Director's Report

November 30, 2017

Senate Tax Bill – We had quite a fright around Thanksgiving. It came to light that the Senate Tax Bill would create a $1.5 trillion deficit that would trigger Sequestration and zero out much of the federal government including VR.

"While neither the House nor the Senate tax plans expressly eliminate the VR program, the potential high costs projected by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), at least in the initial years, would, under current law, trigger something known as the Pay As You Go (PAYGO) rules. Under PAYGO, a new proposal must either be "budget neutral" or offset with savings derived from existing funds. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the House and Senate tax bills would result in an estimated $1.5 trillion deficit in tax revenue which in turn would trigger PAYGO.

As we understand it, when spending is greater than the established discretionary caps and net costs for a year are negative (thereby increasing the debt)— the Office for Management and Budget (OMB) is required to implement the sequestration of mandatory programs including the public VR Program, required by the Budget Control Act of 2011, to make up for that cost. Given the size of the proposed tax cuts ($1.5 trillion), proposed tax reform would trigger a sequestration level so high that it would entirely eliminate funding for mandatory programs subject to sequestration, including again the public VR program."

We have been in contact with Senator Leahy's office and CSAVR and the advocates are also on alert. It is our understanding that neither side of the aisle wants this to happen but a waiver has to be passed by congress in separate legislation before the end of the year. Stay tuned. We will keep people informed.

Careers Initiative: Post AWARE implementation, we are ready to launch our Careers Initiative. As many of you know, WIOA created Common Performance Measures which are job retention, median earnings, credential attainment, measurable skills acquisition, and employer satisfaction. Our old Standards and Indicators measure are gone. We are moving from quantitative measures, counting how many people got jobs, to more qualitative measures, higher wage jobs, retention, etc. This will require a major paradigm shift in how we do our work. I have laid out a timeline for this effort:

December 6th – Kick off at Lake Morey

January 30 and 31st – Management Team Strategic Planning – Create Project Management Portfolio.

February – Clarifying I team role and next steps – I-team will help to distill all staff best-thinking down

March – district and region Kaizen

April – state wide kaizen with I-team

May/June - execute PM plan

July/December – implementation

I am very excited about this initiative as I think we will enable consumers to make informed decisions about their future vocational goals. We can help customers believe they can achieve a career and not just a job.

AWARE: We are in our warranty period. We have a correction plan which we will work with Alliance to complete by January 1st. Staff are using AWARE, learning new ways of using the system and moving up the learning curve. I think there is a sense that we will “too much screen time” but I predict that with increased proficiency screen time will decrease.

Federal Reporting: Thanks to Alice Porter, we made the deadline for our first WIOA driven federal report with edit checked data. WIOA added almost 100 new data elements and moved us to from annual reporting on closed cases to quarterly reporting on all cases active and closed. AWARE saved us! There is no way our legacy system could have generated the data for these quarterly reports.

VR FY ’18 Budget: We are facing a Maintenance of Effort penalty in 2020 of roughly $752,000 which RSA will deduct from our award. We have a plan in place to be able to “save” half the penalty in each of the next two years because of carry-over provisions in the Rehab Act and make the penalty moot. We are still stretched for field capacity and have made reductions across the board.

JFI Sustainability: Discussions continue as to how when the grant ends in 12/18 we will be able to sustain the effort. We have now elevated the conversation to the Governor’s Office via the Governor’s Interagency Workforce Plan. There is much work to be done to research how to develop source of match for SNAP Employment and Training Funds. The outcomes are excellent and the most difficult to serve are getting jobs and stability.

Employing Vermonters with Disabilities – *Setting the record straight, opening the way to opportunity* We continue to partner with Public Assets Institute and VCIL to begin a campaign on the value of hiring people with disabilities. We have a final proposal and identified several funding sources we will approach about funding our efforts. We see this as a 3-year effort.

Linking Learning to Careers: As you know, we have launched LLC. We have experienced some level of difficulty in our recruitment efforts. We immediately developed a plan to support the Career Consultants in their recruitment efforts. We just broke the 100 student mark out of 400 needed for the research study. VR Counselors now Career Consultants half time have never had to recruit their customers. They seek us out. So it is new work for them and they needed training and support.

Happy Holidays!
Diane