MESSAGE FROM THE WIB CHAIR

As we embark on a new year, I think it is the perfect time to reflect on some of our accomplishments, including:

- Another successful year for the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps, which served 184 youth and was placed on Tier 2 of Sonoma County’s Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs.
- The publication of the North Bay Occupational Outlook Report.
- Partnership in the six-county Northern California Career Pathways Alliance (NCCPA).
- The provision of design, guidance and oversight for the employment-related programs and services offered to countless job seekers and employers through Job Link.

Services for job seekers include:
1. Job registration and referrals.
2. Employability skills training.
3. Occupational skills training.
5. Financial assistance for training.

Services to employers include:
1. Recruitment assistance.
2. Financial assistance for on-the-job training wages.
3. Rapid Response assistance for employees faced with downsizing.
4. Partnership with the Economic Development Board to provide services to employers through a Business Representative.

As the year ended, the unemployment rate in Sonoma County was 5.1% percent, ranking us as having the fifth lowest unemployment rate in the State. Based on the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, the available jobs in Sonoma County increased by 4.5 percent on a year-over-year basis. Sonoma County’s average weekly wages for the second quarter of 2014 increased by 1.4 percent from the same quarter a year earlier. These numbers coupled with The Moody’s Fall 2014 Local Economic Report, commissioned by the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, predict a highly optimistic outlook for Sonoma County in 2015. By working together, I am confident we will continue to improve the outlook for both our employers and workforce in this New Year.

Cheers!

2014 SONOMA COUNTY INDICATORS REPORT

The Sonoma County Economic Development Board has released the 2014 Sonoma County Indicators Report. Some highlights include:

- Sonoma County is a competitive place to do business.
- The seasonally unadjusted unemployment rate for Sonoma County was at a four-year low and below the state wide average. Job growth in Sonoma County was 2.1% from November 2012 to November 2013.
- Sonoma County had the third-highest number of business establishments per capita among comparable counties.
- Tourism indicators are overwhelmingly positive.

Read the full report on the EDB’s website at http://edb.sonoma-county.org/content.aspx?sid=1033&eid=2035

REDWOOD COMMUNITY HEALTH COALITION AT JOB LINK

Redwood Community Health Coalition (RCHC) recently joined Job Link as a new onsite partner. RCHC is assisting Job Link clients with finding an affordable health coverage plan for them and their families. Additionally, RCHC will provide hands on support in applying for Covered California and will accompany our Rapid Response team to offer assistance to downsized employees in applying for continued or new health coverage.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) UPDATE

The WIB and its staff are continuing to plan for the implementation of WIOA which becomes effective July 1, 2015. Some of the new requirements include:

- Certification of the WIB under new WIOA regulations.
- Changes regarding the role of the local Board.
- Changes to the Youth Council.
- Change of direction for the youth served in the Youth Program.
- Increase in the focus of utilizing sector strategies.

We are preparing for the changes brought about by WIOA in numerous ways, including:

- The development of an overall strategic plan for WIOA’s implementation.
- Evaluation of all Job Link services to ensure relevance.
- Increase in services to local employers.
- Asset mapping of local employment and training partners and convening meetings with all partners to increase coordination and service delivery.

JOB LINK UPDATE

As 2014 comes to a close, staff at Job Link is reflecting on the past year. There has been multiple staff changes, programmatic tweaks, and the introduction of WIOA for future planning. As we enter 2015, we are continuing to expand trainings opportunities for clients by increased efforts in identifying on-the-job training opportunities with a goal of completing 46 contracts in the first month of the year. Staff also continues to work on reconnecting with partners through the quarterly All Partner meeting. Job Link is increasing efforts to pursue opportunities to serve employers by connecting them with qualified job seekers, and supporting the creation of customized trainings. 2015 will reveal the outcomes of multiple programmatic initiatives, and the Job Link team looks forward to serving both job seekers and employers in the coming year.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2015

The frequency of WIB meetings will change beginning this year. Full WIB meetings will now be held quarterly while the WIB Executive Committee will meet two times per quarter. The updated WIB Meeting Calendar for 2015 can be found at http://www.sonomawib.org/docs/2015Calendar-Proposed.pdf