines. In addition, 20% will be youth that are court involved, homeless / runaway, or in foster care/recently aged out of foster care. Because the State requests it, most of the remaining 80% of youth recruited will have at least one additional risk factor, which are defined as: 1) poor academic performance; 2) being a child of a single parent; 3) having a disability or special needs; 4) lacking English fluency; or 5) being a teen parent.

Local performance goals for the MVWIB/VWCC YouthWorks Year-Round program include:

- Program Completion by all participants, including attendance at all career readiness workshops, development of a Portfolio/Transition Plan, and participation in a subsidized work experience
- Plans for unsubsidized employment, continuing education toward a GED, or high school diploma, and subsequent post-secondary education and training.

Anticipated start and end dates: Complete program: Sept. 2014 – May 2015. 1st Cycle: Nov. 2014-Jan. 2015; 2nd Cycle: Jan. 2015 – March. 2015

The MVWIB/VWCC YWYR 20-hour work-readiness training component will be based on CommCorp's 'Signaling Success' work readiness / career exploration curriculum. It focuses on the 4 areas identified by O*Net as key entry level skill requirements. Those requirements are dependability, communication, cooperation, and initiative. Employability skills will also be built through the employment experience and through job coaching.

The Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan (WBLP) will be also used as a tool to set and measure the attainment of work-readiness goals. Our region utilizes the WBLP for 100% of our YouthWorks (and other youth program) enrollees. Weekly timesheets based on WBLP goals provide employers a way to relay work-readiness skills information to youth and staff. On-going job coaching and regular staff work site visits help increase youth success. Visits help us provide consistent guidance and develop interpersonal techniques that help solve issues before and as they occur. Information is also documented and reported in the WBLP database.

Partner and Roles: The MVWIB, City of Lawrence Dept. of Grants Administration, and the ValleyWorks Career Center will partner on this program. The responsibilities of each are described below.

1. The MVWIB will be responsible for:

- General planning, oversight and evaluation of the 2014-2015 YWYR program,
- Ensuring that the 2014-2015 YouthWorks program is integrated into the region's overall youth employment strategy,
- Promotion and Outreach to businesses in the region,
- Programmatic oversight,
- Final evaluation and draft reporting to the funding source on the 2014-2015 YWYR program.
- Oversight of DGA and the Career Center

2. The Division of Grants Administration will be responsible for:

- Overall fiscal management of the project,
- Assisting in the generation of reports and materials for the evaluation and reporting functions,
- Processing participant stipend and wages payments

3. The ValleyWorks Career Center will be responsible for:

- Direct day to day operation, intake, and programmatic responsibility,
- Recruitment of youth and employers for the program and any coordination needed with the local school system,
- Collecting enrollment information and determining the eligibility of program participants,
- Providing training, coordination, monitoring and oversight of youth at their job sites,
- Recruiting employers for unsubsidized jobs that meet the 2014-2015 YouthWorks private sector wage match requirement,
- Provision of educational workshops,
- Ongoing support to youth and supervisors while youth are at worksites,
- Data entry and report generation for the partners.

The partners listed above are in full agreement and are ready to successfully coordinate, and provide excellent services to the region's enrolled youth.

Cristy said that monitoring will consist of each site being visited before youth are placed to ensure appropriateness and safety. At least once during the program there will be a second worksite review. Any issues arising at the worksite involving YWYR youth will be addressed by VWCC.

Payroll procedures: Payroll is on a bi-weekly basis and generated through the City of Lawrence Division of Grants Administration (DGA). Youth fill out a weekly time sheet, signed by their supervisor, which the employer faxes to the assigned YouthWorks Youth Counselor.

V. Special Presentation

Rafael Abislaiman said that he is a member of the Exchange Club which meets once a week and that is where he met Robin Ellington from CLASS, Inc. who he found to be one of the best speakers that he's heard in months. Rafael said that he is familiar with her organization and has known the president Bob Harris for years. Robin is the Director of Development and Marketing.

Robin then introduced her colleague Huy Trivers, Business Manager, who will also be providing information on the things that CLASS, Inc. offers. Ms. Ellington began with an overview stating that it began in 1976 on Essex Street and moved to 1 Parker Street. They own the 1 Parker Street building which they will be advertising for sale due to program expansion. They are looking to sell the building and remain as tenants until they are able to find a property to meet their needs. Robin said that they serve folks who are intellectually and/or developmentally disabled. Some of them have brain or spine injuries and are confined to a wheelchair.

