

SWWDB – WORKFORCE SERVICES COMMITTEE

October 18, 2006

MINUTES

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Ms. Cindy Harrington, Chairperson

The SWWDB Workforce Services Committee met on Wednesday, October 18, 2006 at the Rock County Job Center, Janesville, Wisconsin, and through various locations in the area through the Meet Me Now web conferencing software. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present:	Mr. Charles Elliott	Dr. Gary Albrecht
	Ms. Cindy Harrington (Chair)	Ms. Amy Banicki
	Mr. James Otterstein	Ms. Jennifer James-Baker
	Mr. Steve Scaccia	Mr. Bruce Palzkill
	Mr. Geoff Upperton	
Members Excused:		
Members Excused:	Ms. Ann Greenheck	Ms. Anne Hore
	Mr. Ken Hendricks	Ms. Regina Prude
	Mr. Tom Hogan	
Staff Present:		
Staff Present:	Dr. Robert Borremans	Ms. Shannon Moe
	Ms. Amy Charles	Mr. Michael Schultz

Cindy Harrington called the meeting to order 3:08 pm.

1. Presentation on Safe Lifting Initiative Grant Award

Amy Charles presented information on the Department of Workforce Development Safe-Lifting Initiative grant which was available to healthcare institutions in Wisconsin which are promoting no-lift or low-lift initiatives in their healthcare companies. DWD committed \$325,000 in funds for the entire State and each institution was allowed to apply for a maximum of \$25,000, which required a 100% match by the healthcare employer in either equipment or training leading to a no or low-lift environment. The healthcare providers were required to jointly submit applications with their local Workforce Development Board. Ms. Charles indicated that our area submitted 6 applications with the following providers:

- Beloit Memorial Hospital, Beloit
- Pine Valley Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, Richland Center
- Schmitt Woodland Hills, Inc., Richland Center
- Mercy Health Systems, Janesville
- Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville
- The Richland Hospital, Richland Center

The applications were seeking over \$60,000 in grant funds, however, only one application, Mercy Health Systems, was funded in this cycle for \$20,000. Committee members indicated that this was disappointing, and were hopeful that the grant would continue into the future and other area healthcare institutions as well as those who applied initially would have an opportunity to receive some of this grant funding. Ms. Charles indicated that the funding cycle is in April and she will work to inform additional healthcare providers about this opportunity, and work with them to apply for the funding if it is a continued grant.

2. Progress on Implementation of Business Services

Amy Charles presented a spreadsheet which will be a part of all future Workforce Services Committee meetings indicating the progress of the Business Services Program. The spreadsheet indicates the name of the employer, the date of a Business Services visit, if there is a contract with the employer and the amount, and which Business Services Representative made the referral to Ms. Charles.

Committee members began discussing two of the listed contracts – United Alloy and Kettle Foods. Dr. Borremans indicated that United Alloy was extremely satisfied with the results of their on-site Job Fair, and that the program significantly exceeded their expectations. Ms. Charles noted that the company had presented SWWDB with a bonus of \$150 on top of the value of the contract. Kettle Foods, Inc., which will be a new employer in Beloit, is using the program to assist in their hiring process for the Beloit facility.

It was noted that there was only one referral from a Job Center partner agency at this time. This led to discussion about possibly rewarding other agencies who make referrals to Business Services; partner agencies who provide referrals are given 10% of the total contract value. It was decided that this issue can be explored in more detail later, if referrals are received from non-partner agencies.

The discussion then shifted to other training issues. It was noted that SWWDB will only provide training to a company on a fee for service basis if that company has first explored training through the technical college system. This was the case with Stainless Tank & Equipment, Beloit. They were interested in some assistance with hiring and have a special need for welders that are more highly skilled for welding stainless steel tanks which requires a great deal of bending and odd position welding. SWWDB suggested that the company consider working with BTC on training specific to their needs.

This idea brought further comments from committee members. Mr. Scaccia indicated that a primary function of the Workforce Development Board should be to make sure the training that area employers need is readily available to them from the technical college system. Mr. Upperton further commented that welders are needed throughout the region as well as state-wide. Part of the problem is that many people look down on the skilled trades, such as welding, and fewer individuals are pursuing jobs in the skilled trades. He also indicated that often the employers are not necessarily looking for an Associates Degreed individual to fill their positions, and that short-term programs providing the skills needed to perform the job are more what employers need. Dr. Borremans indicated that the technical colleges receive higher state aid reimbursement for 2-year degree programs compared to short-term customized training. Dr. Borremans further elaborated that SWWDB can do as Mr. Scaccia suggested and work with the technical colleges to deliver training needed by employers.

