

21st Century Workforce Development Fund Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date and Time: January 23, 2013 – 1:30pm

Location: James R Thompson Center, 3rd Floor, DCEO Director's Conference room

Members in Attendance:

Co-Chair: Dan Seals, DCEO

Co-Chair: Carrie Thomas, Chicago Jobs Council

Joe Henning, Aurora Chamber of Commerce (Phone)

Mark Podemski, Rockford Area Economic Development Council

Wendy Pollack, Shriver Center

Ray Prendergast, Daley College

Whitney Smith, Joyce Foundation

Barb Tartaglione, DuPage Workforce Board and West Suburban Jobs Council

Gladys Taylor, Illinois Department of Corrections

Mattie Hunter, Illinois State Senate (Phone)

Rebecca Volk, IL Environmental Protection Agency

Members of the public present –

Dan Lyonsmith, Chicago Jobs Council

Greg Shirbroun, Chicago Jobs Council

Shaniece Alexander, Growing Home, Inc.

Mark Sands, Student

Justin Richardson, Community Renewal Society

Laura Dean Frederick, Community Renewal Society

I. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions Dan Seals provided a brief recap of the first meeting, highlighting the major challenge, which is lack of funding. With that said, the options moving forward are to determine what action the committee and its members can take to advance the workforce development system without additional funding, or to identify initiatives that will draw funding.

Specific areas of focus identified at the last meeting included:

- Skill-based hiring
- Mentoring/motivational coaching within workforce programs

Dan laid out the goal of this meeting as being to take a macro view of what the disadvantaged job seeker population needs, where those services are provided, and what we can do to address gaps.

II. Approval of the Minutes

Dan Seals moved to add notes to the record, Whitney Smith seconded the motion.

III. Discussion on Refining the Purpose of the Committee

Mentoring/coaching/motivation function and implications for workforce strategies serving high-barriered job seekers

Carrie highlighted this as a critical function of workforce programs and provided an overview of some efforts underway at Inspiration Corporation and the Cara Program, as part of Phillip Hong's Psychological Empowerment Process (PEP) research.

The question was posed, how should we think about this particular function? What are the implications as we move forward to further strengthen and develop workforce development programs?

Barb Tartaglione noted the People's Resource Center efforts to ensure job coaches can help job seekers better and mentioned they are intrigued by Motivational Interviewing (MI), as a way to build resiliency.

Gladys Taylor reinforced the need for appropriately trained frontline staff with a deep understanding of the barriers individuals are faced with.

Carrie Thomas highlighted CJC's efforts with the Frontline Focus Training Initiative (FFTI) as well as the Frontline Workforce Association (FWA), specifically noting an increased interest from frontline staff at organizations in the best practices for understanding and motivating clients.

Wendy Pollack noted that a big piece of motivation is expanding one's "realm of possibility" (i.e. thinking outside of the barriers and beginning to see new opportunities, perhaps previously unconsidered).

Whitney Smith mentioned research from Carol Dweck that considers individuals' learning mindsets.

Ray Prendergast talked about the importance of math skills, and people's struggles with math. He suggested minor interventions (e.g. establishing a system of prerequisites) that can play a role in increasing motivation. If students are guided to sequence the courses in the right way, they'll be more qualified for each course, succeed more, and thus be more motivated to continue.

The importance of mentoring was mentioned, and it was suggested there is not yet enough mentoring.

Ray also noted there is an understanding that soft skills are even more important than hard skills, and that soft skills are best developed through contextualized learning experiences.

Wendy mentioned the concerns regarding gender inequality esp. in STEM fields.

Carrie asked for people to consider interventions that would help individuals think differently, and increase overall motivation.

Shaniece Alexander from Growing Home raised a few points about their efforts to increase motivation:

- a. Supervisors who work alongside their participants tend to be better motivators.
- b. Hiring graduates of the program allows for peer-to-peer supervision and improved mentoring.
- c. Bringing program alumni in to tell their stories and provide the real-world context makes an impact.
- d. Sometimes the biggest issue is people's social network. Family, friends, etc. pull in the opposite way.

Wendy and Ray both spoke in support of the need for peer support groups.

Barb raised a concern about the focus drifting too much toward direct service, as opposed to policy interventions.

Mark Podemski pointed out that the majority of job opportunities are with small businesses who lack capacity to develop/support a mentorship program, and with large companies they too often say no. We need ideas that make it easier for businesses to support the implementation of mentorship programs.

