

Regional Workforce Investment Board
Business & Industry Member Discussion

NOTES

March 27, 2008
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Shillo Inn Board Room
Klamath Falls, Oregon

On March 27, business and industry members of the RWIB for Klamath and Lake Counties gathered for an informal discussion. The meeting was requested by RWIB Chair Tara Pritchard in order to hear from members their perspectives on their membership role, the role they envisioned for the RWIB in region 11, and the one stop system in general. Notice of the meeting time and location were posted on the web, sent to the local newspaper and distributed to the Klamath and Lake County Courthouses.

Tara Pritchard, Scott Koch, Amy Hathaway (membership pending), Susan Galloway (membership pending), Marc Kane, Kathryn Rutledge, Jerry Bowers, Archie Linman, and Pamela Redding participated. The Oregon Workforce Alliance supported the participation of Kris Latimer, TOC/OWA staff to facilitate.

Because several members are new to the RWIB the group began by sharing information about themselves, their business / industry involvement, why and when they joined the RWIB, and how they felt about current developments of the RWIB and/or the Workforce Development One-Stop system.

Most individuals shared that they joined the RWIB because they were using the system to access job seekers and they wanted to provide private sector insights and guidance. Members sighted issues related to recruitment and job referral including work readiness (i.e. attitude, absenteeism, appearance and skills) as well as life skill issues of drug/alcohol abuse, child care, etc. They also felt that they brought perspectives to the discussion of the delivery of services that could augment the return on investment made (i.e. increased investments in on the job training).

Members also expressed their broader reasons for joining the board which included: being involved with the provision of support and opportunities for youth and general community service.

Members felt strongly that their concerns / issues were down played by the public sector and one-stop partners at the RWIB table. Members expressed frustration regarding the domination by the partners of conversations and agendas, when the RWIB, by policy, is to be lead by the private sector. Specifically a lack of willingness to learn, understand and change, as well as an inability to be flexible and responsive to the needs of business were mentioned.

The business and industry members who participated in this meeting felt that the system could be more effective by – engaging the business and industry members more fully in conversations about the investment of flexible funds (i.e. Employer Workforce Training Fund), how to positively impact the economic vitality of the rural area, developing mechanisms to assist employers in training workers (subsidies, opportunities, clusters, industry co-op's and consortia).

Members also voiced opinions about the current “one-stop” system operating in Klamath Falls particularly and several concerns were raised. The majority of members felt the current design was inadequate and did not accurately reflect the desires of the one-stop committee (which was business lead). The group agreed that the one-stop and the services delivered within and via the internet were inadequate to meet business and/or job seeker needs.

The desire expressed by these members for the one-stop is for it to move away from being a “facility” to being a place where job seekers may stop in, review job postings which are readily available (i.e. bulletin board style). Members, as employers, also want to see the partners in the one-stop be sensitive and responsive to their needs – several concerns regarding job seeker / referral services and job postings were raised.

Other concerns about the current delivery of services by the one-stop partners include overall responsiveness, access, flexibility, attitude, understanding and desire / ability to meet the needs of business.

Following this lengthy conversation the group took a moment to review the roles of the RWIB specifically related to the concerns they expressed. The RWIB has a role (in partnership with the Oregon Workforce Alliance) in the coordination and oversight for regional workforce activities, including:

- Timely review and evaluation of regional workforce related programs (all programs involved in the one-stop system), resources and activities; and
- Implementation of regional programs/expectations designed to increase the capability, productivity or efficiency of regional programs.

Based on the input of the members and roles as defined – the group saw good alignment in their ability to address concerns they expressed in common and want to pursue this conversation further.

Members turned the conversation back to the effectiveness of the RWIB structure and current meeting agendas, expressing concerns about the dominance of representation from the public sector and continued focus on “programmatic” conversations that are of little if any value to business and industry.

The group reviewed quickly the RWIBs current membership and committee structure. According to the current bylaws the RWIB will maintain the following committees:

Workforce Response Team: The Workforce Response Team (WRT) is responsible for the solicitation and designation of projects funded under the Employer Workforce Training Fund. Required members of the WRT who are not members of the RWIB are allowed to fully participate.

Youth Committee: The RWIB will maintain a Youth Council.

One-Stop Committee: The One-Stop Committee shall consist of those public and at-large members who participate in the region’s one-stop system. This committee will meet on a regular basis to conduct business directly related to program/systems operations.

Other committees (i.e. membership) may be designated by the Chair on an ad-hoc basis

It was noted that these committees had been established and were meeting in the Spring of 2007 but had ceased to meet or to report back to the Board over the past several months.

As the members discussed their concerns and the functionality of the Board it was apparent that conversations about the future operation of the RWIB were in order and therefore the group respectfully submits the following for consideration / discussion:

First, the RWIB Chair should consider instituting a business and industry committee. Membership of this committee would be made up of all business and industry members, plus the Labor Representative to the Board so long as that individual represents organized labor in the private sector.

Second, the One-Stop Committee should be directed to meet as defined in the bylaws and a chair of that committee should be selected.

Third, the RWIB should consider meeting on a less frequent basis in order to allow committees to work between meetings and to make meeting agendas more meaningful. Suggestion is quarterly at this time.

By providing the opportunity for committees to gather, meet and work between meetings, the RWIB can expect to see progress towards goals, meaningful work and engaged members.

Following this conversation the group adjourned due to time. All attendees expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to meet and to discuss their concerns and their desire to continue to work with the RWIB in order to assist the one-stop system to realize a more significant return on investment.