Mr. Otterstein commented that the Board should be working even more aggressively to develop demand driven initiatives, and that needs to be accomplished through education, information dissemination and identifying the resources required to make it happen. He indicated workforce development needs to work with concepts like 2+2+2 to get youth thinking about manufacturing careers earlier. That SWWDB needs to work to change the image of manufacturing among students and parents. Dr. Albrecht indicated that School Boards may not be the best place to start as they are preoccupied with budgets and accountability issues. He suggested going to superintendents, teachers, counselors and

even to parents. Ms. Charles also indicated that the Job Fit assessment program is another way for SWWDB to reach out to the K-12 schools and it offers the opportunity for students to explore careers and learn what types of education is needed to access those careers. Mr. Otterstein indicated that the link to education is critical, and that the Board should have representation on the education committees of local Chamber of Commerce and economic development organizations. Dr. Borremans indicated that SWWDB has been actively involved with those types of groups and staff needs to do a better job of informing the committee about how the Board is reaching out. He also indicated that SWWDB will refer this issue to the Program Operations committee, and work with that committee to affect a change in perception at the K-12 level about careers in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Elliott suggested that board members should work with the Business Services Representatives as they go out to speak with businesses. He indicated that this may influence a business to look more favorably on the services available through SWWDB. He also suggested that SWWDB work in tandem with Business Services clients, such as United Alloy, to host a "Business After Hours" event to highlight the success achieved by using services of SWWDB and the Job Center. Dr. Borremans and the committee concurred that this was something to pursue in greater detail.

3. **Update on GROW Grant**

Ms. Charles presented some highlights from the (GROW) Growing Regionally Opportunities in Wisconsin project which was a partnership between Southwest and Southcentral Workforce Development Boards to provide demographic and workforce data that could be used to identify opportunities for regional economic growth. Ms. Charles highlighted some of the key findings which were the aging local population particularly in our more rural counties, and that diversity in our area is growing with an increasingly larger number of Hispanics in the workforce. Ms. Charles also highlighted that a significant number of the workforce travel outside the area for work, which means that there is opportunity for economic growth if the right employers locate within the area, particularly as gasoline prices stay elevated.

Another highlight of the report is the driver industries defined for the region; that focus on production, logistics, healthcare and bio-agriculture. Bio-agriculture in particular presents an extremely high opportunity for the region. This opportunity will be explored in more detail through the GROW 2. The Southwest and South Central collaboration will continue and receive \$80,000 to develop opportunities identified in the research stage of GROW project. Specifically, SWWDB will get \$20,000 of the award to assist in the development of a regional strategy that will include exploring bio-agriculture opportunities. This effort is being spearheaded through a partnership between SWWDB, the Southwest Wisconsin Economic Development Coalition Strategic Action Team and the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The GROW 2 project will also further the concepts of Jobs with a Future (JWF) and Career Pathways, both of which were initially implemented in South Central, but which may have application to the Southwest WDA.

4. **Community Audits**

At the September SWWDB Board meeting, the concept of Community Audits was discussed and referred to WSC for further exploration. Ms. Charles presented information on the concept and showed a local example from the LaCrosse, WI area of an audit which was funded during the trial of the project by the Department of Labor in 2001. The report is similar to the GROW report in that it includes demographic information about the area,

as well as some workforce statistics. Where the reports differed is that the Community Audit process includes many surveys of local workers. Workers were asked questions about what motivated them to seek employment, and what types of things kept them satisfied in a job. It was interesting to note that money (wages) was not as important as having a position where the individual felt satisfied. Other top motivators included health insurance and flexibility of schedules.

Mr. Palzkill indicated that something similar to this had been done within the last several years in our area. Others indicated that perhaps it would be more beneficial to pursue something like Community Audits at a later date, as the GROW report has just been completed and another survey may be a duplication of effort at this time.

5. **Dislocation and Plant Closing Report**

Ms. Moe presented the local dislocation and plant closing information for Southwest Wisconsin through the end of September. There were no new dislocations for the third quarter of the year. The total number of workers laid off in the area during 2006 was 701. Some committee members felt this number seemed high. Ms. Moe indicated it is slightly high; however, some of the workers who had been dislocated have already been called back to work. She also indicated that the number is comparable to other years, but that the unemployment rate for Rock County, in particular, is down significantly compared to previous years.

6. **Other Topics for Discussion**

None.

7. **Adjournment**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17th, at the Rock County Job Center from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM in Room D/E.