

State Employment and Training Commission
March 31, 2009
10:00 A.M.
Janice H. Levin Building – Room 102
Rutgers University Campus
Piscataway, New Jersey

MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Remarks – Dennis M. Bone, Chairman, State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, Chairman, called the meeting to order and welcomed Commission members and alternates. The Open Public Meetings Act Statement was read: “In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting was published in the Trenton Times and Star Ledger.”

A motion to approve the minutes from both the September 2008 and November 2008 meetings was made and approved. In regard to the September minutes that mentions a national search for an Executive Director of the Commission, a member asked for an update on the status of this search. Mr. Bone acknowledged that a national search has not occurred given current demands of the Commission, and that he will address this issue in the near future. In the interim, Robin Widing continues to serve as the Acting Executive Director.

Though the January 2009 meeting was cancelled, this has been a busy time for the Commission and the workforce system. The system is under a lot of stress due to the economy, but the federal stimulus package presents a significant opportunity.

Chairman’s Report – Dennis M. Bone, Chairman, State Employment and Training Commission

The State Employment and Training Commission’s (SETC) Planning Responsibilities

The NJ SETC is guided by both the Workforce Investment Act of 1994, as well as by State law. The Commission’s responsibilities include:

- Preparing and issuing the NJ One-Stop Workforce Investment System Unified State Plan per WIA requirements and guidance from the US Department of Labor.
- Establishing performance standards for workforce investment programs which are included in the State Plan.
- Ensuring full participation of WIBs – Workforce Investment Boards – in the planning and oversight of local workforce investment systems.

- Establishing guidelines for local WIBs for their planning, local policy development and oversight functions.
- Fostering collaboration and coordination with State partner agencies to implement workforce investment policies.

WIB Chair Meetings

Mr. Bone indicated that he and Robin Widing hosted regional meetings with local WIB Chairs and that the meetings were well received. These meetings provided the Chairs the opportunity to discuss issues and to identify the type of information and data WIBs need to better carry out their responsibilities. As a result of these initial meetings, Mr. Bone has committed to regional meetings each quarter. The next meeting will take place in April.

Plan Extension Request

US Department of Labor has recommended that states file a request to extend their existing five-year plans for an additional year. This is due by April 15, 2009, and should include any requests to extend current waivers and/or add new ones and revise performance measures that better align with the changes in New Jersey's economy. NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development is preparing the request for waivers and revised performance measures for the SETC to submit.

Plan Modification

US Department of Labor is requiring states to submit a modification of their State plan by June 30, 2009. The modification should describe how programs and services funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will be implemented at the State and local levels. Four principals guide the development of the modified plan:

- Transparency and accountability in the use of Recovery Act funds;
- Timely spending of the funds and implementation of activities;
- Increasing workforce system capacity and service levels; and
- Using data and workforce information to guide strategic planning and service delivery.

Five-Year State Plan

- It is anticipated that the Five-year strategic plan that sets the framework, guidance and requirements for delivery of programs and services under the Workforce Investment Act and the Wagner-Peyser Act will be due June 30, 2010. Instructions were published in the Federal Register in December – but have been withdrawn pending new administration input and potentially the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. New Jersey was one of only four States to file a “unified” plan that embraced all of its partners and the full integration of programs and services – rather than a more simplified plan for WIA and Wagner-Peyser only.

SETC Committees

Information on current and proposed committees was included in the meeting packets, along with forms asking Commission members to sign up for committees of interest. These forms are requested to be sent to Robin Widing within two weeks. Mr. Bone will appoint Chairs for the new committees and the SETC staff will provide support for committee work.

Current and proposed committees are as follows:

- Apprenticeship Pathways Committee (current) – The Committee focuses on developing policies to guide further development of apprenticeable occupations and oversees the NJ Place (New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education) program.
- Disability Issues Committee (current) – The Committee is responsible for developing policies and strategies for individuals with disabilities in the workforce investment system, as well as encouraging the training and placement of these individuals. The Committee has partnered with the New Jersey Department of Human Services in developing and implementing a Strategic Plan.
- Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education (current) – The Council works to recommend programs and policies to break down gender-based barriers and encourages equal participation in the workforce investment system and the workplace. Currently the Council is finalizing a report addressing women in the legal profession. The Council is also working on legislation addressing the Equal Pay Act and Gender Equity Issues.
- Governance Committee (proposed) – The goal of the Governance Committee will be to enhance and empower Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to carry out their planning and oversight responsibilities. This Committee will support the SETC’s function to develop appropriate standards for local areas and ensure that WIBs are in compliance with State and federal law, the State plan and other relevant policy regarding membership and functions.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to create a new Governance Committee within the SETC.

