

**Minutes—Mature Workers Sub-Committee
Workforce Recruitment Task Force
Wednesday, February 27th, 2008
Workforce Services Conference Room**

In Attendance: Barb Daugherty, Linda Gostas, Jim Craig, Matt Jones, Les Engelter, Pete Jones, Nancy Etchingham, Kevin Messamer, Deb Pruss, Carmen Rideout, and Jaime Lewis

Name the Group

This sub-committee needs a name that reflects the purpose of the group, as well as the breadth of experience that mature workers can bring employers. Kevin mentioned the name HOPE—helping older people engage—which is a play on hYPe (helping young professionals engage). This name doesn't seem to convey the purpose of the group. Kevin also suggested the name FUSE—Fully Utilizing Sheridan's Experience. The group likes this name much better, as it reflects the experience level of mature workers, as well as the idea that there are many ways that employers can employ older workers by thinking outside of the box.

Identify the Need and How Far Reaching the Need Goes

Identifying the need should be the foundation for naming the group. Matt sees the group identifying older workers who may not necessarily be looking for a second career, but looking to augment retirement income or pay specific bills or receive benefits. Matt sees that many professionals retired from a first career have a strong work ethic and will find a second career on their own. However, Jim states the second career mature worker shouldn't be excluded from the group. Nancy brought up the concern that many older workers have—they may not be physically capable of doing the "whole" job. Mature workers are concerned that they may not be able to stand for several hours, do heavy lifting, or work an 8 hour shift.

Ultimately, employer needs will dictate the success of hiring mature workers. Not only must the group find out the needs and desires of mature workers, but also educate employers about mature workers. Employers may not have thought about job carving—looking at a job description and carving out tasks that can be completed by a mature worker, flex-time, or splitting full-time jobs into multiple part-time jobs. Employers may still have an expectation of hiring one worker to do all aspects of a job description; they may not have thought about splitting up a job and having multiple employees sharing the responsibilities.

In order to fully identify the needs of both mature workers and employers, it may be best to have a forum or panel discussion. There is a need for workers in the

service industry; perhaps employers in this industry should be targeted for this discussion.

Identify Employers to Bring to the Table

This item was to be tabled until the next meeting; however, with the discussions of identifying the need, employers were mentioned. The group identified several employers to invite to a panel discussion to discuss their needs and to begin discussing the benefits of hiring mature workers. Potential employers include:

- Holiday Inn
- Best Western
- Home Depot
- Sheridan Memorial Hospital
- Downtown Sheridan Association (representing downtown merchants/retail)
- Larry Storro (fast food industry)

Bring Additional Older Citizens

Jim is working to bring additional mature workers to the group's discussions. He's looking for workers who have retired, workers about to retire, executives and blue collar workers. Jim mentioned that most people who have retired or who are about to retire could continue in their field if they choose to—the group needs to focus on those workers wanting to change fields or try something different, as those workers may not know how to reenter the workforce or how to apply their skills to a new field.

Kevin mentioned that the Workforce Services office may be of assistance to older workers trying to switch fields or try something new—mature workers can take the Workforce Services Choices assessment or the WorkKeys assessment to determine what skills they have and what they like to do—that information can lead a worker to a job that would be a good fit for their interests and qualifications. Matt mentioned that Sheridan College is working toward WorkKeys certification—the College may also be a resource for older workers in assessing skills and interests as well as providing additional training to prepare mature workers for employment changes.

Priorities to Create Structure

- 1. Develop Action Plans**—Action Plans will need to wait until the group can answer the question of the need and how far reaching the need goes. Without this information, the sub-committee will not be able to create an action plan that addresses the need fully.
- 2. Create the Database**—There needs to be a central repository of information so that employers can find mature workers looking for jobs and vice versa. Workforce Services provides this infrastructure through the Wyoming at Work website (www.wyomingatwork.com); however, it

may not be receiving enough traffic to be effective. The website may need to be marketed to both employers and employees. There may be issues with the user-friendliness of the site of which Workforce Services is unaware. Use of this website should be discussed at the panel discussion with employers and mature workers.

- 3. Educate Employers and Older Workers**—The group has decided that a panel discussion with older workers and employers is the best way to begin this process. The sub-committee can ask employers what they are looking for, and ask older workers what they are looking for—this information can then be used to create strategies to educate both employers and employees.

The next meeting of the sub-committee will be held on Wednesday, March 26th at 2 pm at the Workforce Services Center. Before the next meeting, each committee member is asked to bring three names of potential employers and three potential mature workers to invite to a forum discussion. Forward Sheridan will provide the top 40 employers in Sheridan, so that these employers may be included in the discussion. At the next meeting, the group will narrow down the invitation list and choose a date (this discussion should occur in April). Everyone should also check out the Workforce Services website, both as an employer and an employee, so that feedback can be provided. Kevin and Deb at Workforce Services can assist with website access or questions.

Kevin noted that he will be leaving the Workforce Services office to continue his military service; Deb will be the contact for Workforce Services.