

**NORTHWEST PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
16 April 2009**

Call to Order

The Northwest Private Industry Council Operations Committee meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robert Melby at the Best Western in Thief River Falls, on Thursday 16 April, 2009 at 4:30 PM..

Attendance

NWPIC members present were Robert Melby and Carolyn Toupin.

Guests present were Jackie Brekken, DEED Business Services Specialist, Stephen Larson, DEED Regional Administrator, Rodger L. Coauette, NWPIC Executive Director and Suzan M. Gagner, NWPIC Administrative Assistant.

Minutes

The minutes of the 19 February 2009 meeting were not approved due to a lack of a quorum. These minutes will be read and approved at the next NWPIC Operations Committee meeting.

Business Services - Jackie Brekken

Jackie stated that she is currently involved with a "Healthcare Recognition" week. This is in collaboration with the Crookston Housing and Development Authority - CHEDA, and the Crookston Chamber of Commerce. This "Healthcare Recognition" week will be held the week of May 11 - 15th at the Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston. Stephen asked Jackie what the purpose of this week was. Jackie replied that it is to bring recognition to the healthcare industry, which includes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, pharmacies, eye doctors and chiropractors. The healthcare industry employs more individuals in our workforce service area than the manufacturing industry. In addition, Jackie noted that Deb Boardman, CEO Riverview Healthcare, might be a speaker and discuss the fact that in this economic downturn healthcare is still hiring. Jackie also mentioned that Riverview will have internships available this summer. Rodger noted that the NWPIC, as in the past, has received a request to be a sponsor for this event. Joan Porraz, Executive Director for the Northwest Minnesota Area Health Education Center (AHEC), will also be included. Rodger added that he recently spoke with AHEC regarding funding for possible Certified Nursing Assistant training.

Stephen asked Jackie if she has had local employers mention any difficulty in finding licensed boiler operators. Jackie stated that she has not. Rodger added that he was recently contacted by Pat Balstad regarding Incumbent Worker training for Crystal Sugar, specifically for licensed boiler operators. Stephen asked Rodger where this additional Incumbent Worker funding would come from - Rodger replied that up to 10% of WIA Adult funding may be allocated towards Incumbent Worker programs.

DEED Contracts

Rodger reported that DEED was approved as a program operator at the last NWPIC Full Council meeting and that at that time it was decided that no Request for Proposal was needed but, any concerns should be added to the contract. Rodger wished to note that he and Carolyn have met and discussed two items of concern. These two items are cross-training and the equalization of services between the Crookston and the Thief River Falls WorkForce Centers. Due to staff reductions, staff can no longer be specialists, they must be generalists. And, in the case of WIA Adult and WIA Youth programs, there appears to be an inequality between the two WorkForce Centers. The Crookston WorkForce Center carries about 80% of the enrolled participants.

If these two items are not corrected, then a full Request for Proposal process will be completed for future Request for Proposals. Rodger will proceed with the current contracts once allocations are received.

Stimulus Update

Rodger wished to update the Committee on what is happening with the Stimulus packages. He noted that approximately six months ago we were almost destitute. The Youth Stimulus Plan has been submitted and approved. Jackie asked if the "regular" funding allocations will be spent prior to the stimulus funding, Rodger replied that the stimulus funding must be spent out prior to the end of September 2009, so this funding will be utilized first. The main difficulty will be keeping individuals on the program, not getting them on the program. The primary component will be Work Experience. In addition, a 5% discretionary grant has been received in the amount of \$29,000.00. This item will be presented to the Youth Council. The Outreach to Schools program has also received \$10,000.00.

The Adult and Dislocated Worker stimulus plans have been submitted, but have not been approved. The Notice of Funding Availability has also been received. Rodger stated that a problem with the stimulus funding is that the information received has been sketchy and little or no rules or instructions have been received, plus the funding is coming out so fast.

A National Emergency Grant (NEG) has been funded, but no instructions have been received. Stephen noted that media releases have been sent out to the public instructing them to contact their local WorkForce Centers for assistance. He also noted that no information has been sent to the WorkForce Centers to allow them to assist these individuals. He has sent an email to Anthony Alongi, Rick Caligiuri and Kirsten Morell noting this.

Stephen also mentioned the following regarding stimulus funding.

- Bonnie Elsey has spoken with the DOL, DOE and MnSCU regarding a compromise between National Workforce Council Association, DEED and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding.
- \$1,000,000.00 should be allocated to address the most critical training gaps for competitive grant proposals.

- Vocational Rehab would like to collaborate for Employment and Training funding.
- \$800,000.00 will be allocated towards Adult Basic Education, with MnSCU adding another \$100,000.00.
- The DOE will utilize \$800,000 to address the needs of ESL, which up until this point has not had any real programs made available.

Carolyn added that the ideas about combining DEED into MnSCU have been compromised. In addition, Carolyn added that she was concerned about the idea from Bonnie Elsey for two-day Creative Job Search classes. Stephen asked Carolyn if itinerant services were available in these rural areas. Carolyn stated that in the past funding was available to allow this, but to the constant budget and staff cuts, this was no longer feasibly possible.

Carolyn also stated that she heard from Rick Caligiuri that the ARRA (stimulus) funding may have the same performance standards as regular program funding. Stephen stated that he recently read the Training and Employment Letter (TEGL) and it states that the outcomes will be the same.

Program Year 2009 Local Plan Update

The Program Year 2009 Local Plan has similar narratives to last years plan. The budget has no numbers included because no funding amounts have been received. Rodger stated that Stephen has indicated that he would be willing to edit the plan prior to it being submitted. Stephen noted that he will also be working with Jeri Jost in completing the Business Services Specialists section.

Operational Reports

The Operational Reports are primarily informative, but Rodger did note that the expenditures look good, with the exception of the WIA Adult program. This program is not being spent at the levels it should be. Rodger also noted that included in each packet were the dashboard reports, which are an excellent tool for performance standards information.

Future Meetings/Future Topics

The next meeting of the NWPIC Operations Committee is scheduled for Thursday, 18 June, 2009 at 4:30 PM at the Best Western in Thief River Falls.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Robert Melby at 5:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzan M. Gagner
NWPIC Administrative Assistant