

Meeting Notes
Workforce Development Working Group
October 1, 2008

The overall agenda item for this meeting was to hammer out issues for the working group's draft summary report to the commission, due to Judge Stein by October 15.

Tony Joseph provided a summary of the discussions of two subgroups (1) environmental justice and 2) quantifying the costs of workforce development) that met on October 24th.

Regarding subgroup meeting 2 (quantifying the costs of workforce development) - Tony said that the group discussed general methodology - how to approach the cost methodology piece. Two approaches were discussed: 1) explore relationship between WFD and jobs needed to meet EEPS goals and 2) the quality assurance angle.

Several studies illustrate the relationship between training and performance of EE measures. These studies create good support for the "ask" for WFD funding. Tony will be getting something out to the group to look at (draft report).

Tony also will be sending out a list of recommendations and a sheet with working group members' names so that votes on the recommendations can be recorded and attached to the working group's report.

Regarding subgroup meeting 2 (environmental justice), Tony also mentioned the Governor's Task Force on Environmental Justice, and that recommendations concerning WFD are also being developed by that Task Force. Environmental justice issues are a high priority for the Task Force, with green collar jobs seen as an important pathway out of poverty.

Adele led a discussion on the specific list of draft recommendations that were sent out to group members for their consideration (these recommendations will be made in the group's final report to the commission). For recommendation one, the group members need to decide if they want to endorse NYSERDA's proposal as a recommendation for the report to the commission.

Fouad Dagher of National Grid expressed support for NYSERDA's proposal and cooperation with its implementation during a discussion of recommendation one.

Recommendation two: the group agreed that this language needs some work. There was a discussion of certification vs. competency. There is a difference in this issue between the existing and emerging workforce. The group felt that a recommendation should be added to allow for some kind of gap analysis on what WFD is currently underway, and what is needed after the commission makes its decision on the 90-day filings.

Recommendation three and four: TRC for WFD? Group members agreed that it was unrealistic and inappropriate for a TRC to be applied to NYSERDA's WFD proposal. The diffuse benefits of workforce development put an onerous test on WFD efforts. Adele mentioned that we have found about six studies with good information on the relationship between training and quality EE measure installations, O&M, etc. The studies will be part of the justification for WFD.

Training efforts can be approached on a program level, but WFD is something that should be handled on a statewide basis. This prevents duplication of effort, uniformity in training content, etc.

Recommendation five: There was a lot of discussion and input from DASNY on the “low bid” process to determine the degree in which it drives a disposable (hire/fire) unskilled workforce, and inferior work quality. The low bid process causes contractors (including good contractors) to undercut expenses to regain lost revenue and protect profit. The concern is that some contractors undercut expenses by hiring “disposable” unqualified labor at lower wages than qualified workers. Such hiring practices undermine performance of the work, as well as efforts to create a skilled workforce.

Recommendation six: program evaluations looking at workforce training impacts. The consensus seemed to be to leave this one to the evaluation teams.

Recommendation seven: Mike Bomke made the point that training for building operators is “all over the map and not standardized.” We should recommend using existing certifications where they exist - there should be a review of existing certifications.

Recommendation eight: job classifications, titles, etc. Group members agreed to work together on these.

A new issue was raised having to do with low bidders. It was agreed that the group needed to include things “that concern us and might have an effect on the success of WFD in the report to the commission.” Because a low bid often equals low quality, how do we assure a basic level of competency in bidders?

Tony will get the group a draft document in the next few days as well as the email in which group members will record their votes on the recommendations. The co-conveners will rework the draft recommendations and send them out to the group.

Adele asked the members get any of the co-conveners any thoughts, anything that you feel was omitted, any additional recommendations, etc.