

State Workforce Investment Board

Lifelong Learning Committee

October 2, 2012
2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Elkhorn Room A, Holiday Inn
Helena, MT

Council Members Present: Dave Crum, Chair; Margaret Bowles (Designee OPI), Linda Guzik; Vicki Judd; Kirk Hammerquist; Jim Marks (*Designee DPHHS*); Representative Jean Price; and Senator Edward Buttrey (via conference call, for Part III)

Council Members Absent: John Cech; Michael DesRosier; Kim Gillan; and Thomas McKenna

Guests: Mary Berg; Adam de Yong; Linda Moodry, Kathy Yankoff

Staff: Leisa Smith and Kali Wicks

I. Welcome & Introduction

Chair Dave Crum called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. He welcomed staff, and committee members. Members of the public and guests introduced themselves and identified their affiliation. New committee member Jim Marks, DPHHS, new designee for Anna Whiting-Sorrel was asked to introduce himself. Chair Crum reminded members that the committee conducts business under Roberts Rules of Order.

Housekeeping

Ms. Wicks conducted housekeeping and noted the meeting would be recorded for accuracy of the minutes.

Roll Call

Ms. Wicks conducted roll call and confirmed a quorum was present

Agenda

Vicki Judd motioned to approve the agenda with a second from Margaret Bowles. Motion carried.

Minutes

Representative Price motioned to approve, as presented, the draft minutes of the May 30, 2012, with a second from Margaret Bowles. Motion carried.

II. Informational Updates

Margaret Bowles reported on several items involving Adult Basic Education (ABE/ABLE) including the National GED Closeout Campaign which began in September 2012 and The Youth Council's companion project, the Future ForGED initiative. Ms. Bowles reiterated to the committee of the importance of attaining a high school diploma or its equivalency and then shared data reflecting the impacts to economies and self-sufficiency when lacking this basic certification. In addition, the data specific to Montana regarding drop-out rates and the high numbers of youth and adults in the state lacking this basic credential and who are also disconnected to the workforce was shared. Ms. Bowles also detailed the upcoming changes to the GED testing process and costs. The GED program is undergoing the biggest redesign since 2002. The non-profit General Education Development testing program has been purchased by a for-profit company, Pearson Vue Testing. Beginning in January of 2014 the test will no longer be a pencil and paper exam. Test takers will need to have key boarding skills as the test will now be computerized to include essay writing. The current cost in Montana is fifty-five dollars. The new cost will be \$120.00 and is expected to rise again in 2015. These costs are expected to increase burdens on employment and training programs and support service resources as funding continues to see reductions. The current test consists of five test batteries, which may be banked as they are passed. The new test will be available to take different sections at a time, but each retake may cost as much as the original (\$24 per section). The present goal of the Future ForGED campaign and GED Closeout Campaign is to encourage anyone needing to obtain or complete their GED testing to enroll in the preparatory classes NOW at the nearest Adult Basic Education Center and complete the test as soon as possible. Ms. Bowles states outreach would be occurring at the state level but requested committee members please assist by taking the information to their respective local communities. The Office of Public Instruction is working with OPI Cabinet regarding changing the Board of Education Rules regarding high school equivalency tests. The term "GED" will not be used but instead will be referred to as the High School Equivalency Test to allow the state to be flexible in the event other approved tests and products may become available. Hoping this process will be in place by March 2013. Additional training will be forthcoming for GED instructors to prepare for the increased rigor to the curriculum. Notices are also being sent to those who have banked scores to understand the impending timelines along with agreements for test takers to ensure they understand that scores will no longer be allowed to be banked. Public notification will also occur along with common templates for local GED examiners to ensure accuracy of information sharing.

Ms. Bowles then handed out Personal Employment Plan (PEP Talk) career planning tool packets for review. In 2008, with a Workforce Investment Act Incentive grant, PEP Talk was developed over a two year period with the input of numerous statewide focus groups. PEP Talk was released for use in 2010 as a new career planning tool to provide resources and personalized support to develop long-term employment plans that capitalize on personal interests and strengths. PEP Talk allows the state to leverage additional valuable resources in the Montana Career Information System and was developed by leaders of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Office of Public Instruction, Division of Career,

Technical and Adult Education; the Department of Labor and Industry, Workforce Services Division, officials from the Governor's Office of Economic Development and business and industry. PEP Talk is intended to be an adult career pathway blueprint that can follow job seekers to numerous agencies that provide coaches and intake specialists. The three key agencies involved can view the employment plan in whatever stage it exists and help the job seeker further develop steps to get customers to a place reflective of their career goals and aspirations. Highlights to the model include the elimination of redundancy in questions, assessments and tests. The process includes video lessons, skills worksheets, interest and life inventories, occupational exploration, and goal setting. All information can be stored via hard copy in their workbook or stored via a personal electronic portfolio secured with a password. The website was also reviewed (www.careers.mt.gov) and serves as a resource for anyone who wishes to access and reproduce any of the materials. On a final note Ms. Bowles was pleased to announce Pep Talk's recent National Best Practices recognition from the Federal Department of Education's Office of Vocation and Adult Education and a published article in the ACP (Adult Career Pathways) newsletter. Questions arose from the committee regarding numbers using the tool and outcomes regarding completion of plan and movement into career choices. Ms. Bowles states that numbers can be tracked for those using PEP Talk and will provide for the next meeting. Committee members inquired into any success stories. One shared that outcomes from Miles City, and more will be collected and shared with the Committee. Ms. Guzik shared that Job Corp has been using Pep Talk and it is producing good results. Chair Crum also asked for elaboration on the collaboration involved in the project. Ms. Bowles shared that seven statewide focus groups were conducted to solicit feedback that involved the three state agency heads along with local input before implementation. No action was required, beyond the need to spread the word.

III. Interstate Compact Bill

Senator Buttrey Joined the Group via conference call, as he was unable to attend the meeting in person due to legislative business and was on the road. Representative Price summarized a Senate bill intended for the 2013 Legislative session, "Montana Military Compacting Act". The purpose of the act is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment by their parents. The act contains provisions for active duty members of uniformed services including National Guard, members or veterans of uniformed services who are severely injured or and medically discharged or retired for a period of one year, and uniformed service members who die on active duty for a period of one year. The act also addresses the facilitation of timely enrollment, appropriate placement, facilitation of qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs and extracurricular activities, facilitation of on-time graduation, and promotes flexibility and cooperation between the education system, parents and student for educational success for the children of military families. Senator Buttrey will sponsor the bill but has not been assigned a number as of yet. Approximately 45 states have similar compact bills. Great Falls Public Schools and Malmstrom Air Base are supporters and have requested this bill be pursued. Senator Buttrey further explained about the Interstate Military Compact Commission. The Commission has a representative from each state with voting privileges regarding the setting of generic policy,

dispute resolution, advisory regarding compliance, data exchanges, reporting to governors, legislators, and school officials. Each state with a Compact Bill forms a council to include superintendents of schools, military officials, legislators and a member of the executive branch to push state coordination districts and state agencies. The state council reports to the Interstate Commission who coordinates between states. Language has been inserted into the bill so that federal rules cannot supersede state code. Most costs generated by the bill are picked up by the Office of Public Instruction and the Office of Military Affairs. A budget of five-thousand dollars has been allocated for the bill with an expiration date of July 31, 2015.

Sen. Buttrey shared further flexibilities provided by the bill that would include additional time permitted for immunizations, and official records to be transferred without having to wait before entrance into the school which puts students at risk of falling behind and impacts graduation timeline if sending and receiving states have differing rules for attendance requirements, and/or pre-requisites the act allows for waivers. If Montana cannot with waivers work with the other states' requirements they may allow for the sending school to issue the graduation certification. Sen. Buttrey concluded with the importance of this type of bill, especially for any base realignment processes, in which a bill of this type would give Malmstrom points and help to help it score points to keep it open.

Mr. Hammerquist inquired if this act would also apply to higher education as "tuition" was mentioned in the draft. Rep. Price replied that the bill is only in reference to public schools, and does not include provisions for private or higher education. The use of "tuition" is a reference to case involving other custodial guardians caring for children if both parents are deployed. The bill is non-partisan, and is supported on both sides of the aisle.

This agenda item will be taken to SWIB for their deliberation and action.

Senator Buttrey left the meeting at this time.

IV. Work Readiness Credential

Dan Griffith presented on the new Work Readiness Credential (WRC) distributed by Steck-Vaughn Adult Education. Steck-Vaughn has been the primary GED materials and testing publisher for many years but found a need to assist further in getting many of these students to the next level of their career pursuits. WRC is ideal for individuals entering the workforce for the first time, returning to the workforce after some time away, or transitioning from one industry to another. The WRC includes four areas of measurement in modules that evaluate workplace reading, workplace math, situational judgment and active listening. WRC is based on extensive research and development from the National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future Framework, a cross-disciplinary business consensus on what defines entry-level readiness and the National Institute for Literacy Study to identify what is expected from entry level workers. WRC is a preparatory curriculum and serves as a complimentary, interim, or transitional credential for people who lack work history. Students are measured on both hard and soft skills and curriculum is contextualized to a workplace setting. The WRC series is written at an 8th

grade level and helps to prepare for more rigorous Work Keys certification at a later date, which is written at a higher education level. For many, this is a good way to begin to secure confidence to move toward a more rigorous study program and/or career pathway. Mr. Griffith stated that many companies are now embedding questions like those seen in the WRC certification program in their on-line applications questions to get a better understanding of the applicant's personality traits as well as their cognitive ability to do the required tasks. These employers include Starbucks, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart.

Entry levels workers are most often the first face of a business and investment in their skills is critical. Examples were given from Marriott Hotels who invest largely in the valets, door greeters, baggage handlers in Augusta, GA., during the Master's Golf Tournament where many service industries are impacted by the influx of professionals and golf enthusiasts during the event. The WRC credential is being used by Adult Basic Education programs, Career and Tech Ed., and numerous community and two year colleges, low-income housing agencies, as well as Tribal entities. Mr. Griffith concluded with the reminder that credentials mean opportunities and build economic development. No questions came from the committee or audience. No action was taken at this time.

V. Pre-apprenticeship Youth Build Program

Linda Cleatus, the Career Technical Institute's Helena Youth Build Case Manager, provided a history of Youth Build which started in 1978 in New York City and has now spread to a national grant program with approximately 273 Youth Build programs. The program targets youth ages 16 -24 who have dropped out of high school and are in need of their GED and additional employment and skill building. It is possible for participants to earn college credits while earning their GED's or high school diploma, along with earning stipends and other job readiness training and certification opportunities. The homes that are constructed through Youth Build are offered for purchase to low-income families.

In Helena, CTI's Youth Build program is in its second year as a pre-apprenticeship program. Through a partnership with Mark Maki, Director of the Apprenticeship/Pre-apprenticeship programs at the Department of Labor, a program has been formalized, featuring student agreements and certificates of completion signed by both Mr. Maki and the Commissioner of Labor. The Helena School District and Helena College are also partners, helping to refer students and working to support their education and training goals. Twenty nine students were enrolled last year with 21 graduating. Ms. Cleatus stated that students who did not graduate mainly had issues with not getting basic needs met. These often included things like housing, medication for mental illness, or therapy for addiction issues.

Mark Leland, owner of a construction business and the instructor for this year's program, shared his experience working with the youth, and was followed by Dustin Ostwald, a recent Helena Youth Build Graduate who obtained his diploma and is now enrolled in Helena College. Dustin shared his experiences with the committee, as he had come from a difficult background and found that Youth Build gave him confidence and employable working skills.

Mr. Maki then provided additional history and definitions on pre-apprenticeship as a career pathway training and work experience program. He presented guidelines for pre-apprenticeship for the state.

VI. New Business

Next meeting tentatively scheduled in January. With no other comments from the Committee or the Public the meeting was adjourned at 4:37.