- Planning Committee (proposed) – The Committee will be responsible for overseeing development of a new five-year Unified State Plan to be submitted in 2010. The plan will be reflective of the Governor’s goals and the emerging economy and will result from an inclusive planning process. In addition, the plan will include policies, standards, programs and operational policies required to meet US Department of Labor planning guidelines.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed to create a new Planning Committee within the SETC.

- Public Sector Planning Committee (current) – The Committee provides a forum for State workforce investment agencies to exchange information and leverage resources in support of the system. It includes State Agency Commissioners and Executive Directors and their designated representatives. The agenda is presently focused on workforce issues resulting from stimulus funding at both the State and national level.
- State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) (current) – SCALES mission is to facilitate State and local adult literacy policy development, planning and oversight. The Council’s work has centered on establishing statewide standards for adult literacy education, developing guidelines for local WIBs planning, promoting the development and implementation of the Work Readiness Credential, and most recently exploring how to improve transitions from adult secondary education to postsecondary education.
- Other Committees – There have been other committees of the SETC, such as the Performance Evaluation Committee. The Commission will continually assess the need for additional committees and, as appropriate, establish them on either an ad hoc or permanent basis.

Deputy Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), Lenny Katz, was given the opportunity to share some comments. He has been with LWD for many years, was the Assistant Commissioner for Labor Standards and Safety Enforcement, and had taken the early retirement packaged offered in 2008, but was given a one-year extension. He has recently assumed the Deputy Commissioner position until retirement. LWD shares the federal concern that the ARRA funds be spent expeditiously and cost-effectively. LWD is confident its proposed bulk contracting proposal can help local areas meet the goals for ARRA funds.

Green Jobs Report – Aaron Fichtner, Director of Research and Evaluation and Allison Kopicki, Project Manager, Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University

Aaron Fichtner and Allison Kopicki gave a PowerPoint presentation on green jobs.

The SETC contracted with the Heldrich Center to develop a Green Jobs report.

There is no standard definition for green jobs and generally they are existing jobs that have taken on a “green” component, such as an electrician who installs energy efficient lighting. Green jobs cut across many industries and occupations. Green jobs in New Jersey tend to fit within two broad industry areas: Renewable/Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency/Conservation. Major drivers of “green” energy job creation in New Jersey are:

- New Jersey Clean Energy Program
- New Jersey Energy Master Plan
- Governor’s Economic Assistance and Recovery Plan
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Three key areas of the energy economy are:

- Traditional Energy – includes customer service representatives, line workers, power plant operators
- Energy Efficiency – includes carpenters, electricians, energy auditors, mechanical and electrical engineers
- Renewable Energy – includes installers construction operators, operators and maintenance technicians, research and development scientists

Although the skill requirements for green jobs is still emerging, sustainability and systems knowledge; green technologies, standards, and processes; and life cycle analysis are important competencies for the “green” workforce to possess.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Presentation and Discussion – Robin Widing, Acting Executive Director, State Employment and Training Commission

Robin Widing presented a PowerPoint on ARRA goals, which are to:

- Preserve and create jobs
- Promote the nation’s economic recovery
- Assist those most impacted by the recession
- Increase employment and training services
- Assist workers facing unprecedented challenges

The law stresses transparency and accountability, timely spending of funds, increasing system capacity to serve, and the use of data to make decisions. New Jersey’s workforce has received approximately \$9.3 million for disadvantaged adults, approximately \$32.7 million for dislocated workers, approximately \$20.8 million for youth and an additional \$10.6 million for Wagner Peyser activities.

The funding is expected to spur innovation and the majority of the money will go to direct services. Though ARRA focuses on getting people into jobs as quickly as possible, there is a significant emphasis on training to build the skills of the workforce. The law requires oversight and reporting. The federal government has created a website (www.recovery.gov) on which information on states spending of ARRA funds will be reported. New Jersey has a similar site (www.recoverynj.gov) for State expenditures. The SETC is responsible for oversight of the workforce system and as such will work with local areas to help ensure that the goals of ARRA are met.

The SETC is in the process of submitting a request to extend the State plan, along with waiver request and proposed new levels of performance (due to USDOL by April 15, 2009). As a result of the ARRA, the State WIB – the SETC for NJ – has a planning responsibility to modify the State plan as required by USDOL to address this new funding and associated activities. This modification is due by June 30, 2009. In addition, the SETC has directed each local area to submit a plan for the use of ARRA funds (due back to the SETC in May 2009).

New Jersey is one of four States that has consolidated workforce functions under one agency. We are the only State that has literacy centers in the One Stop Career Centers.

One-Stop Career Centers are seeing a new clientele of dislocated workers who have higher skills, a greater work history and have been displaced from a higher income job. This has placed greater stress on the system that is not used to handling this population, certainly not in large numbers. The addition of ARRA funding to provide more and better training options will undoubtedly enhance the ability of One-Stop Career Centers to meet the needs of many job-seeking customers and better prepare them for employment with business customers.

