

Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE, TIME: January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 9:00 AM

LOCATION: Zoom and BECWIB Conference Room

ATTENDEES: Fred Boheim, Charles G. Jones, Jr., Michael Martin, Brenda W. McDuffie, Oswaldo Mestre, Jr., Robert Mootry, Jr., Patricia Riegler, Myrna F. Young

EXCUSED/  
ABSENT:

STAFF  
ATTENDEES: Kit Brown, Jessica Corrigan, Francine Nicholas, Denise Raymond-DiBlasi, Joseph Ricchiazzi, Elizabeth Rivera, Anthony Scello, Russell Sferlazza, Lavon Stephens

GUESTS: Joseph Brown, Kevin Zanner

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Call to Order	Ms. McDuffie called the meeting to order at 9:11 AM and verified a quorum was present.	
1. Executive Director's Report	<p>Ms. Nicholas presented the Executive Director's Report in Mr. Szymanski's absence and touched on a number of topics:</p> <p><b>Erie County Healthcare Careers (EHC)</b> The Erie County Healthcare Careers program (EHC), which has replaced the Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG), has been so successful BECWIB asked the Erie County Legislature for an additional \$1.3 million in order to prepare for anticipated enrollment.</p> <p><b>Internal Restructuring</b> Francine Nicholas has been elevated to the position of Assistant Director with the retirement of David Kaczor and Minesh Patel has been elevated to the position of Manager of Grants and Compliance and will be trained by Ms. Nicholas.</p> <p><b>Gun Violence Prevention (GVP)</b> BEWCWIB has three subcontractors, Catholic Charities, Buffalo Urban League and The Service Collaborative, under contract to provide services under the Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) program, with a program end date of July 31, 2022. Based on the recommendation of the Youth Standing Committee and Chairman, BECWIB published a second RFP seeking GVP-related services but no responses were forthcoming. The WIB is considering options for enhancing GVP programming moving forward.</p> <p><b>WIOA Spending Rate</b> WIOA – Funding appears to be on pace though Training is lagging a bit behind, specifically with the Adult stream. The uptick in COVID likely affected winter programs and the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter will provide a clearer picture. This may be a trend considered in the next program year if COVID becomes an obvious seasonal problem correlating to winter months.</p> <p>HPOG – All closeout costs have been taken into account as of 12/31/2021; the program was affected by the prior two years of the pandemic.</p> <p>EHC – Training expenditures have amassed impressive totals. These funds are being spent at a good rate.</p> <p><b>Business Services</b> Since the last meeting, there has been a major increase in business and partner outreach as well as industry engagement with the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program. There is a full docket of Pathways Programs scheduled.</p> <p><b>RFP Status of the CAREERS Grant Website</b> The RFP to redesign the BECWIB webpage to be more user-friendly and accessible is on schedule to be posted</p>	

