YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday, November 12, 2015
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union – Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843

Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:
Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Tom Raiche, Michael Strem, David Tagliaferri, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:
Howard Allen, Michael Bevilacqua, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Brad Howell, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyszkowsky, Wilberto Mejias, Sonia Morales, Linda Piergeorge, Donna Rivera, Ed Warnshuis

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:
Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

OTHERS: Beth Fraster, Dale Hollingshead for Supt. Lavoie, Afi Tettey-Fio, Amy Weatherbee

I.   Call to Order and Approval of the September 9, 2015 Minutes
A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m.

Cal then said that we would proceed with the meeting although we are expecting a couple of other folks. He asked for a motion on the minutes of the September 9, 2015 meeting.

Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Mike Strem, to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2015 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.

II.   Programs Update
Cal then called on Youth Workforce Program Manager Cristy Gomez for her program update. Cristy said that the BOG (Bridging the Opportunity Gap) is continuing this October with twenty kids who will be working 300 hours through May.

Under Connecting Activities, Cristy reported on the Manufacturing Day tours for 19 Haverhill students. They went to CASA and Magellan companies along with six staff. Jessy Abramson and Brian Norris, NAMC Director, arranged the tours. Students enjoyed them although they could not take pictures due to security issues. They liked the interaction with the CEO from CASA as well as the human resource department and managers who talked with them about opportunities for employment. All of the students from Haverhill High are in the IT Academy and this is their first cohort. Cristy also referred to a handout on Manufacturing Day 2015 with pictures of the participants.

Cristy continued stating that YouthWorks Year Round starts Monday for 19 youth. Groups of youth will work till May with each group working for 5 weeks at $9/hour for a total of 20 hours per week. The wage will increase to $10 per hour in January. All participants are out of school youth and most are high school grads. This year, there is less funding for the year-round program and we are focusing on 17 to 21 year olds.

Cristy also said that most of the BOG youth are in DYS custody for gang related issues. DYS is very selective on who can participate. Youth cannot work outside the regional office area.

Introductions were then made around the table.

III.   Guest Speaker – Afi Tettey-Fio, Manager of Targeted Communities, Mass Mentoring Partnership

WIB Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman welcomed Mass Mentoring to the meeting and introduced Afi Tettey-Fio, Manager of Targeted Communities.

Ms. Tettey-Fio said that she was pleased to be in Lawrence and meeting with members of the Youth Committee to talk about the Mass Mentoring Partnership. Mass Mentoring was established in 1992 as Greater Boston One-to-One and renamed in 1998 Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP). They expanded into Western Mass and Marty Martinez joined MMP. In 2012 he was appointed President and CEO. In 2014 a three year strategic plan began and four Targeted Communities were identified. Targeted Communities are Lynn and Lawrence; Hampden Country, Cape Cod & the Islands, and the communities of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

Afi said they use a three bucket approach providing training and technical assistance; field resources (financial, AOMs, Match Activities); and advocacy and public awareness (State Line Grant, Media/Recruitment Campaigns). She said that they want to learn what is happening in Lawrence and what the needs are to leverage resources for this part of the state and to be available to help.

Ms. Tetty-Fio said that they have a really adaptive approach to the work they do. They respond to community needs and are willing to evolve to better meet the needs of the

programs and people they serve. She said that formal mentoring is wonderful but is only one piece of a larger puzzle. She said that they have always believed in the power of relationships and are celebrating the reality that relationships happen in many ways. They currently serve over 350 youth from mentoring and youth serving organizations. They also manage a $500,000 state line item and use this money to support their member programs.

Afi said they look at census data and identify areas with high concentrations of youth and also check on Mass Mentoring Counts (MMC) or how many youth are being served by mentoring programs. If there is a large discrepancy between the number of youth served by organizations and the number of youth in an area, they designate that region as an area of need.

