

**State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services
Friday, February 6, 2015
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
13th Floor Auditorium
Trenton, NJ 08625**

Minutes

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Hal Beder, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and had attendees introduced themselves. The minutes of the November 20, 2014 meeting were approved.

Discussion: Adult Literacy and WIOA

Lansing Davis provided a brief overview of the WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) planning process that the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) and the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) are spearheading. There are WIOA planning groups that are delving into specific key implementation areas. There are also webinars that are being conducted to provide the public with information and to provide opportunities for input and questions. There is also a website and there will be a statewide summit on March 31 and April 1 of this year. Dr. Beder indicated that the legislation that governs federal adult literacy funding and programs has been relatively stable since the early 70's, but WIOA is a game change.

Dr. Beder introduced a document that he had prepared for the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) in response to Deputy Commissioner Aaron Fichtner's request at the last SCALES meeting. This document addresses major adult literacy planning issues associated with WIOA implementation in New Jersey.

There was a discussion about key changes such as a substantially greater focus on out-of-school youth and the development of career pathways. It was also noted that WIOA seems to add more requirements, but not additional funding. However, the regulations when released may provide greater flexibility than indicated by the law. Although the focus of this planning is on implementing federal legislation, the process creates the opportunity to review state programs and where appropriate recommend changes to fortify WIOA or to fill gaps created by the new law.

There are examples, "best practices," that the state should look at. The Shifting Gears initiative around career pathways is one example. The states involved in this worked with the Joyce Foundation which provided funding for planning and implementation. There are well established career pathways so New Jersey doesn't have to start at the beginning. It's important that career pathways be flexible so that learners gain skills along a continuum, but are not locked into limited selected occupational areas.

Howard Miller discussed the need to leverage funding through partnering with other programs and providers. He also emphasized the importance of improving services and outcomes. There was agreement that there needs to be better coordination of services. There also needs to be a clear definition of what career pathways are and we should be able to point to models so everyone is on the same page. We also need to be mindful that practitioners must be trained and given the opportunity to buy-in to the change. They also need to understand how to contextualize learning to build skills, both general work-ready and specific career focused. At the very least, practitioners need to have guidelines that outline what are the New Jersey elements of career pathways, and there should be some level of state coordination and model development.

The high school equivalency test developers are also interested in helping to create curriculum for career pathways.

Skilled Immigrants Subcommittee Briefing

Nick Montalto indicated that in June 2014 the Skilled Immigrant subcommittee was established within SCALES. He reviewed the organizational categories represented on the subcommittee, which included community-based, higher education, immigrant advocacy and service, and government. The meetings, four in all, were conducted by conference call.

The workforce system should respond to the needs of a diverse population whose needs vary. The one size fits all approach generally falls short of serving most well. The subcommittee's task was to examine the needs of skilled immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurs, a growing segment of New Jersey's population. The percentage of skilled immigrants is growing both here in New Jersey and throughout the country. Traditionally, the percentage of low skilled immigrants coming into the state was significantly greater than high skilled immigrant. That has changed with college educated immigrants representing the greater percentage. Immigrant entrepreneurs can be found throughout the skill level groupings of immigrants, including the low skilled, those with less than a high school diploma. A recent report suggests that about 37% of immigrant entrepreneurs nationally don't have a high school diploma.

Many immigrants have skills needed in the US economy, yet too many high skilled immigrant face significant barriers to employment, especially in jobs commensurate to their skill level and occupational area. The report also provides example of good practices around the country to help immigrants improve their employment prospects and contribute to the economic well-being of their states and communities.

The subcommittee made 14 recommendations for actions that should be taken, including information sharing, training, capacity-building, research, evaluation, leadership formation, and program development. These issues should also be addressed in the WIOA planning process and serving the needs of this population is consistent with WIOA's focus on career pathways. The report includes a list of resources that the state can tap into.

The subcommittee is asking SCALES to approve the report and recommend its presentation to the SETC.

A major point of emphasis during the discussion of the report was the economic asset perspective, i.e. skilled immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurs can add value to the economy. It was also noted that successful entrepreneurs not only create income opportunities for themselves, but jobs for others, directly through hiring workers and indirectly by purchasing goods and services from other business.

SCALES approved the report which will now be submitted to the SETC for discussion.

Standard Operating Policies and Procedures

Lansing Davis indicated that the SETC has asked all of its committees and councils to develop standard operation procedures (SOP) to inform members and the public about their mission and to guide how they operate. It was evident at the last SCALES meeting that members need more information about SCALES and how it operates. For example, there was questions raised about who could vote on a motion.

Much of the language in this SOP comes right out of the enabling legislation for SCALES, including the section on membership. This document clarifies who can vote on motions. Section 4 which indicates that SCALES should report to the SETC, though not specifically stated in the law, seems appropriate since legislatively the Council sits within the Commission. One issue not addressed is what constitutes a quorum.

Julio suggested that the Department of Health and Senior Services should be invited to join SCALES. Although the Council has the latitude to invite participation from any stakeholder group, actual membership is defined by legislation and appointment made by either the Governor, the President of the Senate, or the Speaker of the Assembly as specified in the law. Any changes will have to come through passage of amendments to the law, which could be a lengthy process. There was also a discussion about the responsibilities delineated in the legislation for SCALES.

A motion to table the discussion on the SOP for this meeting was passed. Lansing Davis asked that members provide him with input on the SOP. He will then revise the document for discussion at the March meeting.

Larry Breedan indicated that the Department of Education just issued an RFQ (Request for Quote) to expand the number of high school equivalency testing centers.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Attendees:

Jean Baptiste- Department of Corrections

Larry Breeden- Department of Education

Hal Beder- Retired

Peggy Cardigan- New Jersey State Library

Lansing Davis- NJ State Employment and Training Commission

Elissa Director- Consultant

Nancy Fisher- Jewish Vocational Services

Terri Hughes- Department of Human Services

Renee Ingram- Department of Human Services

Erik Jacobson- Montclair University

Judy Larkin- Department of Community Affairs

Howard Miller- NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Nick Montalto- Diversity Dynamics

Julio Sabater- Workforce Advantage USA

Barry Semple- Retired

Marie Virella- Higher Education