Barb mentioned the statewide program, Accelerated Training for Illinois Manufacturing (ATIM), that is setting up these sorts of programs within manufacturing. Barb indicated that employers are inflexible and unwilling to hire. A task force was created in DuPage to try to identify and address employer's issues.

Ideas regarding the best intervention on the issue of motivation:

- Set up an early alert system, so that if something is not going well someone can address it
- Mentorship programs
- Programs have various strengths, for example, alumni networks, which can be tapped into in more widespread ways.

Discussion of skills based hiring and implications for workforce strategies serving high-barriered job seekers

Carrie introduced this idea that individuals can show what they know through a test or some other measure, instead of needing a credential. This can provide more flexibility, though we do know this method is only successful if there is a significant degree of employer buy-in.

Whitney reminded the group of some points from the last meeting. Employers don't know what a HS diploma or GED really means anymore. HR departments are figuring out how to assess job seekers. There are many different skills assessments and they have a better predictive quality than HS diplomas.

Carrie noted that in some communities employers are taking a leadership role, e.g. in Elgin the move toward skill-based hiring is driven by the Chamber of Commerce.

In Will County, the WIB uses the NCRC. The board only approves a WIA voucher (ITA) if an individual has passed the NCRC. However, Illinois WorkNet has been promoting use of the NOCTI assessment.

Mark Podemski noted that getting a large employer on board would have certain benefits; one that does a great job in terms of employee development, and encourage them to work with the Fund to adopt some of these tools, or think about developing career pathways together.

Dan Seals noted that this way you might automatically have a statewide impact.

Barb noted a disconnect between many tests and the concerns of finding living wage employment. Scoring poorly on a test can make it more difficult to find living wage jobs.

Mark Podemski noted that employers are often unable to articulate what they are looking for in employees, and wondered if there is a way to develop a program that helps identify needs and communicate those to job seekers, workforce programs, colleges, etc. This would streamline the hiring process, increased retention and generally improve the business outcomes.

Barb noted the experience in the room and the existing connections that would help get a wide range of employers to the table to share tools with them. Ideally there would be wide industry representation.

A number of people mentioned the possibility of leveraging the Illinois Pathways Initiative for this purpose, specifically the STEM Learning Exchanges. Dan Seals suggested this was a possibility.

The work being done by the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) was also mentioned. The focus of the group is improving HR practices within manufacturing, and making them more efficient and productive. They're in the process of conducting pilots.

The Fund Committee may be able to add value by bringing in other partners and stakeholders to the use this model, maybe in other industries. There are opportunities here if we can identify what the gaps are in the various initiatives (Learning Exchanges and IMEC's work) and fill in some of the gaps.

Dan Seals noted that with the Learning Exchanges there is also the reality of limited funding.

Gladys provided an update on the formative stages of the Second Chance grant, focused on reducing recidivism in a number of areas with high rates. These topics are critical, and have significant implications for IDOC's current planning processes.

The conclusion is that there are opportunities to continue the discussion regarding mentoring and motivation within career counseling, as well as skill-based hiring in order to present findings to various state agencies in the planning stages (e.g. ICCB, IDOC, etc.)

Whitney described the main focuses for employer engagement efforts moving forward.

1. Employer engagement efforts –
 - a. Work with IMEC idea to develop HR processes in manufacturing, and share best practices with other stakeholders, possibly across industry
 - b. Encourage skill-based hiring initiatives
 - i. Can we get more information on what's happening in Elgin, DuPage, etc.?
 - c. Small business engagement (helping manage internships, helping profile jobs)

Whitney proposed the distribution of an options memo for the next meeting to gauge interest of those in the group for these various initiatives?

Carrie pointed out that the small business engagement efforts could also be tied to motivation issues and developing mentorship/internship programs.

Whitney wondered if the Workforce Boards could jointly work to identify how many organizations have adopted various models or ideas, for example Motivational Interviewing.

CJC could distribute a survey to assess the degree to which various methods have been adopted.

Dan Seals noted that there had been little work done at this meeting to identify or discuss specific target populations that the group would focus initiatives on which is an important next step. Something to do at the next meeting.

Next Steps –

- Pull together some updates on skill-based hiring and motivational techniques for mentoring and career coaches.
- Update the website
- Identify sub-populations of disadvantaged job seekers to focus on (can begin this process in a follow-up email)
- Survey WIBs to get an understanding of various strategies for motivating job seekers
- Alternative financing strategies will be a topic for the next meeting

It was determined that in terms of meeting frequency, the group will meet bi-monthly initially and transition into a quarterly meeting structure. Thus, the next meeting will take place in March.

Dan Seals moved to adjourn the meeting, Mark Podemski seconded.