



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board

Workforce Performance & Opportunity Committee and Executive Board Meeting

107 Merrimack Street

Lowell, MA 01852

October 13, 2023 – Minutes - Draft

Meeting Held Via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Charlene Jancsy, Chair

Attendees: Chair Danielle McFadden, Chair Charlene Jancsy, Kimberly Bodkin, John Palmieri

Staff: Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Gabriela Boscaja, Cathy Sturtevant, Jessica Bunting, Hunter Berube

I. Approval of the Workforce Board's FY24 Annual Plan

Chairs Charlene Jancsy and Danielle McFadden called the Joint Meeting to order at 10 am. Kevin introduced that we are including Shannon and Gabriela to help us walk through this process and provide explanation for the numbers for us. The Committee began with a synopsis of last year's Career Center outcome percentages, which highlighted the hard work of the Career Center.

Kevin shared a document showing the overall performance statistics from the Career Center FY22 vs FY23. The document was created in cooperation by Kevin and Shannon. Kevin began by calling the group's attention to the large increase from the Summer Youth program from last year.

Shannon provided information regarding the Youth program. There were 13 young people enrolled in the Digital Office Skills training. Other training also included CPR and First Aid. The budget for this area was increased from \$1million to \$2million and it combined it into a one year-long program. Shannon remarked that this is the first summer since COVID that looked busy again, more like pre-COVID times. Kevin added that the Career Center supplied most of the counselors to the Summer Youth Leadership (YLP) program, which was a great success.

Shannon let the committee know that presently there is a 2 to 3-week waiting period to see a Career Advisor in our Career Center. They have 2 new hires starting next month as Career Advisors, and the Career Center will be fully staffed by December. They are hopeful they will absorb the overflow. Shannon feels that overall, demand from employers is starting to slow down and demand is starting to level off. Kevin remarked that a \$5.20/hour wage increase is a great path to moving forward for the entry level wages and was estimated to be the result of the high demand for labor.

Kimberly Bodkin asked about unemployment numbers. Shannon clarified that not all customers at the Career Center are receiving unemployment. Kimberly thought that number would have gone down. Shannon agreed that it does seem illogical – new hires and placements are up, but unemployment remains elevated.

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Shannon shared documents showing the Career Center outcomes from last year on the screen with the committee. She began with the Program Summary Chart as part of the Annual Plan. The data was collected and assembled by her and her senior staff. There was an ongoing increase from FY21. Shannon clarified that the numbers are not held to us by the Department of Labor, they are instituted by the Workforce board. Shannon pointed out that the employer demand was tremendous and unprecedented. Also, repeat numbers are high, which means employers were happy and came back to MassHire.

Kevin asked Shannon what is the obligation of the Career Center to do outreach to new employers? Shannon responded that this year we will do more outreach by way of free job postings. This combined with referrals from Career Center staff should prove effective.

Charlene asked about the actual total client numbers and how they compared to past estimates from last year. Shannon responded that the Business Services numbers were slightly down, but job seeker services were significantly up. She indicated it was difficult to predict. However, last year's totals increased across all categories. Charlene asked if the documents we are using are internal? Shannon confirmed that we were using internally generated documents.

TI Program Summary Adult: These totals are being carried over. We are still servicing these individuals. Adults were level-funded from last year. Dislocated workers were reduced, and training dollars went down.

TI Dislocated Worker: These totals in line with what was planned. Dislocated workers are people permanently separated from their position or on unemployment. We typically exceed the goals in seeing these clients. We are able to balance the funding throughout the year. Shannon is confident we will exceed the goals once again in this area.

Charlene asked about the Total Participants in Training Activities = 103. Shannon responded that this number only reflects ITAs (individual training activities).

TI Program Summary Youth: Cathy Sturtevant spoke about our 4 WIOA programs. She said they were successful in meeting a high percentage of their goals and the final percentages were good for both entering employment and education. The WIOA youth funding received a small increase of \$4,000.

Kevin asked about the concern that this is the most difficult recruitment. Cathy agreed, and stated that follow-up is the most difficult part, and maintaining contact once an individual is placed in employment is very difficult yet very important for the monitoring report. Cathy added that there was a HiSet instructor change for the better, and Heather and her group's numbers were also improved. Kevin added that Heather and the Young Adult group now have their own van and have a better opportunity to maintain their activities throughout the year.

Kevin is pleased that there has been a good response with the Career Center. We appreciate the Board in understanding what the Career Center implements throughout the year. Kevin added that we are also working on our Transportation Pilot program in the hopes of increasing the numbers of clients with subsidized transportation to and from work.

Sheet 1, 7/23 – 6/24: The Department of Labor looks back at Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 to measure data. Shannon said we always accept the State's goal. If we wanted to change from the state goals, it would be difficult because 1) we would have to provide extensive LMI data to justify the change, and 2) the state would have to bring down their goals across the state. The credential rate totals are always exceeded, and these totals come from the MOSES database.

Shannon added that the final report will come from DCS in late October, and we will show the committee at the next Executive or Performance and Opportunities meeting. Shannon feels confident that the Career Center will meet or exceed their goals, and she clarified that achieving 80% of your goal is what defines “meeting your goals”.

Kevin asked Shannon if there were any significant challenges that she sees coming up. Shannon responded no. The Career Center is constantly checking our client volumes and goals. She added that the Department of Labor reviews the Department of Revenue data, and it will be captured in federal goals. This is helpful if we lose contact with newly employed individuals. Kevin agreed that this is a concern of Workforce Boards, and they presented a formal request to Secretary Lauren Jones to allow access for the Career Centers to this data. Currently, the only time this data is seen is when the Department of Revenue shares it with the Department of Labor.

II. Immigration

Kevin let the Committees know that both the Career Center and the Workforce Board are attempting to get more information regarding additional people receiving ESL services, and additional client volume into our Career Center. He feels the Administration has not yet communicated well. Other Workforce Boards have been contacted to send their Career Center staff to immigrant sites to gather information. However, we presently do not know what the status is of incoming refugees. It is possible there may be additional clients utilizing the Career Center. We will continue to monitor the information and will keep the Executive Board updated. The languages of immigrants involved is Creole, Spanish, and French.

III. Transfer Funds from WIOA Adult to WIOA Dislocated Workers

Gabriela shared documents showing the transfer request of \$180,000. The approved request will be submitted with the Annual Plan. A vote of both Committees was required. Charlene made a motion to approve, Kimberly Bodkin seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The Executive Board followed with their vote to approve the annual plan and workforce are goals as presented. Danielle made a motion to approve, John Palmieri seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

IV. Adjournment

Kevin thanked everyone for attending this important meeting. Chair McFadden called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by John Palmieri, seconded by Kimberly Bodkin, and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00am.