

Salt Lake & Tooele Employer Committee (SLTEC) Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

The Intermountain Employee Services Center
5245 S. College Drive Room #6
Murray, UT 84123
Jill Boyle, Host (801) 270-4366

Attendees: Debbie Pazos, Jill Boyle, James Glade, Paul Ledesma, Jared Smith, Cici Compton, Julia Bench, Christine Kronkow, Tracy Taggart, Craig Sandberg, Jeff Erekson, Sarah Gloyn, Sean Morris, Donna Gonzalez, Joe Tate, Faye Martell, Laurel Morris, Kim Lam, Vicki Giesler, Tala Lakin, Bill Montague, Amber Adams.

Excused: Brent Anderson, Jennifer Bastian, Tammy Johnson, Roberta Williams, and Summer Palmer

Paul Ledesma, SLTEC Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and reviewed the agenda and turned the time over to Laurel for a discussion regarding changes at DWS.

Report – Change in Direction for DWS Business Services and it's impact on the committee – Laurel Morris

Laurel shared a brief history of the committee. She pointed out that the committee is a volunteer organization that has changed focus over the years often as a reflection of the change of direction of the Department. The Committee serves as a connecting point for the Department to the employers in the community. The committee has recently co-sponsored educational seminars and workshops for employers, but that has not always been the case.

Laurel indicated that the Department has adjusted over the past few years to the continuous decline of Wagner Peyser funding which is the DWS funding source for business services and job seeker services. DWS has been focusing on self help technology to free up the human resources to do other things.

Laurel reported that the Department recently held a retreat to review Business Services particularly in light of Return on Investment. DWS is implementing strategies that focus on obtaining entry to midlevel jobs for DWS case managed customers. Staff who have been involved in Business Services are shifting their priorities to make sure their work activities impact the desired outcome of increased customer access to entry and midlevel jobs.

In light of these changes, Central Region has determined that we can no longer provide the administrative supports necessary to continue the SLTEC “for- fee” seminars. The ROI for the seminars and workshops is viewed as insufficient and not focused on the

priority outcome of obtaining entry to midlevel jobs for case managed customers. Other factors impacting the decision to discontinue the seminars are: this is a service duplicated in the private sector, the collecting of fees for this type of seminar, doesn't fit with the role of government, and the amount of administrative support provided to organize the seminars and track the finances cannot be justified in light of the Department's desired outcomes.

Central is also looking at limiting participation in chambers and outside organizations in order to free up resources to focus on developing targeted jobs.

Laurel reminded the group that we recently had to cancel a seminar due to low registration numbers and we have struggled to break even on other seminars. Thus the decision to discontinue seminars is timely in terms of the recession.

Cici referred back to two years ago when the same issue presented itself and she and Sarah met with DWS upper management. Although the Department wanted to discontinue the seminars, she and Sarah were able to persuade DWS to continue at that time. She indicated that considering the funding issues and change in direction for the Department, it's really no surprise that this topic is being revisited.

Cici asked about the possibility of continuing workshops. Laurel responded that it is unlikely for now. However, there may be some wiggle room in the future, the need may arise for the Department to utilize this format to educate employers about specific DWS programs and services. Laurel was unsure about whether or not the SLTEC committee would be involved in helping to facilitate DWS workshops in the future. She indicated she would like to keep the door open to that possibility.

Laurel pointed out that the committee has had a two-fold purpose: Seminars/workshops and the committee's business meetings every other month. The meetings have been very beneficial as a forum for information exchange between employers and DWS. There's still a role on the committee for this, but DWS administration wants more participation for running the committee from committee members and less from DWS staff. Two years ago the other four regions within DWS dissolved their employer committees. They are still working with employers, but without the structure of an employer committee.

Cici pointed out that the committee was able to buy DWS things that we wouldn't have been able to purchase. She also mentioned that if seminars ever resume, we'd need to look at doing registration automatically.

Laurel noted that Central Region recently redesigned registration, but never got the chance to implement the process. She also noted that she doesn't think it is likely that DWS will want to support "for-fee" seminars in the future.

DWS is willing to support the committee's involvement as a partner. Laurel expressed support for the continuation of the committee's bi-monthly meetings and she offered to maintain the roster as well as participate in the rotation of the "administrative" duties,

like minute taking, setting agendas, and setting venues etc.

Christine expressed her opinion that we (the committee) are leaving out an important part by not having workshops and that we're going backwards in ways by discontinuing that. She mentioned that the committee has eliminated some of the competition between employers and has even unified competitors. She added that there still is a need for on-going knowledge of what's going on with employment.

Jill asked what Laurel's suggestion of "being patient," meant. Laurel responded that she expects that DWS may recognize a need for some free educational employer workshops in the future.

Craig mentioned that it doesn't seem that the state wants to sever the relationships, but that resources must be needed elsewhere. It appeared to him that committee members don't want to see the committee go away.

Laurel mentioned that one impact of the budget crunch is that there won't be food at most DWS meetings or events. Laurel emphasized that the change process is still not over. Another departmental redesign has taken priority. Many Department resources are currently being utilized to develop a new centralized Eligibility Services Division (ESD.) Other items still under discussion are: The term "business services" may be changed (possibly to "Workforce Development,") also a workgroup will address the marketing of DWS programs and services.

