

AWARE/CORD STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

NOTES FROM 1-27-09

Present:

- Bob Borremans, Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB) (presiding)
- Bud Gayhart, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
- James Otterstein, Rock County Economic Development
- Sue Conley, Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin
- Kent Kleiva, Monster.com
- Janine Peterson, United Way of North Rock County
- Sharon Kennedy, Blackhawk Technical College
- Lisa Furseth, Community Action
- Steve Ullrick, University of Wisconsin-Rock County
- Mary Frederick, UAW/GM Training and Education
- Tierney Grutza, UAW/GM
- Josh Smith, Rock County Administrator's Office
- Gail Graham, United Way of North Rock County
- Amy Charles, SWWDB
- Gregg Bosak, SWWDB (recording)

Bob contacted Larry Molnar, Associate Director, Institute for Research on Labor, Employment and the Economy at the University of Michigan, via conference call. Following introductions, Larry asked about the various work groups that were formed at the prior meeting: services needed/capacity building, financial, and communication. Bob mentioned that a fourth group, economic development, had already been formed over the summer and was moving forward, so we are partnering with them rather than duplicating.

James Otterstein gave an update of their work. Last week they held an invitation-only session with 31 present to review Rock County's economic trends and forecasts. They discussed collaborative implementation strategies, which are in alignment with what's been written into Rock County's EDA (implementation) grant that was announced Oct. 2009. There is ongoing planning regarding additional extensions of this original grant; recognizing that there are additional needs that cannot be adequately covered by the first grant. A preliminary concept grant has already been shared with the Chicago EDA office. Additionally, the group is working towards finalizing Rock County's overall Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document; while the basic framework has already been completed / approved, there are additional ideas / policies / projects that require more vetting, consensus, etc.

Larry is interested in obtaining that information, indicating he felt he could be helpful in determining what federal agencies might be the best place for seeking funding. Larry said he and his staff are preparing for the March 16 meeting at BTC. At the previous meeting in December he took eight pages of notes from the input from the various participants and assigned sections to his staff, mostly covering two areas—economic and sociological. He is also developing a listing of key stakeholders in the community, to serve as a list for a postcard (“save the date”) mailing with a more formal detailed letter to follow. By this Friday, invitations to all the federal agencies, along with appropriate state and non-profit agencies will be sent. He is also working on a community profile. It was mentioned that if we could include the logos of the “sponsoring” agencies (e.g., United Way, County of Rock, City of Janesville, City of Beloit, etc.) in the correspondence, that it would create more of a “buy in” with those agencies. For some elements, logos might work, where there is not limited space, but for other elements (such as a postcard), logos may not work given the number of them that would be used. James mentioned that even if a logo isn't used, the organization should still be listed by name to help create that link. When Larry Molnar is here on February 24, he will conduct an abbreviated focus group.

Kent wondered how long it might take before funding might be obtained. Larry said it generally takes between two-three months but with the upcoming stimulus package, it could be sooner. Larry said we needed to be “shovel ready,” referring not to just the building or construction aspect, but that projects need to meet the criteria the grantor is looking for so projects can start almost immediately. When asked how the day (March 16) might be look, Larry felt that there might be 18 or 20 federal agencies, state agencies and Foundations present. He said the first 1 ½ hours would be the agencies introducing themselves and giving a brief overview, followed by a break and then groups breaking into interest areas and meeting with the federal representatives at “private” tables with 6-8 chairs at each group’s location to discuss things such as funding sources, cycles, contact information, etc. That would take about 1 ½ hours. The total time would be about 3 ½ hours.

After Larry left the meeting, Gregg shared the list developed as a part of the capacity building committee. Gregg asked for each to review the list and make changes and/or deletions as necessary and get them back to him at g.bosak@jobcenter.org by Friday so he can update the list. That list will then be cross-referenced with Larry Molnar’s to produce a final list of businesses, organizations and individuals to invite to the March 16 meeting. James felt we needed to add the towns (or at least the RC Towns Association), municipalities, cities/villages and other similar units to ensure they feel a part of the group and process. He felt we needed to be inclusive. Chambers of commerce might help with those lists. Kent indicated that Monster.com could perhaps help in developing a community site (something they are now doing), especially since they now are considered a career management site. Various links were also suggested, especially to sites like First Call.

Gail reported on the financial committee’s meeting held January 23. Discussion centered on what the financial institutions in the area are witnessing given the state of the economy. The general consensus was that many Lear, LSI and other AWARE and non-auto-related laid off employees have been accessing financial services at local banks and CUs, but not that many GM workers. While Blackhawk CCU, Johnson Bank and M & I Bank had much input, along with Community Action, the group felt it was important that other groups, especially Consumer Credit Counseling, have additional input on problems they are encountering. Their next meeting is set for February 18 at 9 a.m. at M & M I Bank in Janesville with phone calls to be made to banking/CU institutions inviting them to be present. The group also felt that legislation to curtail predatory lending practices needed to be enhanced.

Gregg reported on the communication committee. Mary Frederick and Andy Richardson felt the best way to communicate with the UAW Local 95 group was through their web site. However, the site needs upgrading. With the assistance of SWWDB’s Mike Schultz (and Eric Guptail), plans call for the site to be hosted on SWWDB’s servers, and consisting of three parts—a news and updates page, a FAQ page, and a forum or thread page. While the forum page will have to be developed and regulated so it does not become a “venting” page, with categories to yet be defined, it will require a software package that has just been purchased. It was also recommended that various links be made to this page since non-UAW members might not know how or desire to access the site. Monster indicated that they now have a career management site and that they do “community sites,” and they perhaps can assist.

Josh mentioned that since many agencies had the same goal, one thing we did not need is different agencies competing against each other for the same dollars. James noted that there’s a need to address some pre-planning issues, to ensure that we’re addressing the appropriate information and reaching the targeted audiences (e.g. units of government / agencies, education, non-profits). It was agreed that an assessment / survey should be done immediately to determine what type of supply and demand exists on the federal grant side. Essentially, to determine the extent of the local matches already committed or expecting to be committed; therefore, ensuring collaboration with respect to securing any future federal grants. The survey will basically create a grants inventory, noting: which federal grants are already (annually) received by agencies; which agencies are in the process or applying or have already applied for federal assistance; and who / what are considering making an application, based on the local economic landscape. It was suggested that this inventory would categorize the grants into the following general areas: human services, workforce and education, financial/fiscal, infrastructure and economic development. Amy, Mary Penny, and Gregg will work on this, to hopefully have a list and survey instrument/process completed, hopefully by the end of the week.

Amy distributed an upcoming workshop schedule and asked if anyone with specialized skills or knowledge in the various disciplines to be covered could volunteer their time to help teach, it would be appreciated. Contact Amy Charles at a.charles@jobcenter.com. The next meeting is scheduled for February 10 at 9 a.m. in Room K at the Job Center.