

## **Fiscal Year 2006 Local Annual Workforce Development Business Plan**

### **III. Plan Narrative**

#### **Introduction to Operations**

In 2005 our objective of *Integrated Services to Customers* had some initial success that included the implementation of a new salary and job title structure for New Directions (ND) that more closely aligned staff with their Division of Career Services (DCS) counterparts. In addition, there were improved working relationships between the business services/job developer functions and the Case Managers, especially in regards to specific programs such as the FISH grant, the Employment Assistance Services program, and in particular during the closing months of FY '04, the Manufacturing National Emergency Grant which combined DCS and ND employees into one team. That team was responsible for the successful turn around of the program grant and contributed to the lifting of the Department of Labor Red Light on New Bedford's grant status. Two months of cross training was accomplished as was the job shadowing program between New Directions and DCS job services/job development staff. This effort contributed to an appreciation of the roles of peers in the career center and helped forge a renewed sense of team.

Both the Executive Director of New Directions and the Director of the Career Center left their positions in the late spring of 2004. An interim Executive Director for New Directions was brought in and functioned as both the New Directions Executive Director and Career Center Director until September 2005. A new permanent Executive Director was hired in September and a new Career Center Director was appointed in November 2005. In addition, a major reorganization within DCS put new managers in key operational positions. These leadership changes put the plans for further integration of services on a slower pace. Other issues also hampered efforts in this category. These include: significant delays in filling vacant DCS positions, especially the important Career Center leadership position of Program Manager III; a recognized need to develop staff skills through implementation of individual professional improvement and training plans; and the need to re-examine internal processes that provide customer services in all programs. There has been, and continues to be, a much improved climate of cooperation between the major partners at the local level – WIB, New Directions, DCS, and the DWDA - and this is improving the process of integrated services to all customers.

As a result of unfilled vacancies in the Veterans program and in Wagner Peyser funded positions, performance was not to the level we expected of ourselves, however, the performance of those providing job seeker services to the general population and special groups like veteran's was truly impressive given the lack of staffing. Finally, the Employment Assistance Service Contract with the Department of Transitional Assistance fell short of goal during the first few months of FY 05. Once this deficiency was recognized and as a result of teamwork at the local level, resources were brought to bear improving performance for this important program that puts very-difficult-to-place customers back into the workforce. Performance has improved significantly in this area and we have every expectation that this program will achieve goal.

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New Directions program management functions, Division of Workforce Development Administration (DWDA) fiscal functions, our youth programs, our internal General Education Diploma and Computer Training functions as well as Fish VI administration will all be challenged during the first quarter of FY 2006 as we all move into a new facility. The City of New Bedford has chosen to use our current location for other city programs and has offered us space in another building being renovated to house their Business Incubator project, a joint venture between the city and UMASS- Dartmouth. This new location will provide us an opportunity to be in close contact with new businesses to assist them in their workforce needs, as well as allow us to reduce operating costs by consolidating functions currently housed at the B&I Center. While the Workforce Investment Board has already contributed significant dollars to assist with the renovation of the new location, the additional costs associated with physically moving existing New Direction equipment, telephone installation, and Internet access cabling requirements will all require a considerable amount of FY 2006 funds.

### **1. Please describe the local area's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to job seekers for FY 2006?**

#### **FY '05 Job Seeker Services**

The *Targeted Job Recruitments* objective was accomplished in 2005. Several very successful targeted recruitments were held including: the Jobs First Day that focused on our targeted industries: Manufacturing, Retail/Wholesale, Healthcare, Business Services and Construction; a Youth Expo that targeted youth oriented jobs primarily in the Retail and Public sectors; a special recruitment for 7 major Home Depot locations, a Manufacturing recruitment for Harvey Industries; and an Employers Breakfast and Job Fair for employers who traditionally hire Employment Assistance Services clients. In addition, a Veteran focused employer breakfast and Job Fair is scheduled for May 2005. Significant efforts to conduct a Marine Trades Job Fair were also initiated and originally agreed to by several small employers but efforts stalled due to a lack of commitment by the employers. We will continue to explore this opportunity in FY '06. The operators and the Workforce Investment Board shared marketing costs for these events; however, past funding assistance by various civic and industry organizations was less than historically provided due to the economy and the targeted industry focus that was not supported by groups that represent all industries. Developing specific goals for entered employment were established by using these events as a way to develop a baseline for future similar events.

Improvements in Job Placement for Customers with Language Barriers were accomplished. English for Speakers of other Languages classes are part of the BayStateWorks Manufacturing Grant that is currently in progress. This grant will provide training in other languages for a group of both incumbent and unemployed workers. Our local grant partners, the Immigrants Assistance Center and the Community Economic Development Center, are providing several of the unemployed workers for this program. There is also a focus in this grant on "Shop Talk"-- English that will provide specific workplace language skills. In addition, Career Center staff that speak Spanish and Portuguese assist this customer population in Career Center workshops and career counseling.

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Our FY 2005 goal *to pilot a work readiness certification program* made great progress. We have successfully incorporated a work readiness component into the BayStateWorks grant that will provide work readiness skills for up to 100 unemployed participants. This program began in April 2005 and will continue through June 2006. In addition, the application for the block grant to provide Work Certification to 300 low-to-moderate income unemployed workers with non-WIA, non traditional funding from the MA Department of Housing & Community Development is moving through the system and we expect to be able to begin this new initiative in the fall of 2005. It is also our plan to utilize trained Career Center staff to provide this program to others beyond those covered in the grant. Additionally, we will be exploring the Work Certification concept with local secondary education providers who have expressed considerable interest. The current youth oriented retail certification program provided by one of our vendors will be expanding to address adults and also add a sales certification component, providing more training opportunities for our clients. In addition, we are represented on a statewide discussion group led by Comm Corp that is addressing the State's on-going analysis of the issues associated with Work Readiness Assessment and Credentialing.

