



# Rural Health & Economic Development Forum Notes

Thursday, December 11, 2008

10:00 a.m. – 1:35 p.m.

*WI Department of Commerce, Madison, Wisconsin*

## **Forum Members Present:**

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*

Eric Gass, *Center for Healthy Communities at the Medical College of Wisconsin*

Karna Hanna, *Sauk County Development Corporation*

Linda McFarlin, *Adams County Public Health Department*

Kathy Schmitt, *WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection*

Tim Size, *Rural WI Health Cooperative*

Bob Tracy, *Franciscan Skemp Regional Hospital*

## **Others Present:**

Padraic Durkin, *Department of Commerce*

Kevin Jacobson, *WI Office of Rural Health (recorded these notes)*

John Eich convened the meeting at 10:10. The October 30, 2008 minutes were approved, with the addition of Brian Potter, WI Hospital Association, in attendance. John announced that Louis Okey has resigned from the Rural Health Development Council and the Forum due to local commitments. Bob Tracey announced that he is retiring in January and will retire from the Council and Forum.

## **I. Strong Rural Communities Initiative Update**

Tim Size reported on progress with the SRCI projects. The Healthier WI Partnership Program (associated with the Medical College of WI) has announced that each of their awarded projects must reduce the balance of grant funds by 20% effective January 1. This will impact three of the six SRCI projects ((Langlade, Manitowoc and Waupaca). There's been no word from the UW Partnership Fund, but there are only 2 ½ months left in the grant period for the Black River Falls, Hayward and Sauk projects. The projects seem to be prepared to continue with their worksite wellness programs post-grant. Most have already moved beyond their original grant proposals and are developing new partnerships with area employers.

## **II. Workforce Data Collaborative Update**

Tim Size reported that the workforce group wrote grant proposals for both the UW and MCW Partnership Funds to develop data collection and analysis systems to better understand the health care workforce in WI. The data collection would ideally be at the licensing stage—most health care workers have some form of license. The data would include demographic/age (e.g., to determine retirement dates), education level (to identify the likelihood or need for further training) and FTE status to determine how many providers are actually working. The first year would focus on 4-6 disciplines. The analysis would be shared widely, especially with education organizations and

legislators for planning purposes. All major state departments, including UW, and many private sector interests are represented in the group. John Eich said this has other implications beyond workforce. State level data is important for accurate shortage designation determination. This could impact millions in federal funds. He asked if there's a Plan B if the grants aren't awarded. Tim said they asked for \$1 million—the highest levels of government are aware of this proposal and the need.

### **III. Planning Insurer/Business Summit**

John Eich reviewed some of the presentations the Forum has had on insurance carrier/business wellness programs. He suggested that rather than inviting additional presenters, the Forum host a group of insurers, employers and others to discuss options in terms of wellness incentives that change behavior—what works? What's possible? He asked for thoughts on topics for a summit:

- Potential new wellness products for insurers
- Should be larger than just rural
- Include policies for small (50—100 employees) and very small (< 10) employers
- Insurance pools
- Include not for profit employers
- What can I do as a small employer to lower insurance costs?
- What can insurers do to accelerate changes in insurance premiums for employers who implement wellness programs?
- What's being done now?

He asked for suggestions on whom to invite:

- Chambers of Commerce that do insurance pooling
- Insurance executives (e.g., Terry Bolz)
- Nancy Wenzel, WI Association of Health Plans
- Wayne Corey, WI Independent Businesses
- Gene Dalhoff, Baraboo Chamber of Commerce
- WI Manufacturers and Commerce
- John Morgan, DHS
- Melissa Duffy, Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin
- Catherine Otto
- State Human Resources Organization
- State Insurance Commissioner

He asked for summit parameters:

- Stipulate that some things are being done now; identify best practices and obstacles at the beginning, then work on solutions
- Pre-survey participants to identify important issues and develop homework
- All day, not just three hours
- Focus on the overlap of insurance and wellness, not either one exclusively
- Include SRCI groups that have worked with employers and insurers

### **IV. Dialogue on Collaboration**

John Eich asked attendees to discuss the Forum in terms of two questions:

"My job would be better if my partners at this table could . . ."

- Consistently attend meetings. It's helpful to hospital administrators to hear from other organizations and what they do.
- Share their organization's perspectives.
- Provide us with something specific to work on related to my agency's mission.
- Attend meetings.
- Provide something my agency could take action on.
- Say what they expect of my agency.
- Identify people in their community who are interested in health careers and refer them to the WARM program.
- Identify ways to take the Forum's work back to their organization and share it's value.
- Identify a clearer link to state government.
- Improve attendance and agree to take action.
- Develop more projects to take back to my organization.
- Have robust discussions.

"In turn, I'll commit to doing \_\_\_ in 2009."

- Being at meetings.
- Working on projects developed by the Forum.
- Get meeting notes out sooner.
- Working on projects that we are able to.
- Listen to Forum suggestions and feedback.
- Take discussions back to my constituency.
- Promote meetings far in advance.
- Stress a rural agenda at MCW.
- Improved attendance
- Engage more with my organization to identify opportunities for them to become involved with the Forum.

Kathy Schmitt suggested that a MOU between state agencies on the Forum could improve their staff members' attendance and involvement. Tim Size added that sending meeting notes soon after meetings may also help. John asked the group if it was alright to enforce the mandatory resignation policy if a member wasn't attending at least half the meetings; the consensus was yes, with a suggestion to ask them why they weren't involved. Tim reminded the group that anyone could be invited to participate in the Forum, but the Rural Health Development Council's membership is set by the Governor.

John Eich asked for ideas for future meetings:

- A summit planning meeting in January with a report to the Forum at the February meeting.
- Face to face with Deans (pharmacy, nursing, etc.) of both medical schools and appropriate technical college administrators.
- Develop a Partnership Fund planning grant proposal.
- Invite AWARE (All WI Alcohol Risk Education)
- Modify worksite wellness programs for very small employers and farmers.
- How do we keep providers in their communities?

- Invite UW Extension Commerce and Economic Development
- Look at constraints and changes to rural health due to the economy.
- Brainstorm how to get more rural applications to both Partnership Fund grants.
- How to get more information out on the Loan Assistance Program?
- How do communities attract providers and clinics?
- Highlight emerging best practices.

The following meeting dates and locations for 2009 are scheduled:

- Feb. 26, WI Technical College System Office
- April 9, WI Technical College System Office
- June 11, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- August 13, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Oct. 8, TBD
- Dec. 3, TBD

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 pm.