

Metro South/West Career Center Committee Minutes February 6, 2024

Members on Zoom Conferencing: Bob Bower, Chair, Rosemary Alexander, Chris Brennan, Patrick Davis, Louise Lynch, Sue Medeiros

Members absent: John Bogdan, Shannon Laingen

Other present: MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board staff: Henry Bryson, Greg Bunn, Louise Meyer; MassHire Metro South/West Career Center: Zoie Jaklitsch, VOA: Shannon Teles; Admin Consultant, Cindy Cedrone

Welcome and Approval of January 9, 2024 Minutes

Greg Bunn welcomed the members and turned the meeting over to Bob Bower. Bob asked for a motion to approve the January 9, 2024 minutes. Louise Lynch made a motion, Sue Medeiros seconded. Motion passed.

Career Center Certification

Henry Bryson reported that the required Career Center certification, required every three years, was due by June 30. Henry said Zoie Jaklitsch, Career Center Director, completes a questionnaire, providing evidence of compliance and presents it to a three-person Review Team, who reviews the documentation for submission to DCS. He asked for a volunteer to be on the Review Team by emailing him willingness to participate.

EA Shelter Funding Update

Greg outlined the \$266K, Emergency Assistance (EA) Shelter Funding proposal submitted at the end of January which outlined a three-pronged approach for spending the money by June 30: 1. Contracting with Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) to provide pre-employment and job placement services for a cohort of 50 individuals in the northern region, splitting the cost of \$240K pilot programs with Newton Wellesley Hospital/MassGeneral/Brigham, and other hospitals, focusing on the healthcare industry. 2. Contracting with a Haitian Creole bilingual person to assess the Framingham and Marlborough shelter situations and to gather information on the skills and interest of the individuals. Also to identify a cohort of 10 individuals for Behavioral Health/community health worker training. 3. Support existing staff at the Career Center to complement the other programs and get information into MOSES. Greg said the three most important challenges, built into the grant, were language barriers, transportation and childcare. He also said he wanted to set up Regional Shelter Coordinator meetings to stay updated on constant changes, to network and to share best practices. He said contracts were ready to be executed as soon as funding was received. Chris Brennan said he was impressed with how fast things had been put into place. Greg emphasized the crucial role of board members, including Kevin O'Connor and Rev. Lloyd, along with the Newton-Wellesley hospital partnerships, to help achieve the goals.

Career Center of the Future: Service Unemployment Claimants

Greg discussed the future of career centers, considering a balance between in-person and virtual services. He asked at this meeting for concentration on the challenges faced in assisting Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants, particularly those with complicated issues. He wanted a discussion about the board's sense of direction which would help him advocate with leadership and other relevant parties to improve the system. He said he had met with the Director of Unemployment Assistance, who said the focus of the department has been on adjudicating fraud and other issues and that a dedicated UI person in the career center was not available at this time. Zoie said there are many frustrated individuals coming to the career center looking for help because they could not connect with the UI office and/or had issues with the quality of information provided. She said there were UI stations/computers for applying for UI, but staff were only able to give "over the shoulder" assistance on how to file and were limited in the capacity to resolve UI issues. She also said it was difficult for many people to get to the Re-employment Center in Boston due to transportation issues and cost. Greg noted that surveys showed most people want to access online services. All members supported allocating resources, possibly through Wagner-Peyer funding, to help alleviate some of the issues by having a dedicated UI person in the career center once a week and to cross-train staff to be able to provide support.

Other Business

Greg said four staff positions had been filled. One at the board level, an HR Generalist who started on January 29 to streamline the hiring and onboarding process. Three at the Career Center: the newly elevated Director of Business and two Business Services Representatives, will be starting February 12 and who will be able to be partially funded by the EA money. Greg was also pleased to announce the Operations Manager had been hired. Zoie said there were other positions waiting to be filled. Bob praised the presentation from the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (MTF) that Pablo Suarez gave last month at the full board meeting. Greg said there are plans to have other partners give a yearly presentation.

Bob asked for a motion to adjourn. Chris Brennan made the motion. Louise Lynch seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Career Center Activity Chart

PROGRAM	FUNCTION	DELIVERY PROCESS ??
(WIOA Title I) Training Enrollments	Administration of training funds and case management of participants	
(WIOA Title III) Wagner – Peyser	Basic Career Center Services: Resource Room, Walk-in Job Search Assistance, Workshops	
Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)	Required orientation workshop and follow up one-on-one appointments to verify unemployment requirements are being met by claimants receiving checks	TBD
Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)	Services to Veterans with an SBE (Significant Barrier to Employment)	
Business Services	Employer Services: Job posting, recruitments, job fairs and navigation of grant or tax incentives	
Unemployment Services / DUA	Application/Adjunction of unemployment benefits. We currently only have limited read only access to this system	