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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

317 W Main Street, Boise, Idaho 83735-0510

Joint Grant Review and Policy Committee Meeting Minutes – July 13, 2021

Grant Committee Members: Kelly Kolb, Jay Larsen, ~~Michelle Stennett~~, Brian Cox, Jeff Greene, Joe Maloney, Jake Reynolds, Rico Barrera, Jenni Bradford, Sarah Griffin

Policy Committee Members: BJ Swanson, Jason Hudson, Christi Gilchrist, Todd Schwarz, John Smith, Scott Syme, Jani Revier, ~~Tom Kealey~~, ~~Tom Schultz~~, Clay Long, Lori Barber, ~~Sean Coletti~~, ~~Hope Morrow~~

Staff: Wendi Secrist, Paige Nielebeck, Caty Solace, Amanda Ames, Jeffrey Bacon, Matthew Thomsen

Guests: Phoebe Guan, Brian Husler, Kylie Turner

Called to order at 2:31 p.m.

Welcome

Roll Call – Quorum met for both Committees.

Review Agenda – No changes to the agenda.

Overview of WDTF Annual Report/Evaluation Information

Between the Policy Committee and the Grant Review Committee a lot of changes have been made to processes, data, etc.

Ms. Secrist provided a high-level overview of the WDTF Annual Report/Evaluation. Please see attached document.

Discussion:

Is House of Design training more employees than they have?

- The training number includes new hires.

Between the two committees there have been over the last two years, there have been a lot of changes in processes, data, etc. Ms. Secrist provided a high-level overview of the WDTF Annual Report/Evaluation. Please see attached document.

Are WDTF reimbursement requests sent from grantees on a schedule?

- The pandemic has had a great impact on grant reimbursements. Training came to a halt during that time. Out of the \$12 million in spending authority the WDC has, only \$1.8 million was paid out in grant reimbursements.
- When an employer applies for a grant, they create a quarterly reimbursement request schedule.
- These schedules help the WDC staff track the obligated funds, so we do not over obligate what needs to be paid out.
- The WDC had an additional \$3.4 million in spending authority but did not end up needing to use it over the past year.

It would be beneficial to see if employers are receiving other incentives. Idaho Commerce does see a few on the list of grantees that are receiving tax reimbursement incentives.

Does the wage match verify that the individuals are employees of the company?

- Yes. The wage increase comes one year after the completion of the grant. IDOL gets the data and evaluates it.
- The Policy around wages needs to be discussed. \$12 an hour in the Treasure Valley is different than \$12 an hour in a more rural area.

Is there a way to track if the individual goes on for further training at institutions of high education and how much credit was awarded through credit for prior learning?

- Ms. Secrist will work with OSBE to get information on the pilot program they are running.

Employer Contributions – Examples

Mr. Thomsen reviewed examples of employer contributions to the WDTF. Please see attached presentation.

Grant Submission Data

Mr. Thomsen reviewed grant submission data. Please see attached presentation.

QFM Review

Ms. Secrist and Mr. Thomsen walked the Committees through the Quantitative Funding Model (QFM). Please see attached presentation.

Discuss Policy Implication

The WDTF has come a long way over the past few years. The processes are not perfect, but it is a continuous improvement process. It is important that the WDC is nimble but at the same time have a stable system of checks and balances in place.

Employer Grant Discussion

QFM

- The WDC staff and Policy Committee has worked to tweak the QFM to address concerns with employer grants.
- Additional factors can be added to the QFM.

Hourly Wage/Wage Increases

- The \$12 an hour wage has been a discussion point within the Policy Committee before. The Policy Committee decided to change the wage to a percentage of the county average wage to ensure fairness to all areas of Idaho.
- The Policy Committee should look at the average county wage annually. The data tends to be a few years behind.
 - The average county wage data was updated a few months ago. There is only a lag of one-year.
- There are only 2 counties in Idaho with an average wage below \$12 an hour.
- The average county wage threshold needs to keep up with the current times.
- The other types of grants (innovation and industry sector) are providing career pathways so it should be kept near \$12 an hour. Most of those individuals are starting in lower end jobs and move up through the pipeline.

Repeat Applicants:

- The Grant Review has seen many repeat WDTF applicants.
- The ones who come back for additional grants, are businesses that have staff who are dedicated to the grants. Small businesses usually do not have the resources to dedicate a staff member to a grant.
- It is important for the employer to contribute funds. Maybe for repeat applicants, the employer must put more funding into the training.
- The WDTF policy is clear that an employer has to close an open grant before they are eligible to apply for a new one.
- If a repeat applicant comes to the WDC, they should share how the previous funds were expended and how the new request is different from previous requests. This will help ensure the training are beneficial to the employees and not just the company.
- If an employer continues to succeed and grow using the WDTF that is a good thing. It ultimately comes down to performance metrics.
- If an employer does not expend the funds of previous grant then that should effect future grant applications.
- A new QFM could be created for repeat applicants.
- Repeat applicants need to provide more specific outcomes for the offered training. The skills being taught need to be transferrable.

Launch

- Employers are sending their employees to utilize Launch to train their employees. For smaller employers it is an easier mechanism to get funds.

In-Demand Occupations

- Where in the QFM does it account for in-demand occupations?
 - The QFM does not address in-demand occupations currently. This is something that can be discussed.
 - The WDC is tracking the types of training being funded by the WDTF. This could be a way to align the trainings to in-demand trainings/occupations.

WDTF Grant Award Amounts

- The Grant Review Committee gets a sense of unease when the WDTF grant requests are high.
- What dollar amount gives that sense of unease?

- It is not bad to have a high request. It is hard to define what a high request is.
- It makes a difference when the request is completely for internal training.
- It also makes a difference when the employer is a repeat applicant.
- It is hard to see large requests from large companies for an employer grant. Industry Sector grants tend to be higher amounts, but they are impacting more people.
- If the employer is not putting money into the project, it can be difficult to want to give them a large sum of money.

- If Policy Committee addressed repeat customers and looked at a percentage of the total for internal training/count the value of their match, that those are enough as a next step and then if we needed to come back and put a cap on employer grants.

Allowable Expenditures

- What kinds of training should the WDTF funds be used for (e.g. safety training)?
 - Maybe a small percentage of the funds could towards “soft” training.
- If one employer is receiving funding for safety training, then all employers should receive funding for safety training.

Internal Vs. External Training

- It would be nice to have the QFM give more weight to external training over internal training.
 - In the QFM, employer receive a higher score if someone outside the company is doing the training.

Definitions

- Is unemployment rate defined? In some counties, there is a low unemployment rate, but individuals are working 2 to 3 unbenefited jobs.
 - It is not defined. Mr. Shaul is presenting at the Council meeting on IDOL’s labor market data. The reason the unemployment rate is in the funding model is to target funds to the areas with higher unemployment. The QFM does penalize counties where individuals have multiple jobs.

Transferability

- To what extent do the Committees look at transferability?
 - Not a lot.
 - Is this something the WDC could measure and be incorporated into the funding model?
 - Maybe a question could be incorporated into the application that asks how the training is being provided today (current state).
 - The application should also ask applicants why the funds are necessary for the program to continue.
- Leadership training or other “soft skills” type of training is valuable but so often the training is an event. To measure the success of the training it comes down to the culture and accountability of the business.
- It is a good investment to provide train the trainer opportunities. One individual can be trained and then come back to the employer and train the rest of the employees. If the WDC could figure out how to implement this statewide it could make a big impact.

- A small percentage of funding requests could go towards some of the less transferrable but important trainings (e.g., leadership training).
- Ms. Secrist has looked at other States' programs and they have moved towards a model where if the training does not result in a credential, then the training is not eligible for funding. This may not be the direction Idaho needs to move but it is an option.
 - This could be deployed on repeat customers before deploying it on new grantees.
 - The State could purchase the curriculum for skills training (e.g. leadership, OSHA, etc.) and offer them through Launch. This would allow any Idahoan to access to the training.

Sustainability

- Currently, sustainability is not measured for employer grants. This is something that can be added to the application.
- It would be nice to have the employer provide a sustainability model for any internal training.

How are outreach project requests awarded and evaluated?

- Outreach projects are reviewed by the Outreach Committee. Every year the Outreach Committee makes a request to the full council for a pool of funds to use for outreach projects. The money is then obligated in the WDTF for the Outreach Committee to award funds to projects.
- The Outreach Committee has a rubric that projects are scored against.
- The Committee has seen requests ranging from \$243 to \$125,000. There is no cap on funding requests for outreach projects, but the Committee does have a limited budget.

Industry Sector Grant Discussion

The WDC is just starting to be able to evaluate industry sector and innovation grants. This is a journey and the next evaluation report will help drive us in the right direction.

Innovation Grant Discussion

The Policy Committee adapted the innovation grant policy to have the cap waived for work-based learning (WBL) projects. These projects will help implement activities like internships, co-ops, etc. This will allow WBL projects to receive more funding than the \$25,000 cap normally put on innovation grants.

Next Steps

This item will be moved to a future meeting due to time constraints.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.