



Rural Health & Economic Development Forum Notes

Thursday, February 26, 2009

10:00 a.m. – 1:25 p.m.

WI Technical College System Office, Madison, Wisconsin

Forum Members Present:

Rita Black-Radloff, WI Department of Workforce Development
Byron Crouse, *UW School of Medicine and Public Health*
Joel Davidson, *Southwest WI Area Health Education Center*
John Eich, *WI Office of Rural Health*
Jim Frymark, *WI Department of Commerce*
Karna Hanna, *Sauk County Development Corporation*
Michelle Harvey, *USDA Rural Development*
Leslie Patterson, *Medical College of Wisconsin*
Brian Potter, *WI Hospital Association*
Kathy Schmitt, *WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection*
Annette Severson, *WI Technical College System*
Tim Size, *Rural WI Health Cooperative*

Others Present:

Padraic Durkin, *Department of Commerce*
Kevin Jacobson, *WI Office of Rural Health (recorded these notes)*

John Eich convened the meeting at 10:15.

I. Strong Rural Communities Initiative Update and Next Steps

Tim Size reported on the SRCI projects and the Steering Committee meeting that preceded the Forum. The UW SMPH communities are finishing their grants February 28 and the MCW communities will finish in June. Most projects have accomplished all of their original worksite wellness goals. The Healthier WI Partnership Program (MCW) projects had to implement a 20% budget reduction due to the economic situation. The Coop is hosting regular roundtables on worksite wellness and the six SRCI projects are invited to attend. The Steering Committee talked about the economy's impact on wellness programming and hospitals in general. Some employers are cutting back and others aren't. John Eich announced that the Office of Rural Health will continue to be involved in the worksite wellness issue through the [Community Grant program](#). The Office will award extra points to proposals that feature worksite wellness for the 2009-10 grants. He suggested other ways to maintain communication without grant funds, e.g., listserves. Joel Davidson said there may opportunity for collaboration on the Community Grants; AHEC did something similar with their last round of RFPs.

II. Insurers/Small Business Summit Planning Update

John Eich recapped a discussion with the Summit planning group. He reported that the group wasn't necessarily interested in revisiting discussions that they believe have been ongoing for some time, i.e., the importance of wellness programs to businesses. Their belief was that small employers understand this. The group did reach consensus on a specific theme for a meeting: incentivizing

healthy behavior and disincentivizing unhealthy behavior. Senator Vinehout and Representative Seidel have a taskforce working on these issues; could the Forum connect with that work? It was suggested that at least one of the Planning group members be asked to join the Forum (after some discussion Kathryn Otto was the Forum's choice). Tim Size said the task force is looking at legislative approaches rather than incentives. It may be better to focus the summit on larger rural employers, like school districts and hospitals, rather than begin with the very small worksites. Forum members proposed additional ideas for summit topics:

- Connections to workforce recruitment.
- How do we minimize employer insurance costs, e.g., through higher deductibles?
- How can insurers structure plans so that more employers offer insurance (resulting in insurers making more money)?
- Highlight case studies of successful programs with different size and type of employers. SRCI worksites for example.
- How to get employees to develop a wellness plan with their physician?
- How to transfer programs to small rural employers?
- Include John Morgan.
- How far can an employer go with dis-/incentives without being intrusive?
- What are an employer's expectations of family behavior if they're covered by insurance?

John recapped the discussion:

- He will report to the Planning group that the Forum is interested in "Incentivizing Healthy Outcomes" as the topic
- Plan on a summer/fall event and extend invitations to Sen. Vinehout and Rep Seidel.
- Include in the Summit:
 - Data on financial impact of wellness programs
 - A variety of program and employer types
 - Providers and what they are doing with wellness
 - Case studies of ways insurers and employers are making wellness work

Joel Davidson offered to participate in the Planning Group.

III. Health Professions Loan Assistance Program and the Governor's Budget

Jim Frymark and Padraic Durkin reported that the Loan Assistance Program and responsibility for the Rural Health Development Council are in the Governor's budget to be moved from the Department of Commerce to the University of Wisconsin/Office of Rural Health in an effort to streamline staffing. No administrative funds will be transferred beyond the amount already in place for WI-ORH's existing work; this accounts for a loss of roughly 30% FTE. John Eich pointed out that an issue for the University to consider is the additional contractual and legal work, like those related to defaults. Forum members agreed that it's important to know not only the administrative FTE but all the ancillary work—legal, accounting, etc. Jim said final collection/default efforts are currently given to the Department of Justice. Padraic said he would assemble financial information on the cost of all HPLAP-related work within a week. John also said that Randy Munson, WI-ORH's physician recruiter, may be able to take on some of the post-award administrative work, but asked the Forum if there would be a perceived conflict of interest. Tim Size asked if this is an opportunity to officially replace the Council with the Forum? John said he will suggest that to the Medical School's lobbyist, Lisa Maroney. Karna Hanna suggested identifying a legislator to work on this as soon as possible. John has talked with Senator Jauch about LAP and he seems interested in getting more funds for the Program. He asked members to provide him with any ideas for

additional/different roles/members for the Forum. The Forum would assume all the responsibilities of the Council, including review and approval of Loan Assistance applications. If the Council does move to WI-ORH, would it still be a Governor appointed body? Would it still be advisory to Commerce? If it is no longer advisory, then it could lose some value and voice. Tim Size said the Council does have additional responsibilities beyond the Loan Assistance Program; Lisa Maroney can look into that.

IV. Forum Membership

John Eich reviewed the status of current members. There are several appointed Council members who do not attend meetings. He suggested that empty roles be actively filled, especially any missing economic interests, as the Forum/Council can lean toward health care. Tim Size said members remain on the Council until they are replaced. Kevin Jacobson reported on his conversations with Libby Gerds, Governor Doyle's Appointments Director. She recommended that the Council Chair contact members who don't attend meetings and ask if they're still interested in serving. In many cases, they choose to resign at that point. John will contact them. There are several vacant positions and the Council is welcome to recommend people for the Governor's approval. John asked for suggestions for new representatives to possibly include in statutory changes; the following were given:

- One each hospital and private lender representative instead of two of each
- Wisconsin Counties Association
- UW Extension Center for Community and Economic Development

Rita Black-Radloff recommended increasing participation by using conference calls.

V. Forum Workplan

John Eich asked for comments on the draft Forum workplan. Regarding health IT, Tim Size said the eHealth board should become more active now that there will be federal stimulus money to spend. He suggested including HIT in the April meeting. Because the Council/Forum is appointed by the Governor it has greater influence and people will listen to it. He also suggested a standing item for whatever issue may be "hot," such as possible decreases in Medicare payments. John said he would solicit ideas for that before each meeting. Additional suggestions included:

- Stimulus bill impact
- Update on the status of HPSA revisions
- Something concrete (a report, paper) that comes out of meetings that would be useful for economic development
- The WI Hospital Association economic impact report

John will update and circulate the workplan.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 pm.

There was no Rural Health Development Council meeting.