Rafael asked what ages they prefer working with. Beth Fraster, MMP Director of Program Services, said they serve 6 to 24 year olds but noted that MMP provides no direct services but works to build the capacity of existing programs. She said that mentoring is defined as one-on-one adult attention for a year or more occurring at least once a week. She spoke about a plan for a mentoring program for the entire school system in Holyoke. Beth said that she would share information on some helpful links such as America's Promise. She also mentioned the Search Institute.

Rafael said that the level of need is so great there is controversy on whether to help the poor with significant issues or to just help the poor. He asked her to provide information on the $20k grant. Beth said Search Institute identified one million youth and the five characteristics of adults and what they need to do to develop relationships and said that she would send the resources for review.

Irene Chalek said that this is clearly not for affluent communities but rather low income and wondered if the focus is on the highly troubled or looking at poor who have some characteristics that give them a better shot moving forward. Beth said that there is no magic answer and is a living question for the community and adults and meeting the needs you are trying to target.

She said that all deserve to have the right to have a relationship. Formal mentoring doesn't work for everyone but there are many other ways to connect. She mentioned coaches as an example. David Tagliaferri said that youth in DMH often don't respond to traditional mentoring and it is nice to have a more global perspective

Cal talked about the Summer Jobs Program where youth are hired in for- and non-profits and work with supervisors to help them grow soft skills. Cristy said that we don't hire the supervisors, the job sites designate someone. Beth then talked about private sector jobs and said that State Street Bank hired 160 summer youth.

Afi Tetty-Fio then asked if there were any questions and mentioned that she came out of AmeriCorps in Cambridge and is looking forward to meeting with folks in Lawrence to see what MMP can help with.

IV.   WIOA Update

Rafael reported on information he mined from the 2014 Social Security wage chart. He said that about 65% of this nation's salaried workers earn less than $43,000 a year. Rafael said that he thinks that we can discount the bottom 15% or so as wages earned by kids who live with their parents. There's no way that an adult wage earner can attempt to survive on less than $5,000 per year. About 50% of adults currently earn low-income wages. But being low-income doesn't mean that earners are poor or in poverty. Most low-income individuals just haven't reached the middle income level.

Rafael said that people are considered as being in poverty depending on family size. Individual poverty starts at very low dollar numbers and location and other factors are involved. But Rafael also said that it's clear that, according to the WIOA definition, most Merrimack Valley families are now middle class only when there are two or more income earners in the family.

Rafael said that the chart he created is based on SSN information. It has the top range of individual middle income earners as ending at the 99th percentile. That is to say that only the top 1% of individual income earners are not middle class but instead rich or upper-class earners. He asked when the upper class earning number should start? If we use the Social Security 1% demographic, it starts at a salary of about $250,000 per year.

Rafael said that sounds like a lot of money and those able to earn it are fortunate, but, in metro Boston, earning $250,000 isn't being rich - especially if you have to send a couple of kids to college or try to buy a good house. But it's about six times as much as 51% of U.S. wage earners make in a year. However, people at the upper end of the top 1% category earn many more than 6 times as much as someone earning $250K. They have wages that are incredibly higher than the wages earned by the folks at the bottom of the 1% category. But there aren't many of those extreme earners.

Rafael said that WIA/WIOA services have income restrictions in all categories but for dislocated workers. For example, if someone has lost an $80,000 IT job and can't find employment, we are able to train them and they can perhaps get a job at $70,000. Employment is not like it was in the 1960s or 1970s and the number of folks needing help and job training is expanding every day. He also mentioned that Lawrence and Holyoke have the highest disconnected youth numbers in Massachusetts. Disconnected here means that youth are neither working nor in school. Disconnected youth and adult numbers have grown a lot in the last ten years.

V.   Other Business
There was no other business. Cal thanked the presenters and noted that the next meeting will be held in January.

VI.   Adjournment
Having no further business Francisco Brea made a motion to adjourn, seconded by David Tagliaferri. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder