



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Alaska Workforce Investment Board
Youth Council Report
August 25, 2006**

This will be my last report for the Youth Council and I thought it might be of value to remind AWIB members of some of the highlights of the past 16 months. One observation I have made is that every member of the AWIB and the Governor's staff are very concerned about how we prepare and inspire the workforce of tomorrow. This is heartening considering the multi-cultural nature of our state, and the logistics of a homegrown workforce.

There are some very able professionals in the field of youth services delivery, youth leadership development, and vocational education working in Alaska. And the membership of the Youth Council has access to them on a regular basis. Therefore please remember to call on their expertise as youth workforce issues arise.

As the Youth Council continues to venture forward in its efforts to build bridges among the pockets of youth service providers and Alaskan youth, some basic initial efforts were needed to prepare the YC to shoulder fully its responsibilities under the Workforce Investment Act.

In the last year the administrative work of the Youth Council accomplished the following:

- Passed a set of bylaws that was approved by the AWIB to outline the mission and methods of the Council;
- Approved a vision statement (Building Bridges to Jobs of Alaska's Youth);
- Developed Council member job descriptions;
- Developed ethics rules for Council members;
- Developed formalized operation guidelines;
- Created two additional ad hoc sub committees- Youth Leadership, Youth Workforce Development;
- Worked with Division of Business Partnerships to review grants and recommend programs for funding;
- Developed an Orientation of New Member Training Component;
- Developed AWIB Youth Council presentation describing our role and purpose to be shared with other organizations serving youth;
- Crystallized our purpose "To be the coordinating council for youth workforce development in Alaska;"
- Added the YC as a standing committee in the AWIB bylaws.

In August 2005 the Council adopted seven strategies to improve the youth workforce system. They are to:

- Involve youth in planning and policy development;
- Develop a website or internet portal for Alaskans to provide information for youth, parents, employers and youth organizations;
- Develop public relations and outreach materials to engage a statewide network for youth workforce development;

- Form a coalition among youth workforce readiness and leadership advocates to maximize efforts;
- Build a greater understanding of WIA, youth program policies and activities;
- Develop a strategic plan to integrate with and compliment the AWIB strategic plan;
- Incorporate the Governor's goals for Alaska's youth into strategic planning activities for the YC.

In November, YC activities were put on hold with a change in AWIB's executive director and reorganization of the AWIB committee structure in an effort to create greater involvement of the AWIB membership. After making suggestions for AWIB changes, the consultant then reviewed the make-up and structure of the Youth Council. Below is an excerpt of the consultant's comments regarding the Youth Council. (The full report is attached at the end of this report)

A key activity for the Youth Council is strategic planning. There is suddenly a great deal of new youth activity underway through the Department; the High Growth Jobs Initiative, Denali Commission Youth Initiatives, and Job Center Career Guides in Schools, for example. There is a current and projected shortage of residents in critical occupations, such as education, health, and construction. It is an appropriate time to do strategic planning for youth workforce programs.

There are several issues that should be settled before strategic planning: appointment of Council members, AWIB staff assignments, and meeting resources.

- *The Youth Council would benefit from more private sector members. Private sector representation is essential to ensuring the programs deliver results desired by employers.*
- *There is no budget for the Youth Council. This means that meetings are held by teleconference with no personal interaction between Council members. A modest travel budget is recommended to enable the Council to have a face to face meeting once or twice per year.*
- *New members should receive orientation about their role and responsibilities prior to attending their first meeting.*
- *There must be adequate AWIB staff resources to meet the needs of the Youth Council. The AWIB Executive Director should ensure staffing to the Council meets the Council's needs.*
- *There are no regular communications by and between the Youth Council members or staff. Most communications are via e-mail and phone as needed. Most of the communications go through the staff and up to the AWIB Executive Director and Department. Providing regular communications is one way to keep members involved. Youth Council staff should discuss ideas with the Chair on ways to have regular communications.*
- *Youth Council members are waiting for something to happen. Most are patient and fall back on their desire to help Alaska's youth in response to the Governor's call to serve but the length between meetings is taking a toll.*
- *There are a number of other state agencies represented on the Youth Council. There is concern youth programs are not contributing their share of resources or collaborating closely enough for a strong youth workforce system. The department should consider ways*

other programs can adequately support youth council operations and Division of Business Partnerships youth initiatives.

- *There is no specific requirement for a youth strategic workforce plan at this time. However, it is implied in the overarching legislation that calls upon the AWIB to provide a strategic plan that includes youth workforce strategies. If the Administration wants workforce programs to focus on sustaining high growth jobs initiatives for youth, it would benefit from adoption of a Youth Council strategic plan.*

(The consultant's report was not distributed to Youth Council members till late June and the Council has not had a chance to respond directly to the comments listed above.)

