

MSW Workforce Board Executive Committee Meeting, March 12, 2024

Unofficial Minutes

Members on Zoom: Lisa Kubiak, Chair, Bob Bower, Mark Fegley, Rev. Lloyd, Andy Vizulis

Members Absent: Brandy DeBarge

Others present: MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board staff present: Henry Bryson, Greg Bunn, Meghan Burke, Louise Meyer; Cindy Cedrone, Administrative Consultant

Welcome and Approval of February 13, 2024 Minutes

Lisa Kubiak welcomed everyone and asked for approval of the February 13, 2024 minutes. Bob Bower made a motion to approve. Rev. Lloyd seconded. All members indicated approval. Motion passed.

EA Shelter Update

Greg reported that the funds had been received and was happy to report that there was an extension from June 30 to September 30 to spend the money. He said the two planned pilots were ready to start:

1. Contracting with Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)/MassGeneralBrigham to place 40 individuals in hospitals in the Waltham area, where transportation was more accessible. He noted that the Waltham shelter was now run by Middlesex Human Service Agency.
2. Contracting with a Haitian Creole bilingual person to be the point of contact with the shelters, who will provide ESOL support, lead recruitment, and find skills, aptitude, and interest of potential workers, and also dovetailing to identify 10 individuals interested in the Behavioral Health Community Health Worker Training Grant.

Greg said a meeting was planned with Secretary Jones about realistic job placement numbers, noting language barriers, lack of transportation and the possibility of some employer exploitation could be issues. He wants to be confident that the money is used effectively, creating the best public value. He said Rute Vale, Director of Business Partnerships, would be tracking interested employers to add to the list of hospitals, car wash, Sheraton Hotel, Boston College, Children's Hospital, College Hunks Junk Removal and Moving, among others.

Upcoming Youth/Trade/Construction Month-Expo

Greg gave updates on April's Trade and Construction Month. He said the Trade and Construction Expo will be taking place on April 3 at the Royal Plaza Trade Center in Marlborough from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, with a speaker at noon and a raffle for students earning incentive tickets. The Expo will have 400 students attending from 17 schools, up from 300 students from 11 schools last year. He said there will be 20 indoor and five outdoor exhibits. He said an updated logo would be ready for the event and be used for the first time. Meghan Burke noted that all union/labor exhibitors from last year were eager to participate again this year and said she is looking for volunteers. A flyer will be sent. Greg said during April vacation "Tools for the Trade" for 25-40 students will be given a broad overview of construction jobs in carpentry, electrical, plumbing/pipefitting, and laborers. They will receive minimum wage for attending, along with a pair of Red Wing boots. On April 23 there will be a Job Fair for all job opportunities.

Henry Bryson reported that the current website is being broken up into three parts. One of the new websites will be merging the two youth programs, with added features targeting youth, and is planned to be completed by the April Expo, with the url: mswyouth.org.

Updates on the Governor's Budget

Greg reported the FY25 budget will be difficult. He noted that the One-Stop funds, which don't normally have mandates, were in the Governor's budget for \$10M, up from the \$5M cut in FY24, but that it also mandated that the workforce boards cover salaries for the Market Maker positions. Greg said there is a meeting planned at the end of the month with Secretary Jones to advocate for the restoration of the \$10M, without mandates, and advocating for yearly reliable funds. He said with restrictions the workforce boards cannot afford to run some programs.

Other Business

Greg reported that the formal announcement had been made of the three-year \$1.4M Behavioral Health Workforce Competitive Trust Fund Grant from CommCorp to support entry level Community Health Worker Certification training as well as bachelor's level incumbent workers to pursue a master's degree in counseling psychology from Framingham State University, managed by Kerri Sandberg.

In addition to the previously mentioned new youth website, Henry noted that there will also be a new board website: mswwb.org targeted for completion at the end of April. Working with Champ Internet Solutions, the new websites will each cater to specific audiences with the original website staying for the career center.

Mark Fegley asked about what could be done from a branding perspective. Greg said that Louise Meyer had suggested a summit with Tony Mazzucco and other lead elective officials in the area to educate them and he also said he wants to meet with Liz Bennett from DESE and Molly Jacobson from CommCorp to help them all further understand the work of the board. Mark suggested a small external team of stakeholders to rollout a communications program. Andy Vizulis suggested 30 second YouTube videos on the websites and shared on social media to capture the "elevator speech".

Greg said he had gone to the State House last week to speak about the use of Transf VR headsets for career exploration and training, hoping to use it to find opportunities for migrant workers. NBC Boston did a three-minute video segment. A link will be sent.

Greg said the Business Services Team is being reestablished with the hiring of Rute Vales, Director of Business Partnerships and two new business services representatives. He also said that the Operations Manager position had been filled by Jack McKenna.

Lisa asked for a motion to adjourn. Mark Fegley made a motion. Andy Vizulis seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.