### **FY '06 Planned Job Seeker Services**

In FY 2006, several workforce initiatives to improve services to job seekers will be undertaken in order to accomplish the following specific objectives:

- **Full integration of New Directions and DCS staffs as well as other workforce partners to optimize services to our customers.**
- **Improve the Job Ready status of job seekers through better identification of weaknesses and increased use of Career Center services especially workshops and work readiness and work cert training programs.**
- **Balanced resource allocation to ensure meeting all performance goals without requiring major shifting of resources to support one program at the expense of other programs.**

Continue efforts to integrate all services to include:

- Seeking improved communication and operational decision making between ND/ CC Directors and DCS Senior Leadership. While local efforts have resulted in better relationships than past years between the WIB, ND, and local DCS, as well as dramatically improved leadership integration and decision-making; state level decisions regarding operational issues such as employee training and local staffing assignments have been made without the proper professional interaction of senior DCS management with the local operational team which includes the lead operator (New Directions), the Career Center Director and the DCS Field Manager. We are seeking to have a fully integrated model locally and require the active support of DCS senior management to help us reach that goal.
- Creation of functional teams to include both ND and DCS staff will begin in July with new duties and skill development for the majority of staff.

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- Increase efforts to cross train staffs, which will directly support the functional team concept and improve the service to customers – both job seekers and employers. The large percentage of small and medium sized businesses in the Greater New Bedford area presents untapped opportunities for the business services functions at the Career Center. With the cross training and integration of staffs, many of the job developers will bring with them a host of small to medium businesses with whom they have contact that will immediately increase Business Services outreach targets.

Seek 1 full time equivalent (FTE) for the Veteran's program. We have been operating with only one Veteran's representative for the past year. At this time we have been promised an additional .5 FTE Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) position to share with the Cape for the Veteran's Program. That position still has not been filled. *We strongly believe that with the increased focus on and numbers of veterans returning from Iraq, we will need two full FTE's to provide the level of service those veterans from the Greater New Bedford Area deserve. The second FTE should be a Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) vs. DVOP to increase outreach to the business community, and to become part of the business services team advocating for Veterans during all of the outreach activity planed by the Career Centers, especially to small businesses that comprise 87% of all businesses in our area.*

With the slow start of our Employment Assistance Services (EAS) program in 2005, there is always a threat that FTE's assigned to the program may be lost to another area with better performance numbers. With the successful improvements of our local processes already initiated and future changes in the program which will result in a much higher referral rate in FY '06, we believe that New Bedford both deserves and will require the full 6 FTE complement of workers to meet the needs of the EAS program this coming year and we will make the case to keep that number stable at 6 FTE. According to our labor market information data, we do not see the EAS population we serve decreasing. If anything, we will see an increase in customers who are much more difficult to place. A reduction in FTE's would have a significant negative impact on our ability to serve this customer base.

Balanced emphasis on meeting all program performance goals for all constituencies. Previously, resources were shifted to focus attention on programs that appeared deficient in meeting performance numbers, resulting in diluting resources from other programs. This balance process will include educating staff on performance measures including their role in meeting goals, greater management focus on meeting performance goals, utilizing functional teams that address all program needs, and development of an annual plan for meeting individual program goals.

Implementation of the "Certified Work" Program to include those not covered by the block grant. As currently designed, the grant will not provide for New Bedford residents, our largest group of unemployed who would require this certification.

Emphasis on ABE/ESOL opportunities in two different categories: a focus on incumbent workers needing this training using Workforce Training Funds (WTF), and also identifying opportunities to integrate English for the Workplace (Shop Talk English) along with skills enhancement training efforts for the unemployed, primarily in conjunction with the Bay State

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Works Manufacturing grant and also through the Cert Work program. This initiative will not show up in our WIA performance numbers as a training activity in the ESOL category since this type program does not meet WIA standards for ESOL. However, it will help those Title I customers to get a job much faster which is their primary focus. NOTE: Our experience is that Title I customers who need WIA approved ABE/ESOL training are not willing to commit to a lengthy ABE/ESOL program. They want jobs now, not a lengthy training program and hope for a job later. Experience also tells us that very few, Dislocated Workers will elect to go through an approved ABE/ESOL program. Feedback from other workforce development providers indicates that the English for Work program is a better use of our training efforts and dollars. We also intend to seek technical assistance from the Boston career centers on combining ESOL w/ Skill Enhancement through their ITA process.

Provide documentation for job seekers who meet criteria for the Workforce Opportunity Tax Credits and the Hiring Incentive Training Grant so they can use it as leverage when applying for a position. This process will help improve the obtained employment performance numbers in all categories especially for Employment Assistance Services clients.

Implement a process that requires better follow-up with all customers to provide support services where needed and also capture entered employments, especially those that primarily use the Resource Room.

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities (Samples)
Full integration of New Directions and DCS staffs and Workforce Partners	# of employees expressing satisfaction with the job and work environment per employee survey - Increased appropriate customer referrals to services - Customer satisfaction results	- Cross Training - Job Shadowing - Training: Professional and technical).
Improve the Job Ready Status of Job Seekers	# of successful interviews and job placements increase. # of job seekers obtaining work that results in long term employment increases because customers are better informed and better prepared for the position they obtain	- Completely revamped Workshops - More cohesive process for assessing skills and barriers and making timely referrals.
Balance Resources to ensure meeting all performance goals	- All program performance goals met with minimal shifting of resources. # of program cross training activities	- More effective management oversight of all programs. - Define performance thresholds that trigger required action Development of a more flexible workforce that can respond to multiple program needs Increased training of staff especially managers

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Increased numbers of targeted job seekers to support employer needs	# of qualified job seekers for referral	Maximize Navigator position to serve the disabled Outreach to Vets, EAS & Youth through workshops and job fairs
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The Workforce Investment Board will provide ongoing support for the development of training and employment teams and leadership integration. The WIB’s Performance Measurement Committee will help to facilitate and monitor activities relating to change management strategies. Additionally, a key responsibility of the WIB is the Annual Charter Review Process whereby interview and focus groups to elicit performance feedback from Career Center customers, including employers, job seekers, partners, vendors, staff and leadership will take place. It culminates in an annual report delineating areas of strength as well as focal points for improvements by the Career Center Operators, New Directions & Division of Career Services, Department of Workforce Development Administration (fiscal agent), and the WIB. The WIB will provide ongoing support in terms of partnering with the Business Services Teams to design and coordinate the marketing effort to targeted employers. In a continued effort to meet workforce development system goals, the WIB will provide staff time and volunteer hours from board members. Specifically, all WIB activities in support of system goals are coordinated and approved through the following standing committees, subcommittees, and working groups:

