

State Workforce Investment Board Lifelong Learning Committee

May 5, 2010

Best Western Heritage Inn
1700 Fox Farm Rd
Great Falls, Montana

Council Members Present: Dave Crum, Chair; Linda Guzik; Vicki Judd; Thomas McKenna; and Mary Sheehy-Moe

Council Members Absent: Michael DesRosier; Kim Gillan; Kirk Hammerquist; TJ Eyer (*Designee for Denise Juneau*); and Hank Hudson (*Designee for Anna Whiting-Sorrell*)

Guests: David Morey; Suzanne Ferguson; Mark Maki; Andy Poole; Margaret Bowles; Mary Berg; Linda Moodry; and Pat Wise

Staff: Leisa Smith and Dan Bernhardt

I. Welcome & Introduction

Chair Dave Crum called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. He welcomed staff, committee members, and guests. He reminded members that the committee conducts business under Roberts Rules of Order. Members of the committee and members of the public introduced themselves and identified their affiliation.

Roll Call

Dan Bernhardt conducted roll call and confirmed a quorum was not present.

II. State Projects

Industry Approved/Work Readiness Credentials

Pat Wise, Economic Development Specialist, Governor's Office of Economic Development, described to the committee the history of how the discussion of standardized skills began in Montana. She pointed out that this was when the two-year system and community colleges were started. Ms. Wise also explained to the committee the history of work readiness credentials, including WINN/WorkKeys.

Ms. Wise explained to the committee that the Governor requested two pilot WINN projects. Students saw a definite improvement in their scores after completing the program. Great Falls is currently participating in an additional pilot for students in grades 10 – 12. For adult level participants, there are eight One-Stops that will be getting licensed.

After detailed discussion regarding a localized specific certification versus a nationally recognized certification, Ms. Wise explained to the committee that the value of a local certification is relevant, but only to the local area. Ms. Sheehy-Moe added that industry or national standards are seen as having more value, and they are more recognizable by people in the specific industry. Employers do ask for certifications; however, usually an accrediting agency ensures that the standards are relevant.

Ms. Sheehy-Moe explained to the committee that one of the challenges for two-year colleges is that the education requirements are such that they are not necessarily relevant to the employer's needs. If the student has the particular skills that are needed for the job, some sort of credential they could leave with would be beneficial.

Digital Based Learning

Ms. Sheehy-Moe informed the committee that "for profit" institutions represent 9% of enrollment; however, they also represent 43% of online enrollments. She briefly described the Western Governor's University. Students typically finish a four-year degree in approximately 2.5 years due to the structure. The Lumina Project is currently attempting to develop the same type of programming and structure for Montana.

Ms. Sheehy-Moe also informed the committee that Montana consistently ranks at the bottom in lifelong learning for the percentage of adults engaged in some form of post secondary education. She briefly explained to the committee how some states utilize "stackable certificates" where students complete one course at a time with a sense of accomplishment as they go along. She pointed out that a major obstacle in Montana is a lack of broadband connectivity. Additionally, higher education must learn how to redo college and go to the learner instead of expecting the learner to go to the college.

The committee discussed higher education's ability to respond in a quick manner to establish a course when needed. Two-year colleges do a very good job and are much quicker to help employers if they are not being asked to create a full degree program.

I-Best Model

Margaret Bowles, Adult Basic Education and Literacy Specialist, Office of Public Instruction, presented to the committee a program overview of the I-Best Model (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training). I-BEST programs are designed to provide educational access and support for Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English as a Second Language (ESL) students to progress further and faster along career pathways. I-BEST pairs ABE/ESL and professional-technical instructors in the classroom to concurrently advance student gains in basic and professional-technical skills. Classes are in programs that build toward degrees and/or certificates and prepare students for employment.

Washington state currently has 128 different I-BEST programs offered at 34 colleges. These programs range from CDL and childcare provider training to hospitality trades and welding.

Washington State has received a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation to assist certain states develop this model. Montana was chosen and a project is being developed in partnership with Flathead Valley Community College and the Flathead Adult Basic Education Director. To date, business/clerical/office cluster has been chosen with a focus on medical office receptionist.