Tracy asked about job development. Laurel explained that it involves working one-on-one with customers and going out to find employment that matches the skills of the specific customer. She explained that up until now, Vicki, Kim, and Tala have focused on getting more jobs on the database for DWS' general customers. Only about 22-28% of those looking for work through DWS services are receiving supportive services from the Dept. Those customers have many barriers to self-sufficiency and DWS wants to focus on the needs of those customers as a priority.

Laurel indicated that DWS database (jobs.utah.gov) fills a mandate to provide a free labor exchange. It will continue to exist, but with a greater self-help focus. She added that DWS is moving to self-help in other services as well. For example, people filing for Unemployment Insurance benefits, must do so by either telephone or on-line.

Laurel stated the bottom line is that there is support for DWS to participate on the committee, but DWS staff can't do the time-intensive tasks like setting up for meetings and events, creating flyers, and finding speakers.

Cici asked if DWS leaders could come to talk to the committee and to listen to the committee. Laurel explained that Jon Pierpont (Central Region Director) was invited to the meeting with Paul and Jennifer, but was unable to come. Jon also has a standing invitation to the SLTEC business meetings, but historically has rarely had time to participate. Laurel noted that she has a couple of people in mind that we could

approach about coming to the next meeting. If the Committee requests it, she could make the request through Jon.

Christine asked how the committee could add value to the organization. It was suggested that the committee member(s) fill the role of committee secretary position to send out reminders and agendas for the meetings.

Jill mentioned that part of the value of the committee is that she can let DWS know what she needs for her positions. Specialized job matching efforts are not as effective for her company's needs. Business needs are the immediate priority of committee members. Meeting specialized customer needs with business needs presents a challenge.

There was a discussion about the role of DWS in regard to Job Fairs. Laurel noted that DWS is looking at focusing their resources on targeted job fairs for specific groups of DWS case managed customer. Christine added that having targeted job fairs only doesn't make sense. She encouraged working together as a state. People might relocate within the state for jobs.

Laurel confirmed with committee members their acceptance of not being able to sponsor events for now, but their feeling that the discontinuation of general job fairs is not a good move.

Cici pointed out the need to give good info at meetings and events as committee members need to show their own employers the value of committee participation. Without events the committee meetings are one of the only forums for members to get workforce info. There still is value in potential workshops. She added that the economic updates are invaluable.

Laurel explained that there is a council of private sector employers (Central Region Council) that is mandated by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA.) Sometimes the Council sponsors workshops which have been confused with the SLTEC workshops, but sponsoring events is not the Council's key role.

Laurel asked if we continue with business meetings, what would bring value to those meetings. Christine suggested downscaling event topics to our meetings and always including a discussion.

Jill expressed a desire for morning workshops to be readdressed. She agreed with Cici on the importance of economic updates and with Christine to always have a discussion at the committee meetings.

Cici wants more info from Dawn Lay on what's happening with displaced workers. Laurel recommends more involvement by committee in developing agenda. She also recommended rotating responsibility for such tasks as minutes, in order to share the responsibility for administrative support of the committee. DWS could feed ideas and resources for agenda items.

Laurel sees DWS calling on committee members for focus groups and the like. Joe Tate mentioned that it feels like committee members are being given the “cold shoulder” to him. His company leads in job fair participation. He sees these changes as driving a wedge in participation with DWS. “The state doesn’t create jobs. It’s we the businesses that create jobs,” he said.”

Cici added that she wants those from the state management level to hear the committee members express their needs as well. Christine mentioned that it’s time to “embrace employers with open arms.” Tracy mentioned the need to know trends of where people are being displaced from and where he can send people that he can’t place. Christine mentioned that employment counselors need to know how to address barriers like hygiene. Sarah talked to Dawn about job preservation techniques to avoid a permanent reduction in force. “Let’s not add to the 22%,” she said. Paul mentioned needing to keep the door open. “It sounds like we want to go forward preserving the relationship,” he commented.

Laurel noted that one way of keeping employers/Committee members connected with DWS may be to invite EC managers to the SLTEC meetings and/or invite SLTEC members to attend DWS employment supervisor meetings could also be beneficial.

It was suggested that the SLTEC may want to write a letter inviting a DWS management representative to the next meeting and expressing some of the committees concerns. Paul indicated that he and Jennifer would write a letter on behalf of the committee and he asked for suggestions for the content of the letter.

There was a discussion about making an effort to spread the administrative duties of the Committee among all of the members. Debbie suggested dividing duties into pieces so nobody has too much. The consensus was that everyone will do something. It just needs to be organized. At the next meeting the committee will establish roles on committee. They will also look at the wording in bylaws. Laurel reminded the committee that as a volunteer organization, member votes can change the bylaws

James asked if there’s a necessity to present a proposal for the continuance of workshops. Laurel indicated she would take this concern back to management and will start by discussing it with her regional director.

Cici asked for another agenda topic to justify attendance at meeting to member’s employers. She needs a take back.

Paul thanked everyone for attendance, thanked Laurel for her efforts and the DWS staff for their work on past seminars. The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: April 1st at a DWS office. It may be at the administrative offices. Jill invited members to stay to listen to presentation for the Dept of Homeland Security.