- Full WIB
- Executive Committee
  - Membership & Governance Working Group
- Finance Committee
- Resource Development & Planning Committee
  - Employer Services Working Group
  - Lifelong Learning Working Group
- Performance Measurement Committee
- Marketing & Publicity Committee
- Youth Council
  - Executive Committee
  - Planning Committee

In an effort to provide quality literacy services to adults - improving the workforce, increasing employment rates and building the economic well being of families and the GNB Workforce area - the GNB Workforce Investment Board in FY '06 will collaborate with Comm Corp in developing a Literacy Works program. Literacy Works is a strategic initiative to improve and expand the delivery of literacy services, primarily Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The foundation of Literacy Works is to incorporate basic skills and language development in all education, business and technology training programs and to link the importance of literacy to the economic and social well being of the community by mobilizing community-wide

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understanding and support for literacy efforts, developing new programs and strategies to fill identified needs, and expanding resources for literacy initiatives.

### **2. Please describe the local area's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to employers for FY 2006?**

#### **FY '05 Business Services**

In 2005 our goal of *providing pre-screening and targeted recruitments* was very successful. We had pre-screening agreements with 7 major companies in our targeted industries and we held 89- targeted recruitments to date with more scheduled for the remainder of FY '05. The primary industries included manufacturing and retail/wholesale trades. While very productive, we need to carefully plan increased use of this type of recruitment tool, as it requires a significant amount of time and effort while at the same time being a major drain on resources.

The local labor market data supports our continued focus on the target industries of Manufacturing, Retail/Wholesale, Business & Professional Services, and Health & Social Assistance Services. We also intend to develop a greater understanding of other industries of interest including Hospitality & Tourism, Marine Science & Technology, Medical Devices & Pharmaceutical, and Warehouse Distribution, and will work with local vendors and educational institutions to develop training programs that meet future target industry needs.

Our efforts to *synthesize regional marketing and resources development* were marginally successful. Very little organized progress was accomplished in this area. There has been an increase in our marketing efforts but primarily as a result of individual event advertising and promotion. These included press releases for major grants and training events, Job Fair advertising, radio remote broadcasting, and radio talk shows. The Marketing Plan previously developed has been partially implemented but further efforts are needed to make significant progress. Some success in consolidation of services occurred with the use of fee-for-service agreements with one major employer, renting of one small office space at the Business and Industry Center (B&I), and moving the Fishermen's Family Assistance Center to B&I to save funds from the Fish grant and reduce the rental costs of the B&I Center. Efforts are also in progress to find another business to take over the B&I Center by September to allow all B&I and Fish VI staff and training facilities to move to the new Incubator building.

In FY '05, the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board (GNBWIB) revised its strategic development plan to sustain and expand the organization's mission-driven programs and initiatives. Emphasis was placed on pursuing traditional grant opportunities, temporarily deferring goals around an annual appeal. The WIB's goal was set at \$750,000, a fifty percent increase over non-formula revenue from the previous year. The WIB applied for three BEST III/BayStateWorks grant award in partnership with three sectoral collaboratives, including manufacturing, healthcare, and marine trades. GNBWIB was successful in two out of the three - manufacturing and healthcare, taking the lead in the manufacturing sectoral initiative. To date, GNBWIB has been awarded \$982, 843 of Competitive Grants and/or Discretionary Funding FY ' 05.

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The Certified Work Credential Initiative grew out of an employer roundtable hosted by the WIB in 2003. This employer driven demand initiative was already discussed in the Job Seeker Section of this Plan. However, from the employer perspective, we know that the entire employer community has placed emphasis on this work readiness/certification process to address the general feeling that today's entry-level employees need a greatly improved basic work readiness skill set that includes personal relations and customer service, as well as a better understanding of common workplace rules.

### **FY '06 Planned Business Services**

In FY 2006, the Greater New Bedford Workforce System will focus considerable attention on the Business Customer by continuing to build on the initiatives started in 2005 and by dedicating improved workforce system resources to accomplish the following major objectives:

- **Significantly increase the business community's awareness and use of Career Center Services with some special emphasis on the small business community who dominate the New Bedford Workforce area according to labor market information (of 5,811 establishments of March 2004, 87.7% had fewer than 20 employees).**
- **Provide a better match of available job seekers that meet business workforce needs as when working with targeted industries.**
- **Improve the skill level of incumbent workers by increasing business use of the Workforce Training Fund and other training grants.**
- **Implementation of the Work Certified Program, if funded, in response to business demand for job ready workforce.**

Changes in key leadership positions within New Directions and the Career Center required a period of familiarization and understanding of processes and systems before any major changes in the organizational structure that support business services were undertaken. Therefore, the strategic planning effort outlined in the 2005 plan did not make significant progress. A plan for examining current and potential services and reorganizing the Career Center Business Services functions is now part of a Continuous Quality Improvement process in its infant stages and will address the following activities that will support our three major business services objectives.

- Reorganization of all staff that interacts with businesses into functional teams, staff training and skill improvement in new business related responsibilities; examining and improving internal processes that deal with employers, development of effective tools to determine employer needs, creation of an employer customer service measurement tool, increasing staff industry expertise; and developing a more effective job matching process that will help identify job seekers with specific skills/experience.
- Profile all businesses by services needed vs. our ability to provide services vs. their ability to meet worker needs (wages, benefits, career ladders, etc). Focus our resources on those that provide the best profile.