III. Business Resource Division Programs

Andy Poole, Deputy Director, Department of Commerce, presented to the committee on the Department of Commerce's Workforce Training Grants (WTG) within their Economic Benefits Business Resources Division. The program is designed to train Montana full-time workers and is funded at approximately \$5 million in one-time-only funding. Businesses must demonstrate that 50% of the business sales are from outside of Montana, or the business is a manufacturing company with 50% of its sales from companies that have 50% of their sales outside of Montana. Approximately 5% of Montana companies qualify. This is specific workplace training, not higher education. The training plan must be approved by the Department of Labor and funds are not provided until the job is created and the training has been provided.

Mr. Poole explained to the committee that since the inception of the WTG program:

- \$7.9 million has been allocated to 21 companies resulting in \$218.5 million in projects
- 2,404 WTG-eligible high paying jobs were created that earned \$101.3 million in wages and salaries and paid \$4.5 million in annual individual income taxes
- 100% of the employees will receive health insurance benefits

Some of the key findings that Mr. Poole pointed out to the committee were:

- Eleven of the 21 companies awarded WTG funds began operation in Montana in 2004 or later
- A total of 7,348 employees are supported by these projects who will earn \$244.6 million in wages and salaries thus paying \$10.3 million in individual income taxes
- For every Commerce dollar awarded, the companies provided \$26.10 in matching funds
- Nearly \$133.3 million is being spent on construction activities in the state, supporting 1,333 construction-related jobs. Wages and salaries paid is \$38.5 million while individual income taxes are \$1.7 million. In addition, eight new buildings were constructed, adding over \$61.0 million to the taxable base
- These companies spent nearly \$66.1 million on equipment with \$19.1 million spent on Montana-made products and services
- Eleven of the 21 companies will be partnering with some of Montana's higher educational institutions to conduct the needed training and educational requirements of these jobs.

There are currently ten institutions of higher education that are partners of this program.

IV. 21st Century Bureau Update

Dave Morey, Bureau Chief, described the program make-up of the bureau to the committee. He pointed out that among Jobs for Montana Graduates states, Montana consistently ranks as one of the top by several measures, and Montana has a 95% graduation rate, even on the reservations.

Mr. Morey informed the committee on a solicitation for grants for a governor's forum on credentialing (post secondary for adult workers) that Montana was awarded. Montana received \$10,000 for a one-day forum that will be held at Glacier High School on August 12. The topic of the forum will be to discuss issues around working adults having access to higher education. The forum will give College Now! a boost in public interest. The governor will present and the intent is to have two panels – one of sector employers and one of adults that have gone through Adult Basic Education as dislocated workers. Details on the forum will be forthcoming and sent to all committee members when available.

Chair Crum requested the committee try to meet the day before the conference and then attend the conference.

Mr. Morey informed the committee that the Incumbent Worker Training Program was implemented on April 5th and the program has received approximately 12 applications.

Mr. Morey also informed the committee on Elevate America, a Microsoft Corporation program. Microsoft is offering vouchers through state government for public training on their products. The launch date is May 20th and is open for only 90 days. There are one million vouchers nationwide. Montana has received 2,500 standard vouchers and 625 advanced Information Technology vouchers. The vouchers waive all normal training fees. Completion of the standard training will result in a Microsoft certificate of competency. The only qualification to receive the voucher is that you must be a Montana resident. There are currently only eleven cert of ports available to take the proctored tests; however, there is a search to increase that number and a number of Adult Basic Education centers have committed to be a cert of port.

V. One-Stop System Survey

Ms. Smith summarized why staff did the survey and how it was implemented. After some committee discussion, it was agreed upon that the survey highlighted Montana's lack of technology, especially broadband, and the issues in being able to provide services in rural areas.

VI. Action Steps and Timelines

Chair Crum requested staff invite some program operators and upper-level directors of programs to take the survey to the next step and come and speak with the committee about barriers they face. He also requested staff schedule a conference call within the next three weeks, and reminded both staff and the committee about the possibility of meeting as a committee on August 11, a day before the governor's forum on credentialing.

VII. Adjourn

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.