Open Discussion

Chairman Bone asked each SETC State partner agency in attendance to briefly comment on the impact of ARRA.

The Department of Education has received ARRA funding. ARRA education funds create an opportunity for educators to implement innovative strategies to improve education for students from low-income families and to improve outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. These funds are disbursed to local school districts based on federal formula, and are to be used at local discretion, within the parameters set by law.

Adult high school funding continues to be an issue and more districts will likely eliminate these programs. Adult high schools meet State standards and follow their operating district's curriculum. They currently serve about 8000 students. There is no longer any direct State funding for these programs, nor is there an earmark in ARRA to support them. Thus, funding for these programs is left to the discretion of districts whose budgets are already tight.

There were a number of comments about the importance of adult high schools as an option for adults to earn a high school credential. Adults without a high school diploma have very limited prospects for jobs that pay a self-sufficient wage. Loss of these programs would reduce the opportunity for adults to meet what is clearly recognized as a prerequisite to advance to further education and training necessary to earn a middleclass income. Thus, the Commission should weigh-in on the adult high school funding issue.

SCALES was asked to discuss adult high schools at their next meeting and to make a recommendation for next steps to the Commission.

Traders to Teachers, a program to train people who have lost jobs in the financial sector to be math teachers will be piloted during the Fall semester at Montclair State University.

The Department of Human Services indicated that they are receiving ARRA funding to expand health insurance to the needy and to provide childcare.

The Department of Community Affairs is receiving ARRA funding for neighborhood stabilization and weatherization programs and for block grants training.

The Juvenile Justice Commission noted that they are not receiving any direct ARRA funding, but are hoping to partner with local workforce investment areas to serve their population.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development discussed the ARRA funding it received and how it is working with WIBs to ensure that local programs are consistent with federal regulations and State intent. LWD is also collaborating with partner agencies to ensure that those in greatest need for workforce services receive assistance.

One training option that LWD is organizing and promoting to local areas is bulk training contracts through the community college system. This training will focus on the skills that are in demand for current job openings. When appropriate, the colleges will integrate literacy skill into the training, and at the completion of the training the colleges will provide job placement. This strategy should help expedite the process of getting people into the training they need.

Concern was expressed about One-Stop Career Centers' capacity to serve their customers. It was noted that at some of the One-Stop Centers there are backups in service delivery because of the large number of unemployed. Commission members expressed concern about the responsiveness of some One-Stop Centers to employers' job orders. Two Commission members recounted occurrences when One-Stop Centers failed to assist them in filling job openings. One-Stop staff must be properly trained and procedures need to be put in place to ensure responsiveness to employers and jobseekers.

Though One-Stops must be responsive, LWD noted that these centers are understaffed due to past federal reductions in funding and a State hiring freeze. While the infusion of ARRA money will primarily go to fund direct services to customers, LWD is introducing new technologies and techniques to improve services.

The Burlington County WIB Chair, Bob Santare, indicated that he surveyed businesses in his area. Though job opportunities are flat or declining, there are openings in heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), manufacturing, machine operations, services, healthcare, and claims representatives. Stimulus money should also be used for layoff aversion/job retention to provide shared work options and to supplement workers' wages.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

The next meeting: May 26, 2009

**State Employment and Training Commission
March 31, 2009
Attendees**

Members and Alternates

Marie Barry (for Davy)	Lenny Katz (for Socolow)	Julio Sabater
Dana Berry	Veleria Lawson	Robert Santare
Dennis Bone	Jody Levinson	Tapas Sen
Michael Cantwell	Brian McAndrew	Doris Sims (for Velez)
Celeste Carpiano	Matthew McDermott	JoAnn Trezza
Gail Davis	Joe McNamara	Carolyn Wade
Deborah Heinz (for Doria)	Robert Munyan	Charles Wowkanech
Stephen Hornik	Clifford Reisser	
Andrea Karsian		

ABSENT MEMBERS

Harold Burlingame	Henry Henderson
Michael Carey	Joseph Krimko
Peter Contini	Rev. Bill Linder
Caren Franzini	Harvey Nutter
Nicky Gacos	Jane Oates
Robert Gamgort	Bruce Stout

OTHER ATTENDEES

Elsa Candelario	Jane Guillard	Nils Richardson
Juanito Chiluisa	Laura Hart	Dennis Rizzo
Vito DeSantis	Alice Hunnicutt	Barry Semple
Aaron Fichtner	Allison Kopicki	Sharon Taylor
Brian Fitzgibbons	Tony Langon	Greg Williams
Robin Ford	Felix Mickens	
Joe Gazzara	Michelle Richardson	

SETC STAFF

Lansing Davis	Deborah O'Kane
Judith Formalarie	Robin Widing
Maureen O'Brien-Murphy	