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- Continue with pre-screening and targeted recruitment arrangements for companies that meet desired profile.
- Increase marketing activities to include: target marketing to the better “profile” companies/industries; increase public awareness of Career Center services through increased public speaking opportunities with local civic, industry and trade groups, and neighborhood business and community organizations; better use of various media with emphasis on informing Job Seekers of available openings; market the Work Readiness and Certified Work programs to targeted businesses; increase marketing of the Workforce Training Fund and other grant opportunities as well as use of tax/grant hiring incentives – Workforce Opportunities Tax Credits and Hiring Incentive Training Grants; and developing an accurate email distribution list for area employers (to include identification of Youth Friendly employers).
- Increase outreach to smaller businesses through sponsorship of employer relations/Human Resource (HR) related seminars. Also examine opportunities to generate income by providing employment related consulting or other services to small businesses not having HR expertise.
- Expand upon the critical step of Employer education when pursuing sectoral initiatives in the areas of routine processes, time commitments required, and long-term ownership of the project.
- Sponsor at least 4 Job Fairs/Special Recruitments to targeted industries.
- Develop WIB staff and Career Center staff Workforce Training Fund (WTF) expertise to supplement Comm Corp Technical Assistance. Focus efforts on handholding businesses through the WTF application process to increase the number of applications submitted and improve local success rates in grant approvals.
- Continue to improve the relationship between the workforce system and the economic development systems within our area.
- Develop a plan for addressing the major business expansion activities that will occur in 2005/2006 in the Wareham area.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Activities (Samples)</b>
Increase Business Community awareness and use of Career Center services.	# Businesses reached # New businesses reached # Business using services # New businesses using services # Small businesses reached and using services # Public speaking engagements by staff # Media activities utilized # Repeat business customers # Seminars and workshops for businesses # Attending seminars and workshops	- Use of new marketing tools and activities - Development of business profiles for target marketing - Development of cross-functional teams - Developing tools to determine business workforce needs - Creation of Business Customer Service feedback mechanism

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<p>Provide a better match of available job seekers that meet business workforce needs</p>	<p># Jobs attained                  # Repeat business customers                  # Job postings                  # Job postings filled                  # Scores on business customer satisfaction measurement tool                  # Job seekers trained in work readiness and Certified Work                  # Number of above getting hired</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve process for automated job matching</li> <li>- Increase staff industry expertise</li> <li>- Improve job seekers skills as a result of new resource room processes</li> <li>- Improved training decisions resulting from better case manager knowledge of business needs.</li> </ul>
<p>Improve the skill level of incumbent workers by increasing business use of the WTF and other training grants.</p>	<p># Number of applications for grants                  # Successful applications                  # Workers trained                  # Improved business outcomes as a result of training such as reduction of turnover, fewer workplace accidents, increased promotion rates, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop staff expertise in WTF</li> <li>- Increase outreach to businesses needing training</li> <li>- Marketing of work readiness and Certified Work Program to businesses.</li> </ul>

The GNBWIB continues to seek interaction with community organizations by participating in a number of other Boards, such as the Regional Competitiveness Council, the Economic Development Council, and by convening meetings to support sectoral initiatives. Due to both a change in WIB staffing and Marketing & Publicity Committee make-up, limited progress was achieved in the marketing efforts in FY '05. Going forward into FY '06, local stakeholders will work cooperatively through the newly energized Marketing & Publicity Committee of the WIB to plan, execute and chart marketing to facilitate community awareness and branding of the local workforce development system as well as Board recruitment and development. It is the goal of '06 to produce quarterly issues of the regional newsletter- *Rising Tide* as well as local Career Center system success stories (Mission Stories).

The GNBWIB will continue to support the work of the Regional Competitiveness Council (RCC). The WIB Executive Director serves as Co-Chair of the Workforce Development and Education Program Committee working to link workforce development with economic development activities. Recent efforts have focused on more state investment with programming for Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Prior efforts of this committee resulted in the Workforce Training Fund placing more emphasis on ABE/ESOL by allowing the use of this resource to be utilized specifically for this type of workforce education. Going forward, this committee will evaluate the initial pilot as to its effectiveness in addressing the needs of the unemployed, evaluating the number and types of companies that are applying for this type of WTF funding, as well as evaluating the number and type of employees that are being served. The GNBWIB along with the RCC will continue to advocate for more resource allocation for ABE/ESOL as well as market the availability of the Workforce Training Funds to employers as a means to address this overarching educational workforce need.

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The Resource Development and Planning Committee of the GNBWIB continues to support the need for a strategic development plan that incorporates achieving supplemental funding to support all areas of the existing regional system's portfolio as well as expand upon current programs and initiatives. In addition, a major focus will be placed on enhanced outreach to businesses to support an increase in Workforce Training Fund applications from and grants to our region. As noted in our '05 report above, increased state and federal funding set-aside opportunities for workforce development helped us exceed our FY '05 goal by 31% (\$232,843). In FY '06, by aggressively pursuing competitive government grants (state and federal) and discretionary awards from various foundations (private/corporate/community), it is the goal of the GNBWIB to raise \$1,000,000 in additional revenue - this to be reviewed and approved by the Resource Development & Planning committee.

**3. For FY 2006 what are your area's primary priorities and strategies for managing and improving performance and access to the WIA Title I youth services? How did the region identify these priorities and strategies (labor market information and research, demographics of youth and resulting needs, etc.)? How will the local program of youth services incorporate the practice of "youth voice" into the development of these strategies (membership on Youth Council, focus groups, surveys, etc.)? Describe progress in meeting youth program priorities and performance goals described in your FY05 Annual Business Plan.**

### **FY '05 YOUTH ACTIVITIES:**

During FY '05 the Greater New Bedford Region priorities within the Workforce Investment Act Title 1 Youth program were to reduce the dropout rate and coordinate local implementation for the P21 initiative; to allocate more workforce development system resources to service out-of-school youth and to establish relationships with "youth friendly employers."

Members of The Greater New Bedford Workforce Development System facilitated and participated in the P21 Planning process during FY 05. The Greater New Bedford Youth Council, New Directions and staff representing various community organizations formed the P21 Planning Committee and attended weekly meetings, trainings and state sponsored P21 events.

New Directions and WIB staff collaborated with local youth providers to secure a P21 planning grant to develop a Strategic Action Plan to address the needs of the targeted Greater New Bedford Youth population. The P21 planning team was coordinated by Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction (PAACA) and includes representatives from the Division of Social Services (DSS), Division of Youth Services (DYS), UMASS Dartmouth, Mass Rehab, Community & Schools for Career Services (CS<sup>2</sup>), New Bedford Public Schools, the Parenting Teens Program and the Interchurch Council.

Dropout prevention strategies will be incorporated into the P21 strategic action plan, although impacting the dropout rate was not chosen as a target indicator due to the increase in effort put forth by the community and school department to address the dropout rate. In an

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effort to decrease the dropout rate in New Bedford, the school department restructured the freshman class to the freshman academy design and hired two Drop-out Prevention Specialists. The High School also launched an “Adopt a Homeroom” campaign for local business members to visit New Bedford High School freshmen during their freshman academy class to reinforce the value of staying in school and connect attending school now to future success in the work force.

The SMILES coalition brought together leaders from the Faith, Government, Educational, Business, and Human Service sectors to impact the dropout rate by providing mentors for middle school students that show drop out warning signs such as poor academic performance, behavior problems, attendance problems, learning disabilities, etc. This year approximately 100 mentor / student matches were made; students at Normandin Middle School and Keith Jr. High participated.

The South Coast Learning Network was hired by Superintendent Michael Longo to implement Action Learning into the sixth grade curriculum at Roosevelt Middle School. Action learning provides a hands-on learning approach and involves community experts in the learning process.

The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Workforce Investment Board launched a summer jobs campaign last year to connect youth with local businesses for summer employment. The group successfully employed 27 youth in the private sector. The WIA-funded in-school summer of work and learning program also provided 175 at-risk youth with a six-week work experience. Work experiences included childcare, masonry, culinary, art, clerical, maintenance, peer leadership and entrepreneurship. Connecting Activities also connected 50 youth to paid internships. The Career Center, through a MA Department of Education funded Pathways Coordinator, enrolled an additional 59 students as members of the Career Center and exposed them to available services including Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) support services.

The Local P21 planning team decided that allocating additional resources to dropout prevention would be a duplication of the many services provided by the school department, community organizations and existing WIA Title 1 programs. The focus of the P21 Strategic Action Plan will be to increase employability of out-of-school youth in the New Bedford Area and to increase employment and job readiness opportunities for youth living in poverty.

Following national and state trends, the Workforce Development System allocated 60% of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title 1 Youth funds in FY ‘05 to out-of-school programs. This shift in funding increased the number of out-of-school youth serviced from 155 to 218 adding 63 additional slots in alternative education and 28 slots in certified occupational certification programs. In FY ‘05 additional funds were set aside for occupational training, which allowed us to provide training scholarships to 14 out-of-school youth seeking employment. In FY ‘05, an out-of-school youth portfolio with Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan was developed and incorporated into an out-of-school program curriculum.

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In response to the increase in allocations to out-of-school programming, the New Bedford Area Workforce Development System strengthened relationships with Division of Youth Services caseworkers and Division of Social Services staff to ease the transition from residential care to community living and enhanced the educational and career components of the department's client service plans with WIA services.

Connections between Community Based Organizations (CBO), Faith Based Organizations (FBO) and the Career Center established as a result of the CBO/FBO initiative have been maintained and new relationships with additional community organizations have been made as a result of efforts put forth by youth staff and WIB members. New Directions Management Information Systems in collaboration with the New Directions Youth Department and the Workforce Investment Board began to create a database of local employers who hire youth or have expressed interest in hiring youth. Integrating data from connecting activities, Massachusetts One Stop Employment System (MOSES), and Youth Mapping databases will create the database. Work is currently being done to ensure that information is not duplicated and is accurate. Completion of the database is targeted for early fall 05. Youth Case Managers and Career Center staff will use this database to assist young people in their job search.

Youth staff began hosting Job Readiness workshops for youth in January 2005. Workshops are specially designed for youth and include interactive activities as well as open discussion. Topics include resume preparation, interviewing skills, job search, employer expectations and dress for success. Workshops are available to all youth ages 14-21. To date, 65 youth have attended workshops at the Career Center. Postings of potential job opportunities for youth are collected, updated and maintained by youth staff. All youth seeking Career Center services are referred to youth staff to review job postings. Referrals are made when appropriate. The Career Center is scheduled to host the National Retailers Association training for youth to train youth in retail and customer service and prepare them for the National Retailer's Association exam. Employers nationally recognize National Retail Federation certification as a credential, often hiring those with certification at a higher rate of pay.

On Friday, April 22, 2005 during April school vacation, New Directions and The Career Center, in conjunction with the Workforce Investment Board, the Mayor's Office, Connecting Activities, CS2, the Chamber of Commerce and the Boys and Girls Club hosted a Youth Career Expo at the Career Center to connect all youth ages 14-21 with summer programs and employment opportunities. Fourteen employers attended and interviewed youth for summer jobs. The list of employers included: JC Penney, The Recreation Department, Lowe's, McDonald's, Domino's, the Sheriff's Department, The Boy's and Girls Club and Wal-Mart. Workshops were available each day during April vacation to help youth prepare for the Expo.

Twenty community programs participated in the Youth Career Expo to showcase summer programs and internships for youth. Approximately 400 explored program and internship opportunities, with 307 youth meeting with employers that day. Employer surveys were conducted and feedback from employers will be incorporated into future workshops. The Youth Career Expo will be an annual event.

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The local Science Technology Engineering & Math (STEM) Initiative has gained significant momentum over the last few months and continues to make progress toward its yearly goals and objectives. This initiative is a collaboration of six Massachusetts's WIB's aimed at two specific outcomes. The first outcome is to expand the number of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics internship opportunities for regional student populations. The second outcome is to develop a collaborative proposal seeking three years of funding for an expanded STEM internship program in the six regions. New Bedford is responsible for the placement of youth into STEM internships, as well as implementing a pilot training program within New Bedford High School. To date, over ninety youth have been placed in STEM internships and the pilot training program has been implemented. This pilot training, Tech Corp's Skills4Success, began in May and will conclude at the end of the school year. Presently, fifteen sophomores are participating in a series of curriculum based soft-skills training seminars, which are facilitated by six volunteers from local private sector companies. Volunteers representing AFC Cable, Polaroid, and Joseph Abboud are acting as lead and/or co-facilitators for this training piece.

### **FY '06 PLANNED YOUTH ACTIVITIES:**

Transitioning from FY '05 to FY '06, the local Workforce Development System will continue to prioritize many aspects of the '05 business plan for youth services in relation to strengthening connections to employers and increasing employment and job readiness opportunities for youth in the New Bedford area. A focus toward implementation of the P21 Strategic Action Plan and increasing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title 1 Youth funds to targeted populations, follow National and State trends.

During FY 2006, the Greater New Bedford region will prioritize the following three strategies within the WIA Title I Youth program:

- Coordinate local implementation of the P21 Strategic Plan to increase employment and training opportunities to target populations.
- Allocate more workforce development system resources to serve targeted youth populations identified through P21 and the United States Department of Labor's (USDOL) New Strategic Vision for the Implementation of WIA services.
- Establish and enhance relationships with employers who hire youth.

*Goal #1: Implement P21 strategic plan to increase employment rates for non-enrolled HS dropouts, decrease the number of youth who are jobless and out-of-school and increase opportunities for youth living in poverty.*

Through our work with the P21 initiative, we learned that the 2000 Census for the Greater New Bedford Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) region reported that there are 14,793 youth ages 16-21. Of this group, 13.5% (or 2,004) are high school dropouts representing the highest regional percentage for all of the 16 LWIBs in the state. Of this region's 10,888 white non-Hispanic youth, 1,194 (11.0%) are dropouts and of the 449 Black non-Hispanic youth, 59 (13.1%) are dropouts. The rates for each of these groups place the

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rating for the Greater New Bedford region the second highest of the 16 LWIBs in the state. Among the 1,161 Hispanic youth in our region, 365 or 31.4% are dropouts putting our region for this population at the highest in the state along with the Asian Non-Hispanic youth that is reported at 18.2%. These statistics further underline the need for services for out of school youth, from various demographic groups, in this region.

As reported in the 2000 Census, of the state's 16 LWIBs, the Greater New Bedford LWIB has the lowest percent (64.4%) of employed, out of school youth. The employment rates improve for those with a high school diploma and/or those who had some post secondary education- 75.3% and 83.1% respectively. For those youth who did not graduate from high school, the employment rate is 46.9% indicating that more than half of the individuals who dropped out of school are not working.

- Highest concentration GNBWIB youth located with the city limits of New Bedford
- New Bedford Public School district dropout rate reported at 9.3% for 2002-2003 vs. State 3.3% rate
- New Bedford Public School district low-income student population at 62% of student base vs. State 27.2% average
- New Bedford Public School district special education rates at 17.8% vs. State average of 15.6%
- New Bedford Public School district's English for Speakers of Other Languages student population at 19.1% vs. State 13.7% rate

Career center and WIB staff will support the P21 strategic plan and develop strategies to connect unemployed, out-of-school youth to the career center where they will access information and a variety of educational and employment services. Additional resources will be allocated to support outreach efforts and programs to service the target population.

"Youth Voice" has been, and will continue to be, woven into the planning process for P21. This has been accomplished through past surveys administered to youth; moving forward these and future surveys will be incorporated into the YouthWorks Summer Employment intake process. Information will be gathered by various survey opportunities and will be captured through a minimum of three youth focus groups held throughout the city of New Bedford. The documentation and practical use of "Youth Voice" is critical to our ability to not only engage but also provide meaningful and ongoing services to the target population of P21.

The Career Center currently provides services to in-school and out-of-school at-risk youth. The WIA in-school programs provide a summer of work and learning experience for participants. A youth portfolio with the Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan is established for each youth based upon a job description of their summer placement. The Career Center, through a MA Department of Education funded Pathways Coordinator, will enroll area students as members of the career center and expose them to available services. Competitively procured Youth Services Providers are required to provide remedial education services. The Youth Council oversees other state and federally funded programs

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such as Connecting Activities and Pathways to MCAS Success, mandating they integrate their services with WIA Title 1 activities.

*Goal # 2: Allocate more workforce development system resources to serve targeted youth populations identified through P21 and the USDOL's New Strategic Vision for the Implementation of WIA services.*

The USDOL's new strategic vision, P-21, and identified local need (quantified above) all significantly impact the local service delivery model in that resources will be directed toward the programs, services, and systems aimed at Out-of-School youth. In FY 2005, the Youth Council allocated 60% of contracted dollars to out-of-school youth programs, allowing us to serve 218 youth. For FY 2006, the Youth Council anticipates allocating 65% of contracted dollars to out-of-school youth programs, which will allow us to serve approximately 240 youth. Out-of-school youth are the most vulnerable youth population due to their lack of educational attainment and employability skills. The additional resources, coupled with ongoing P21 planning activities, will allow the local system to enhance its ability to collaborate with state youth-serving agencies including the Division of Youth Services and the Division of Social Services to integrate systems and referral processes. The P21 Strategic Action Plan will identify non-enrolled high school dropouts; improve overall employment rates for out-of-school youth, including high school graduates and to increase opportunities leading to self-sufficiency for youth living in poverty.

In FY 2006 we will continue to set some WIA funds aside to support our Youth Occupational Training program. We will continue to place emphasis on programs that offer recognized certifications, as well as increasing the capacity around, and diversity of, existing and future certification opportunities. The availability and diversity of these trainings are extremely important to our ability to first engage, and then transition youth along a continuum of services that ultimately lead to competitive and meaningful employment. This is particularly important as it relates to the increased focus on out-of-school youth, especially older and disconnected youth.

In addition to providing increased opportunities for youth to obtain credentials and improve employability through programming, the local workforce development system will work during FY '06 to improve performance and continue to incorporate common measures into youth contract measurements. Adjustments in the FY '06 youth budget will allow for stipends to be provided to youth who meet performance benchmarks at graduation or General Education Diploma (GED) attainment and during the 12- month follow-up period. Follow-up benchmarks may include employment retention and retention in post secondary education.

The New Directions Youth Services Manager and the Youth Case Manager attended an Older Youth Performance Measures training sponsored by Commonwealth Corporation. Additional training for youth staff and WIB staff are available on-line for older youth and younger youth performance measures. The Local workforce development system will continue to seek technical assistance on performance measures from Commonwealth Corporation when needed.

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Goal #3: Establish and enhance relationships with employers who hire youth.

Our local system has made significant progress in the recruitment, engagement, and documentation of “youth friendly” employers. A major focus in FY 2006, will be to expand upon our foundation of employers and centralization of data relevant to those employers. The development of our employer database consolidates information from New Directions Youth Department, out-of-school vendors, and career center staff. This database will be utilized for the placement of youth and help to coordinate outreach efforts to local employers.

An example of progress in this area was the successful Youth Expo that was carried out by New Directions at the New Bedford Career Center in April 2005. This event will be leveraged with the Youth-Works program to ensure summer employment opportunities for a significant number of local youth. Additionally, YouthWorks will be used as a recruitment and engagement tool for the summer and year round services as we anticipate a large number of YouthWorks participants being eligible for WIA services. Additionally, a significant proportion of YouthWorks participants will be within the P21 target group.

With the noticeable shift to serving out-of-school youth, we feel that our local team would be well served with technical assistance in the following areas:

- Identification and training developed around the practical utilization of national best practices for engaging and servicing out-of-school youth.
- Ongoing training and forums specific to P21. To include facilitated trainings as well as discussion groups.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Activities (Examples)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GNB youth will access an increased number of job readiness training and employment opportunities through the Youth Employment System at the Career Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of integrated Youth Employment Database.</li> <li>• Update youth portfolio to suit employer needs.</li> <li>• # of GNB employers who hire youth through the Career Center.</li> <li>• # of employers who actively participate in the development of employment related programming.</li> <li>• # of vocational training opportunities available to youth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff will use integrated database as a resource for job seeking youth.</li> <li>• Integrated database will be maintained and updated.</li> <li>• Enhance portfolio system through collaborations with employers.</li> <li>• Increase diversity of training programs.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GNB Career Center will serve as the primary resource for youth seeking educational and employment related services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of youth who attend Career Center activities including workshops and job fairs.</li> <li>• # of youth who receive Career Center services.</li> <li>• # of referrals made to partners and agencies.</li> <li>• # of youth who obtain employment as a result of a career center service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate information from youth focus groups to outreach and marketing plan.</li> <li>• Increase resources for outreach and marketing to out-of-school youth.</li> <li>• Youth Career Expo to provide summer opportunities.</li> </ul>
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**4. Please describe how the local area will allocate training funds and resources in FY06 to assure skill enhancement across the broadest adult and dislocated worker customer base?**

**FY '05 Allocation of Training Funds & Resources**

In some respects, the increase in the training funds cap to \$4000 initiated in FY 05 backfired as vendors increased their costs for training once they became aware of the cap increase. Our average Adult and Dislocated Worker Individual Training Account (ITA) costs for FY 05 were \$2900 and \$3200 respectively, up from FY 03 (\$2200 and \$2400), and from FY 04 (both at \$2400). This reduced the number of clients served and, as in prior years, training funds were exhausted in March. The number of available vendors in our area was also limited and clients were unable or unwilling to go out of the area to access other vendor opportunities elsewhere due in part to limited public transportation. Little progress was made in locating new vendor programs that would provide more client choices. During FY 05, issues with vendor and partner use of “Training Pro” were recognized. Career Center staff that have the appropriate expertise have been working to improve the situation for area partners and vendors. Specifically, staff from Computer Training Specialists II Inc., UMass Professional & Continuing Education, and Roger Williams University has attended “Training Pro” trainings. A plan has been developed to host a large training in the fall '06 for Bristol Community College.

**FY '06 Planned Allocation of Training Funds & Resources**

The emphasis for FY 06 continues to focus on improved relationship between Vendors/Partners and Career Center staff. During FY 05, an orientation was developed for Career Center Partner Staff to provide information around new programs, program/eligibility requirements, course requirements and employment opportunities in the field to improve customer service. This process will continue during FY 06 with additional Professional

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Development opportunities for both Career Center staff and Career Center Partner staff to focus on Labor Market Information and local Employer needs. The overall strategy is to improve the training decision-making process through the inclusion of Greater New Bedford WIB members, Career Center Partner Advisory Committee (made up of representatives from Career Center mandated partners) and a diverse representation of Career Center staff to determine training needs, development of new and/or improved training activities based on local labor market needs and better utilization of limited Individual Training Account funds. Weekly Case Conference meetings will be held to ratify approval of final training. Another initiative for FY 06 is to increase the knowledge base and available resources for case managers to reference while conducting career counseling with customers. The goal is to provide customers with the best information for making career path decisions.

During FY 06, the GNBCC will be involved in the Reemployment Assessment (REA) grant. Through this program, the REA Specialist will work closely with recently separated workers. Through this one-on-one service the specialist will be able to identify those workers who may be interested in training and follow through with appropriate referrals to case managers. In addition, the Resource Room staff will provide guidance to customers around employment opportunities and the Business Services staff will provide continuous updates on local employer needs to help educate customers on local labor market demands.

While our Individual Training Accounts CAP contributed to fewer individuals being trained in FY '05, we felt it important to not lower the CAP in FY '06 as many training programs that are of interest and appropriate to our clientele cost this much. We will also focus considerable attention on developing training programs that are shorter in duration, less expensive and provide skills to get a job quickly. These efforts, in addition to our non ITA funding training programs such as computer skills and Work Cert II, will ensure clients are getting appropriate training.

Overall, the region will engage in the following activities to maximize the availability of training opportunities:

- Improve Case Manager knowledge of employer needs and business climate including the use of local labor market information data so client counseling provides better information regarding training options relative to post training job opportunities. Together with increased interaction with Business Services, this will improve relevant training and increase the number of training related placements.
- Develop a more comprehensive objective assessment of customers to provide more breadth and depth for training options.
- Continue with '05 strategies on individual assessments for anticipated GED enrollments, life skill activities for GED participants, engaging cooperation of Business Services in providing labor market information through their new relationships.
- Work more closely with vendors, especially secondary and post secondary education, to create more training programs that are relevant to the local labor market and located within our geographic area. This effort will focus attention primarily on the needs of the clearly identified targeted industries as well as those additional industries

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that offer future potential such as Hospitality & Tourism, Marine Science & Technology, Medical Devices & Pharmaceutical, and Warehouse Distribution.

- Meet with other Career Center staff (outside of the Greater New Bedford Career Center) to share ideas and tactics that have proven successful for others.
- Modify vendor contracts and focus monitoring efforts that stress vendor responsibility to provide increased and timelier communications with case managers regarding training issues with enrolled customers.
- Create more inclusive training decision-making process with the Workforce Investment Board, Career Center Partners and diverse representation of the Career Center staff in attendance.
- Engage Dislocated Worker customers who have an interest in training early in the process.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Improved customer selection of training to support training related placement	# of training related placements	- Objective assessments - Staff training on local LMI
Increased employment opportunities for customers by improved vendor relations	# of credentialed training offerings	- Outreach to Voc Tech & UMass for shorter term credential program offerings
Clients will complete GED/Remediation classes with additional work readiness skills	# of job ready customers who complete remediation or GED	- Provide Life skills and work readiness activities for GED participants

**5. What specific continuous improvement initiatives are planned by the local partners in FY06 to strengthen the operation of the One-Stop Career Center(s)?**

**FY '05 CQI initiatives to strengthen Career Center**

In 05 several Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives resulted in the following process improvements:

- The Resource Room CQI is ongoing and very effective. It has resulted in major changes to the way services are provided as well as a continuous re-examination of the changes to tweak the process. It has significantly contributed to internal Career Center integration and has helped us identify a key sector of our customer base that fail to ask for services but in fact are not job ready and could use our services.
- The Customer Service Measurement CQI implemented an automated process that effectively captures customer feedback. Ongoing efforts to fine-tune this tool

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continue and future changes will make it more effective as a barometer of customer satisfaction as well as indicator for modifying our services.

- Business Services CQI has recently been established. It is in its infant stage and will address the Business Services issues identified in the Business Services section of this Plan.
- Individual Performance Report CQI has identified a need to provide a more flexible and meaningful tool for documenting individual performance. New software to support this recommendation is being purchased and a new process will be implemented in FY 06.
- New staffing plans for the Career Center and New Directions has been an ongoing initiative and changes are being identified that will provide for cross-functional work teams and individual job duty changes. Initial changes will begin in July 2005 with ongoing analysis and adjustments as necessary.
- Staff Professional Development – a process for identifying job skills by position and then identifying the current skill mismatch by individuals together with identifying future skill needs for all staff was accomplished and a comprehensive professional training program was initiated. Specific time was established for all staff training with the closing of the Career Centers to the public for one hour each week.

### **FY '06 Planned CQI initiatives to strengthen the Career Center**

CQI teams will be formed to address the following areas:

- Business Services - will examine the structure and process of all services provided to employers including internal staff skills, quality of services provided, services vs. resources available, identification of additional potential services, integration of all staff functions that interact with employers, pay for services options, etc.
- Individual Performance Reporting – continue with implementation of a new Performance Evaluation process including staff training, and tying performance to the business plan.
- Resource Room - This initiative was probably the best thought out and most inclusive CQI process in FY 05. As we move forward, the Resource Room will continue to be a major focus for higher levels of performance. Better teamwork, better information for customers provided by cross-trained team members, more timely referrals to appropriate services, and a revamping of service offerings that accommodate Resource Room customers will be on the agenda for FY06.
- Employee Morale – the major issue of pay equity has been addressed but other employee concerns are always present and the CQI process will provide a method for communicating concerns and making recommendations. New issues include development of internal career ladders and examination of employee benefit options.
- Customer Satisfaction Tools – The ability to effectively gauge customer satisfaction of job seekers services needs to be strengthened, and a similar process needs to be developed for employer services.
- Follow-up Services to clients who entered employment needs to be improved to ensure issues that arise after entered employment are addressed. In addition,

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customers who primarily are self-sufficient need to be followed up with to determine the outcome of their efforts.

- Wareham staffing – proposed business development in the Wareham area, which includes building of a large shopping center as well as several large proposed housing developments, will significantly strain existing Career Center resources. The CQI will develop a plan for dealing with this need.

For FY 2004, 12 of the 17 performance measures exceeded our goal by over 100%, 4 exceeded or met our local goal. One measure, Younger Youth Skill Attainment Rate fell below our planned goal of 80% (actual 75.5%). This goal was not met due to delays in data entry. Attainment had occurred, but was not entered into Moses within the correct timeframe. The youth department is now knowledgeable of the data entry time frames and has enforced practices in FY 2005 to ensure data entry is completed in a timely manner.

So far in FY '05, we have low performance numbers in several categories that require some explanation.

- The EAS entered employment number is low as a result of a very slow start to this program during the beginning months of FY05. This slow start was the result of a combination of events: an internal Division of Career Services investigation of the Employment Assistance Services (EAS) staff with primary focus on the EAS supervisor who was removed from his responsibilities during the investigation and subsequently permanently removed; not receiving the EAS performance numbers until November; the changeover of New Directions and Career Center leadership; and the very slow hiring process for filling the PMIII position (new EAS supervisor). Once the magnitude of the EAS performance number became apparent, significant efforts have been implemented to bring the numbers up prior to the end of the FY'05. These are ongoing and our hope is to meet the goal.
- The VET performance numbers are low because they were based on the assumption both our DVOP and LVER positions would be filled. In fact, the LVER position was never filled and the performance numbers reflect a very strong effort by only one VET staff. Our FY06 goal reflects having only one Vet position filled.
- Both the Adult and Dislocated Worker performance numbers are low because they were based on an erroneous carryover assumption. While the FY05 Plan projected a carryover of 125 and 150 respectively, the actual number of carryovers was 88 Adults and 84 Dislocated Workers. Our performance numbers for FY06 reflect a carryover that has been arrived at after a much closer examination of the case files, and is therefore felt to be much more accurate than last year.