



**State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services
Wednesday, November 20, 2014
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
13th Floor Auditorium
Trenton, NJ 08625**

Minutes

Welcome

Hal Beder, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. He welcomed all in attendance and thanked Deputy Commissioner Aaron Fichtner, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) for agreeing to respond to questions and participate in a discussion about the direction of adult literacy.

Discussion with the Deputy Commissioner, Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Dr. Beder introduced the first question: What is the current status of the blueprint planning initiative?

Dr. Fichtner acknowledged the importance of State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) in setting a direction for the adult literacy system. He indicated that at the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) meeting on Tuesday, November 18, 2014 he did a presentation about implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). Full implementation begins on July 1, 2016, but many provisions take effect July 1, 2015. There will be two phases of planning and implementation. LWD will work with the SETC in developing a unified state workforce plan as required by WIOA. Although full planning will be done next year, the state will begin developing a planning blueprint now. An internal workgroup consisting of state staff and outside stakeholders is being formed to do a deep analysis of the law. Dr. Fichtner would like this group to meet with SCALES in January to have a discussion about the Council's issues and ideas concerning WIOA. Once developed, there will be a number of ways to react to the blueprint. Stakeholders will be invited to a summit in February, which will include presentations by state staff and national experts. SCALES can help identify experts to address adult literacy and career pathways models. LWD will also launch a WIOA implementation website to disseminate information and obtain input from stakeholders. After these activities, the workgroup will come back and meet with SCALES to present their findings and suggest policy changes.

Dr. Fichtner affirmed the importance of the WIOA regulations that will be issued in January. Through both the US Departments of Education and Labor have responsibility for WIOA, Education is writing the Title II regulations, not Labor.

Since 1967, federal adult education legislation, including WIA Title II, had changed very little. However, WIOA is a game changer. There seems to be a move away from targeting low-level students who may only achieve a small grade-level increase (a secondary outcome under WIOA) in a program year, to higher level students who are better positioned to transition to postsecondary education and training or have improved employment/career outcomes (primary metrics under WIOA). Dr. Fichtner indicated that the literacy system is greater than WIOA and other programs like the Workforce Learning Links (WLL) could be structured to accommodate populations that aren't served well through WIOA funding. At this point no decision has been made concerning how the 15% Governors reserve under WIOA will be used. The 12% leadership funding remains in Title II WIOA.

LWD should expand but better coordinate WLL, which help learners improve their literacy skills as well as build digital fluency. This is particularly important in the corrections system.

The second question: What is the investment strategy going forward as it relates to WIOA planning, career pathways, skill development, and credentials?

Dr. Fichtner indicated we are at the early stages of this discussion and that's why it is important to have conversations like this. LWD is committed to create better career pathways through connecting literacy programs with occupational training initiatives. We need to think about how we can facilitate development of programs that enable customers to improve their literacy skills while simultaneously completing occupational skills training. Although it will be harder to achieve postsecondary and credential outcomes for low literacy students, we must ensure that this group has access to literacy services. It's important that the adult literacy system is well integrated into workforce development.

Dr. Beder mentioned that the state legislature passed a bill that would restore adult high schools and fund them at \$1500 per student. If signed by the Governor, the legislation would provide funding through the Department of Education (DOE) that would almost equal Title II funding. The community colleges get significant funding for developmental education. Although Literacy Volunteers does not receive substantial funding, the organization serves a significant number of adults. How do you bring these various programs together within a system? This is a daunting task. In some areas, referrals from the One-Stop Center to the Title II program do not typically happen. WIOA creates an opportunity to connect literacy services to career pathways and get people on the road to self-sufficiency.

Like WIA, WIOA only calls for the WIBs to review local Title II proposals. It is hoped that the regulations will strengthen this requirement, giving WIBs more influence, improving connections between Title II and WLL, and reducing the redundancy between these programs. Title II consortia have greater expertise in providing literacy services. The question of whether the One-Stop

Operator should be included in the local literacy planning and implementation process was raised. Under WIOA there is a greater expectation for regional planning and cooperation.

Career pathways will require strong partnerships between the workforce and literacy systems as well as county colleges, vocational schools, comprehensive school districts and community-based organizations. Increasing the number of people who have industry-valued postsecondary credentials is a major focus of the system.

