

Southwest Counties Consortium Meeting

August 25, 2009

Meeting Minutes

The Southwest Counties Consortium meeting was held on Tuesday, August 25, 2009, at the Iowa County Courthouse in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present:	Mr. Art Carter	Mr. Mark Masters
	Mr. Russ Podzilni	

Members Excused:	Ms. Ann Greenheck	Mr. Jack Sauer
	Mr. John Patcle	

Guests Present:	Mr. Fred Cleary	Mr. Mark Stead
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Staff Present:	Dr. Robert Borremans	Ms. Katie Smith
	Ms. Annette Meudt	

1. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Masters, second by Mr. Podzilni to approve the minutes of the Southwest Counties Consortium meeting held on May 26, 2009. **Motion carried unanimously.**

2. Summer Youth Employment

Dr. Borremans gave an overview of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Summer Youth Employment Program. He explained that the program was not like previous summer youth work programs where young people were just placed on a job. This program tried to give youth a career pathway-type learning experience to help them gain skills and information related to future career interests. Board members agreed that it was a job well done and thanked all of those involved. He explained that one hundred and fifty (150) youth participated in the program and worked at both public and private sector worksites. He further added that because some participants did not complete the program, there was money available so SWWDB offered worksites the option of extending the program into the month of September. He added that 57 percent of the worksites asked for an extension into the month of September.

Dr. Borremans said that SWWDB participated in two Summer Youth Demonstration Projects. The first was an Energy Advocacy Project. He explained that the project was designed as a demonstration in low income communities to provide basic energy assistance to help homeowners improve home energy efficiency. This project has been very successful and was the subject of several news broadcasts in Madison and Rockford, IL. One of the news videos was shown. Dr. Borremans also showed a video of one of the Beloit youth performing a rap explaining the Energy Advocacy Project.

The second demonstration project was the Invasive Species project. Five (5) young people worked with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at boat landings providing information about Wisconsin's Invasive Species Act and collected information regarding boater habits.

3. Opportunity Grants

Dr. Borremans explained that the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has announced a new program called Opportunity Grants which will provide \$1.5 million PY 2009 to assist low income workers improve work-related skills. Dr. Borremans further explained that \$1.2 million will be used towards education and \$300,000 will fund wrap around support services. He added that the grants are intended to assist low-wage workers with little or no education or training beyond high school and improve their skills at one of the technical colleges. Instruction will be in short-term training that is not covered by financial aid.

Dr. Borremans informed the Committee that SWWDB will receive \$67,500 to assist individuals who meet the eligibility criteria. He noted, however, the guidelines had just been released and the technical colleges had already begun their school year and it was too late to enroll students for the Fall. SWWDB will target putting clients into the Winter semester that begins in January. He further noted that this is an unfunded mandate since the workforce boards will administer the program but will not receive any reimbursement for their activities.

4. Wisconsin Strategic Workforce Training Initiatives

Dr. Borremans explained that Governor Doyle has announced that \$5.89 million will be available for strategic workforce training initiatives to assist Wisconsin workers and businesses to succeed in the future economy. He added that the major enterprise in this plan is called the “Wisconsin Sector Strategies Initiative”, which provides nearly \$3 million in federal funds over the next two years.

Dr. Borremans said that the sector grants were intended to bring together business and education to develop training programs supporting the employment needs of the private sector. Funding will be limited to GROW regions and that the sector strategies projects will be coordinated with the South Central Workforce Development Board. He identified the driver industries for this region as: Agriculture, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, and Bio-Tech. The four sectors that South Central and Southwest will collaborate on and the lead organization will be:

1. Healthcare - South Central
2. Manufacturing - South Central
3. Food Processing - Southwest
4. Transportation & Distribution – Southwest

He said that grants were supposed to be awarded in June and July, but that SWWDB is still waiting to hear about their proposals.

5. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Occupational Training Initiatives

Dr. Borremans stated that more and more often federal and state agencies are using competitive proposals, targeted to special interest initiatives, as the way to distribute funds. Proposals that SWWDB is currently working on include:

- Health Care Sector and Other High Growth and Emerging Industries - \$220 Million
- State Labor Market Information Improvement Grants - \$50 Million
- Energy Training Partnership Grants - \$100 Million
- Pathways Out of Poverty - \$150 Million

- State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grants - \$190 Million
- Green Capacity Building Grants - \$5 Million

All of the listed proposals are due within the next 4-6 weeks. He said that grant writing requires developing concepts, coordinating activities, and leveraging funds between multiple agencies. It is a very complex and time intensive process. Dr. Borremans added that several of the grant opportunities are for auto impacted communities, therefore, he believes that SWWDB must make every effort to go after these grants.

6. WIA and ARRA Plan Update

Dr. Borremans reported that the 2009-10 WIA Plan has been formally approved by DWD, but no formal approval has been received to-date on the ARRA Supplement to the 2009-10 WIA Plan. He also explained that Karen Pfeil, DWD Local Program Liaison conducted ARRA program monitoring and no significant deficiencies were identified.

7. WIRED Update

Dr. Borremans explained that the WIRED Leadership Caucus approved several projects totaling approximately \$2.6 million. He added that only \$118,236 has been approved for projects in Southwest Wisconsin in the form of a Manufacturing Basic Skills Project. Dr. Borremans reported that WIRED will conclude on June 30, 2010 and the Department of Labor will not likely approve a “no cost” extension of the project; even though to-date, \$2.4 million dollars remain unobligated.

He added that Dr. Susan Hansen of UW-Platteville has replaced Dr. Duane Ford because he has been appointed Interim Provost and Vice-Chancellor during the UW-Platteville Chancellor search process. Dr. Borremans said that DOL is will be conducting an audit of the project in early September. Dr. Borremans advised that the WIRED Leadership Caucus meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2009.

8. Preliminary Program Year 2008-09 Performance

Dr. Borremans told committee members that preliminary performance results from the 2008-09 Program Year show that SWWDB met or exceeded all performance measures. He said this is an amazing accomplishment given the currently economic conditions in the area.

9. Other Business

None.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Podzilni, second by Mr. Masters to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.