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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

317 W. Main Street
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TRANSMITTAL # 5

MEMORANDUM

January 30, 2006

TO: Workforce Development Council

FROM: Megan Ronk, Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Governor Kempthorne

SUBJECT: Local Input into the Workforce System

ACTION REQUESTED: Approve an initial system that allows for the public and local policy makers to have a voice in the design of the workforce system and establish a committee to provide direction to staff in the effort

BACKGROUND:

The WIA State Plan calls for the Workforce Development Council to identify a system for gaining local input for workforce development programming to replace the function that was performed by (or assigned to) local workforce investment boards. The Council will be expanded to include local representatives; however, additional mechanisms or processes must be developed to demonstrate a visible and effective means for allowing the public and local policy makers to have a voice in the design of the workforce system. While there has been some criticism voiced concerning input into the WIA program itself, staff recommends that any input mechanism be focused on the entire system with WIA as one of many solutions in building a quality workforce.

There are various methods the Council could design to achieve effective local input and to incorporate into the final strategy. This transmittal addresses two methods which could be instituted within the current fiscal year. Staff is initially proposing two methods to obtain local input into the workforce investment system.

- Hosting Annual Regional Forums
- Implementing Skill Panels—Industry Focused Efforts

Hosting Annual Regional Forums

The theme of the Idaho Economic Symposium 2006 is e3—Economy, Employment and Education: Understanding the Critical Connection—the critical components of the workforce investment system. If agreed upon, the same concept used during the Economic Symposium could be used at a regional level on an annual basis. Under the direction of the Council, key state level workforce and education partners would organize regional forums focused on employment, education and economic development. Each regional group would identify current and proposed planned efforts for the upcoming year and identify local priorities for the workforce system. Potential issues to discuss include:

- Regional issues and accomplishments in economic and workforce development
- Facilitated planning
 - Is the region moving in the right direction?
 - What can be done to improve our regional efforts?
 - What message do we want to communicate to policy makers to assist us?

The purpose of these forums is to solicit local input from community partners in the workforce system. During the initial regional forums, community leaders would be asked to identify the methodology they would propose to provide local input into the workforce investment system. Community representatives would include local elected officials, industry representatives, Chambers of Commerce, Idaho Commerce & Labor Employer Committee members, local economic development advisory board members, members of the Workforce Development Council and Idaho Rural Partnership, private non-profits and members of the public who wish to have a voice in shaping the workforce system.

Information received from these regional forums would be compiled and presented to the Council for consideration in continuing the regional forums or designing alternate structures for gathering local input.

Skill Panels—Industry Focused Efforts

Skill Panels are public/private partnerships of business, labor and education—alliances working together to improve the skills of workers in industries vital to Idaho's economy. Skill Panels continuously examine the workforce needs of the industries they serve. They recommend introducing new training programs to expand training capacity if needed, support and modernize training for the industry's current workforce, support strategic use of public training budgets, and support economic development initiatives aimed at building industry competitiveness.

This effort would be coordinated among Idaho Commerce & Labor, Professional-Technical Education and selected industries. To be successful, this joint effort would need to utilize the expertise from each partner. This concept would better inform decision-making in the professional-technical system by creating an opportunity for a more comprehensive review of

employer training needs and would facilitate Commerce & Labor's support of the industries under consideration.

Staff is recommending a local leadership structure that would include a college representative, the regional labor economist and a Commerce & Labor office manager. This body, using labor market data, would identify a high growth industry experiencing a worker shortage. Executives from this industry would be convened to participate in identifying specific causes for the shortages and potential solutions. Small sums of money could be made available from state reserve funds in WIA and Professional-Technical Education to help facilitate solutions, or a competitive model might allow for development of a more comprehensive response. This model could assist several Idaho industries including advanced manufacturing, health care, technology and science, food processing, etc.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting the Council's approval of the above local input strategies for the current program year. Staff further requests that the Council establish a committee to provide direction in developing these and other models to ensure a meaningful local voice in the workforce development system.

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