The Youth Council was given permission to begin meetings again in March and scheduled a teleconference in April. The teleconference meeting was an effort to refocus and to allow remaining members to get back on track. The YC was split over re-gathering of our issues and anger over not doing anything for such a long period of time. It was determined that a face-to-face meeting was needed and a date in May was set to meet face to face for strategic planning.

The May face-to-face meeting was cancelled due to lack of travel money, and another date was not scheduled.

Part of the discussion regarding reorganization of the AWIB included a need for a YC chair that was closer to the pulse of youth issues in Alaska. A new AWIB member who had a seat on the State Board of Education and was a school principal with strong ties to rural Alaska seemed to be the perfect candidate. On July 17th, Tim Scott was appointed new YC Chair.

An August 8th teleconference was set in which Tim Scott assumed his duties of YC Chair and the Council tentatively set a face-to-face meeting date of October 2 or 9, 2006 to complete strategic planning for the YC.

As outgoing chair of the Youth Council I am excited about the changes that will be forthcoming as Tim Scott assumes his duties as the new chair. He has the respect of his peers, speaks the language of today's youth and plays in a rock band. At the time of the writing of this report, several of the consultant's suggestions for the improvement of Youth Council function are in place. Things like a budget, staffing, strategic planning etc. I am pleased to have served as YC Chair and I encourage all AWIB members to lend your support and encouragement to Mr. Scott during these trying and exciting times.

Consultants Report

“We need to point our money at helping our youth so they can get good jobs in Alaska and stay here. Everyone wants to help. So let’s just do it.” Alaska Youth Council Member

The Alaska Youth Council is an advisory committee to the Alaska Workforce Investment Board for youth (ages 14-21) formed to meet the requirements of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The federal law mandates the formation and continuance of a Youth Council dedicated to workforce issues for youth, particularly youth who have significant barriers for success in school, transitioning to work, or seeking to advance themselves through postsecondary education and job training.

The Youth Council has oversight for a coordinated system that is effective at meeting youth challenges and for advancing youth into Alaska’s good paying jobs and careers. There are many education, employment and training programs involved helping a wide range of groups of youth, including students in school, school drop-outs, youth involved with the justice system, disabled youth, and Alaska Native youth.

The Youth Council sets the state’s vision for youth as the State’s emerging workforce and offers strategies to help all young Alaskans succeed. The Council vision points workforce programs in a direction that improves services for all youth while preparing them for work and careers in Alaska.

Members of the Youth Council are appointed by the AWIB Chair in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development. They represent a cross section of geographic regions, government agencies, community, faith based and non-profit organizations, Alaska Native youth programs, educators, industry, unions, youth, parents of youth, and other committed volunteers.

The Council forges partnerships and drives coordination among partners to offer a structured education, employment and training system. Three current Council objectives are to (1) provide a variety of proactive options to improve educational achievement, (2) reduce high school dropout rates, and (3) prepare youth for successful careers in Alaska.

The current Youth Council has strived to ensure each member understands its mission and role. This understanding helps the Council fulfill its role. The Youth Council adopted bylaws in 2005 that were subsequently adopted by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. The bylaws include a vision statement (*Building Bridges to Jobs for Alaska’s Youth*), mission statement, member job descriptions, ethics rules for council members, standing and ad hoc committees, and operation rules.

The Youth Council has formed several committees to help accomplish its mission. These are the Executive, Operations, Marketing & Planning, Youth Leadership Development, Workforce Development, and Strategic Planning. There is a process for moving youth workforce policy through committees, through the Youth Council, to the AWIB Executive Committee.

In August 2005 the Council adopted five strategies to improve the youth workforce system. These are:

- a website to provide information for youth, parents, employers and youth organizations,

- public relations and outreach materials to engage a statewide network for youth workforce development,
- form a coalition among youth workforce readiness and leadership advocates to maximize efforts,
- build a greater understanding of WIA, youth program policies and activities, and
- involve youth in planning and policy development.

The large number of Council members brings many volunteers and voices to strengthen the state youth workforce system and ensure good programs for youth. Coordinating the activities of members is challenging for Council leadership and staff.

The AWIB has assigned one person as lead staff to the Council. AWIB staff coordinates with the Division of Business Partnerships Youth Program Manager and connecting federal and state programs to help carry out program oversight. Youth Council makes timely decisions required by WIA.

In general, the Youth Council is functioning and meets the requirements of WIA, which is a minimum standard. The Council wants to accomplish more by engaging in the development of a more comprehensive service delivery system.

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- Youth Council members are waiting for something to happen. Most are patient and fall back on their desire to help Alaska's youth in response to the Governor's call to serve but the length between meetings is taking a toll.
- There are a number of other state agencies represented on the Youth Council. There is concern youth programs are not contributing their share of resources or collaborating closely enough for a strong youth workforce system. The department should consider ways other programs can adequately support youth council operations and Division of Business Partnerships youth initiatives.

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