Ms. Ellington said that like most people, these individuals find learning more difficult after age 20. But they have a great capacity for learning and can reinforce what they have learned in high school if put in the right situation. CLASS makes six trips a day bringing folks to sites like the Essex Art Center and YMCA and well as GroundWorks and a gardening program where the vegetables were sold at the farmer's market.

Ms. Ellington informed council member of a free conference on October 25th for parents of youth leaving high school at age 22. Parents need to have a plan to keep their disabled children engaged or they will regress.

October is Hiring People with Disabilities month. The State has made a decision to shut down sheltered workshops in an effort to have participants move into community workplaces at minimum wages. Robin said that we have jobs in the community with worksites and employers and told the story of Stacey who was fortunate to find a

dream job with MacDonald's and David, a hockey lover, who was hired by the Tsongas Center as a ticket taker.

Huy Trivers said that his job is finding jobs and contracts. He said that they established Career Services in 2008 to find competitive employment for clients. He said that they have a sales team to find jobs and have connected a lot of clients who have been successful.

CLASS expanded their services to MRC to find jobs and serve as far as Boston. Each individual is provided with a job coach and they follow the Dartmouth Model of on the job training. The job coach stays with the individual until they master the job and sometimes provides transportation when needed. As Business Manager, Mr. Trivers said that he oversees all contracts. With sheltered employment closing this December he has 168 clients to move to community based programs. They want to work and he is busy developing worksites. He said that they have a contract with Universe where clients work to fix/recycle hangers and another contract for Bank Note Readers. He explained that the US Treasury was sued on behalf of the blind and deaf as they cannot differentiate between paper bills. The US Government needs to provide a device like a pager that can identify bills. Specialized Employment Services are grandfathered to be safe and continue to do contract work as clients are considered a danger to themselves or the community.

Huy spoke about a contract with British Beer Companies to solder all the wiring in the tap lines which need to be cleaned weekly. The electrical signal cleans the lines of bacteria. Now he said that he is trying to connect with installers. He said that they have other contracts citing an example of Blue Cross/Blue Shield and that is basically what is happening with Sheltered Employment. In some cases, parents are not comfortable with their children going out into the community.

Robin said that what Huy does is a job cost for employers. He does a comparison between people with and without disabilities and then they negotiate a price. He said that Joe Fish has taken clients at their new facility. Robin said that the chef at Joe Fish, Jay Duffey, has been very instrumental in getting clients there. Huy also said that employers get a \$2k tax benefit per year for hiring a disabled person. They also get a \$6k benefit for ADA compliance.

Lisa Remington wondered how they get referrals and Huy said they need to connect with the regional DDS office where they are assigned a case coordinator who determines the best program. Rafael Abislaiman asked if the schools determine the students need their services. Huy said that they tried to go into the schools in the sophomore year but the schools provide services now to those attending and then when they age out look to transfer them. Robin said that is why the October 25th meeting is to prep parents to prepare for when their children age out. She said that

Andover and North Andover were struggling with the cost of transporting students for services and started a TOP program group with NECC.

Now Robin said that they are looking to put together an Autism Program and start a Nurse Practitioner Program to help monitor medical appointments and bill properly to look after clients' health as 80% of the participants are diabetic and/or obese and many have thyroid issues.

Steve asked if clients don't meet eligibility by being autistic as determined by DDS or DMH, where should they go? Linda Piergeorge said to send them to Mass Rehab.

VI. Partner's Information/Other Business

Irene Chalek said that NECC is getting additional funding from Higher Education for something similar to a transition college for adults with high school diplomas or GEDs that need additional foundation work. They plan to focus on employment sectors such as manufacturing. She also said that there will be a ribbon cutting on November 6th for the NECC property at 420 Common Street, Lawrence.

Steve Noroian reported that the Department of Mental Health will be hosting community meetings around stigma issue and treatment.

Mike Bevilacqua said that the Merrimack Valley Chamber will be hosting an event with Labor Secretary Rachael Kaprielian at the China Blossom.

VII. Adjournment

Having no further business Howard Allen made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Steve Noroian. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder