

**ESPRI Work Group Chairs – Meeting Highlights**  
**March 10, 2017 12:30 – 1:30 PM**  
**Community Action Planning Council – 518 Davidson Street**

Present: John Bonventre, Transportation Chair  
Kevin Hill, Workforce Development Chair  
Angie King, Housing Chair  
Krystin LaBarge, Education Chair  
Carolyn Mantle, Education Vice-Chair  
Peter Schmitt, Watertown ESPRI Director  
Dawn Cole, Watertown ESPRI  
Bob Gorman, United Way of Northern NY  
Tobi Darrah, United Way of Northern NY  
Eric Hesse, ESPRI Liaison / Director of NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs

Excused: None

Introduction to ESPRI Liaison

Mr. Gorman introduced Eric Hesse, Liaison to Watertown ESPRI and Director of NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs. A retired Army Colonel who was stationed at Fort Drum for 10 years, Eric serves on the Governor's Poverty Task Force and will be the group's link to the Governor's office. Eric explained that his role is to serve as the conduit to state government, helping us to navigate through any barriers at the state level.

The Process

Mr. Schmitt provided a brief overview of the activities conducted thus far as part of Watertown ESPRI, explaining the formation of the Steering Committee, Task Force and Work Groups.

A question was asked regarding the timeline for the receipt of funds. Mr. Gorman explained that the project is currently in Phase I, the administrative and planning phase. The goal is to identify programs that support the reduction of poverty and submit a plan to the state, although there is some confusion in the statewide ESPRI network as to the exact timeline for rolling out projects. Mr. Gorman will clarify with the state representative and ensure that the information is reported back to the ESPRI groups.

Mr. Schmitt explained that it is important to have a clear understanding of the timeline and the process for funding projects. Once projects are identified by the Work Groups and adopted by the Task Force, a mechanism for accepting proposals from local organizations will be identified. It is anticipated that the Work Groups will begin to identify prospective providers during the second round of meetings.

### Role of Work Group Chairs

Mr. Schmitt reviewed the role of the Work Group Chairs and encouraged them to welcome members of the group and review the agenda at the start of each meeting. A sample agenda was reviewed and discussed.

At the next meeting of the Work Groups, it is anticipated that Mr. Schmitt will provide an overview of the barriers noted to date. Ms. Cole will provide a summary of the community engagement meetings, after which the group will prioritize barriers, determine target audiences and identify prospective providers.

### Surveys

Work Groups will also provide input into an engagement survey. Mr. Schmitt explained that two surveys will be made available – one targeting the low-income population through organizations such as Watertown Urban Mission, Salvation Army and Community Action Planning Council. Another survey will be made available online to the general community; this version will include an additional question about income. Once the Work Groups have provided input, the survey tool will be reviewed by the Steering Committee.

### Community Forum

The group discussed the possibility of hosting a community forum. Mr. Schmitt asked Mr. Hesse to share his thoughts on the effectiveness of an open forum for the community-at-large. He suggested that we consider our expectations for such a meeting and what we hope to gain as a result. It was generally agreed that an open forum would draw two kinds of people – those who come to complain about the initiative and those who wish to learn more. Mr. Hesse suggested that we hold off until we have a clear sense of whether we need additional input. Mr. Schmitt agreed to take the matter back to the Steering Committee for a final determination.

### Community Engagement

Ms. Cole distributed a calendar listing the Work Group and community engagement meetings scheduled during the month of March. She asked the group for help recruiting under-resourced individuals to attend the upcoming meeting at East Hills / Meadowbrook (March 13).

Ms. LaBarge shared an idea that we consider a community engagement session geared to high school students. The group discussed whether income should be a factor in the target audience. Mr. Hesse suggested that we focus not so much on whether students are living in poverty but rather on targeting those students at risk of not graduating. All agreed that this preventative approach was a good strategy. The idea will be discussed more thoroughly at the Education Work Group meeting.

### Closing

Mr. Hess thanked the Work Group Chairs for taking on leadership roles.