The focus on career pathways may shift literacy services from low level literacy learners, whose immediate goals focus on basic skills rather than career pathways. Literacy planning should address this issue based on State priorities and there should be a differentiation between types of programs in the system based on which segments of the literacy population they serve best.

The term career pathways should be defined. SCALES, with the help of outside experts, should provide guidance in helping to define what career pathways should look like. The career pathways model should provide opportunities to support learners with low literacy skills as they prepare for employment, while helping them gain skills and credentials. However, there is a real fear that WIOA will drive the system to focus on the higher level students because it is easier to achieve the performance outcomes with this population.

Technology should be used to deliver and support educational content. The software utilized in the WLL offer a variety of content including basic literacy, English language, soft skills, and job search. It would be a significant step forward if access to this software were available to learners outside the physical location of the WWL, while still providing them in-classroom opportunities, a hybrid model. Libraries and One-Stops can provide access to computers for low literate populations who don't have them at home.

Under WIOA, English and numeracy skills are still important, but should be contextualized with a career focus. This shift will require significant professional development for teachers and better collaboration with One-Stops can help Title II programs meet performance metrics which stress employment outcomes.

The third question: What is the role of SCALES in moving the adult literacy system forward?

Dr. Fichtner responded that it would be helpful for SCALES to provide a short document for the workgroup to consider that presents the principles, concerns, and goals that need to be considered as WIOA is implemented as well as suggestions for external resources. Dr. Fichtner proposed that SCALES meet with the workgroup in January and in closing, thanked SCALES for all its work toward improving the literacy system.

SCALES did an inventory of the adult literacy system; that needs to happen again. A goal of the NGA grant is to do an asset map of the workforce system, including adult literacy.

Introductions and Updates

Because introductions at the beginning of the meeting were tabled to provide ample opportunity for discussion with the Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Beder asked attendees to introduce themselves at this time. He then asked if there were updates from any State agency.

Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD)

Howard Miller, Chief of Customized Training and State Director of Adult Education, mentioned that his office has begun messaging with Title II program directors and other key literacy stakeholder groups about the changes WIOA will spur.

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Jean-Baptiste, Director of Education, indicated that the passing rate for students in state correction facilities on the high school equivalency test is 75%. DOC is preparing to make the new test available to its students in January 2015.

New Jersey State Library

Mary Chute, State Librarian, pointed out that libraries do significant work around digital literacy. Although typically not part of a formal structure, librarians help individuals learn the basics of using online technology and how to use it to navigate and negotiate their world. Libraries should be included when the asset mapping takes place.

Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

Marie Virella, SLDS Collections Steward stated that the Office of the Secretary is actively involved in the NGA project, working closely with DOE and LWD to examine the pipeline issues.

State Employment and Training Commission

Michele Boronkas, Executive Director, reiterated that NGA awarded New Jersey a two year, \$170,000 planning grant. The grant comes with access to national experts.

Comments

Dr. Beder indicated that attendees who represent a SCALES member can vote, but if multiple people represent an agency, only one can vote. Julio Sabater suggested that more private sector members are needed and that the Department of Health and Senior Services should be invited. Michele Boronkas mentioned that we should talk to Verizon, who is a major supporter of literacy, about what their literacy investment strategy is and how we can link that with the State vision. Barry Semple stated that there needs to be greater clarity on what the role of the WIB is in regard to literacy planning. Howard Miller noted that he requires a WIB review of consortia applications in the Title II application proposal.

Approval of the Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2014 meeting was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

SCALES Attendance- Wednesday, 11/20/14

Members and Alternates

Jean Baptiste- Department of Corrections

Hal Beder- Retired

Michele Boronkas- State Employment and Training Commission

Aaron Fichtner- Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Terri Hughes- Department of Human Services

Judy Larkin- Department of Community Affairs

Julio Sabater- Workforce Advantage USA

Barry Semple- Retired

Marie Virella- Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

Guest

Mary Chute- New Jersey State Library

David Kring- NJALL

Tiffany McClary- New Jersey State Library

Howard Miller- Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Staff

Lansing Davis- State Employment and Training Commission