<p>2. Minute Approval for October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Meeting</p> <p>3. Resolution Authorizing Temporary Increase to Wage Training Subsidy for OJTs</p> <p>4. Second Quarter Budget Report</p> <p>5. Resolution for Copier Lease</p>	<p>in April with vendor selection in May. The \$50,000 CAREERS federal grant will be used for the redesign.</p> <p><b>COVID Protocols</b></p> <p>There have been a number of adjustments to staff work schedules throughout the pandemic. With COVID numbers climbing, the WIB and WDC will be returning to rotating two-day work weeks. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the WDC will start Monday/Wednesday and the WIB will start Tuesday/Thursday. This schedule is anticipated to continue until April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 when the state of the pandemic will be reevaluated.</p> <p><b>Thank You to Russell Sferlazza for His 40 Years of Service</b></p> <p>Lastly, Mr. Szymanski announced the retirement of Russell Sferlazza after forty years of exemplary service to workforce in Buffalo and Erie County. He is wished all the best in the next chapter of his life.</p> <p>Ms. Nicholas presented the Resolution Authorizing Temporary Increase to Wage Training Subsidy for OJTs which would increase the maximum dollar amount of the OJT training subsidy per trainee from \$7,000 to \$10,000 as well as the aggregate maximum OJT training subsidy companies may be eligible to receive in a Program Year from \$21,000 to \$30,000 for those OJT contracts developed and implemented solely during the period of July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023. Mr. Jones inquired why the increase would only be temporary and Ms. Nicholas explained it was structured this way to ensure the budget could accommodate the increase. Mr. Ricchiazzi expounded it will be evaluated, over a one-year period, while working closely with Business Services, whether the increase will be feasible to maintain. Ms. Nicholas asked for a motion to approve the Resolution.</p> <p>Mr. Ricchiazzi presented the Program Year (PY) 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Budget Report and indicated everything is on track for the second quarter. Total Salaries and Fringes were \$1,827,307, Total Operating Expenses were \$492,171 and Total Training and Support Expenses were \$1,006,183. 57% of the budget remains for WIOA funds. The Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) was officially closed out. Program Year 5 for HPOG ended 9/29/2021 and additional closeout costs were incurred through 12/31/2021. There were \$891,330 in unspent funds and this was due to shut downs during the pandemic. The Erie County Healthcare Careers (ECHC) Grant, intended to be a continuation of the HPOG Program, has about 75% of its budget remaining. 67% of the budget remains for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program, 34% of the budget remains for the Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (ER-NDWG) and 100% of the budget remains for the Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Initiative. There was a discussion between board members and WIB staff regarding ways to increase participation with the GVP Initiative.</p> <p>Mr. Ricchiazzi presented the Resolution for Copier Lease, explaining it was discovered, upon a copier going down, that copiers were no longer under a service contract. A competitive rate was secured based off of the Erie 1 BOCES agreement. A question was presented by Mr. Mootry regarding what is included in the lease and Mr. Ricchiazzi expounded 18,000 copies, toner and service will be included in the 63-month lease.</p>	<p><b>Motion to approve the minutes from the October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting was led by Mr. Mestre and seconded by Mr. Boheim. All were in favor. Motion carried.</b></p> <p><b>Motion to approve Resolution Authorizing Temporary Increase to Wage Training Subsidy for OJTs was led by Mr. Mootry and seconded by Ms. Riegle. All were in favor. Motion carried.</b></p> <p><b>Motion to approve Resolution for Copier Lease was led by Mr. Mootry and seconded by Ms. Young. Seven voted in favor and there was one abstention. Motion carried.</b></p>
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<p>6. Business Services Update</p>	<p>Ms. Corrigan began by announcing changes to the Business Services Team. Minesh Patel who formerly conducted project management for the Business Services Team was promoted to BECWIB's Manager of Grants and Compliance. Mauricio Perez has taken on a new hybrid role with the SUNY Erie Career Center allowing integration between the two teams. Ms. Corrigan shared that it has been an exceptionally busy few months and everything has continued to move in a positive direction. Pathways Programming Update: Four programs are scheduled for Program Year (PY) 2021-2022. OJT Update: There are currently 75 open OJT applications out with businesses for PY 2021-2022 within 13 different industries in comparison to closing out PY 2020-2021 with 21 open OJT applications out with businesses within 6 industries and 5 applications coming to contract and successful completion. It was noted the data for PY 2020-2021 begins in September 2020 when Ms. Corrigan took over Business Services and began tracking these metrics. Ms. Corrigan gave a special acknowledgment to Mr. Perez for his recent work with Buffalo's refugee community and the OJT program. Mr. Perez has been engaging closely with partner organizations to build closer partnerships to service the most vulnerable living within the community and because of his efforts two refugees from Afghanistan were successfully placed in OJTs with AESKU Inc. NY. Business and Partner Outreach Update: Business Outreach for October 2021 – December 2021 totaled 351 and Partner Outreach for October 2021 – December 2021 totaled 49. 13 different industries were served. Ms. Corrigan opened the floor for questions but none were posed.</p>	
<p>7. Erie County Healthcare Careers</p>	<p>Ms. Rivera provided an update on the Erie County Healthcare Careers program (EHC). In the three short months since the inception of the program in October of 2021, 180 Erie County residents have been served. Working with partners, Erie 1 BOCES, Trocaire College, D'Youville College, SUNY Erie and Villa Maria College, 100 LPN students and 49 Registered Nursing students, including two students finishing up their Bachelors of Science in Nursing, have been assisted. Some of the other healthcare trainings funded include Surgical Technician, Diagnostic Medical Sonographer, Echocardiographer, Physical Therapist Assistant, Phlebotomist and Pharmacy Technician. The program has been marketed by a two-page color flyer and shared via email to partners as well as shared on the social media pages of Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz. The floor was opened for questions but none were presented.</p>	
<p>8. SUNY Erie Career Center Update</p>	<p>Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi presented the SUNY Erie Career Center January 2022 Report regarding constituents served from 07/01/2021 through 12/31/2021. The Career Center continues to be very busy. Approximately 90% of customers have chosen to interact virtually. In person traffic has been light and most group-based events have been hybrid. Most appointments, workshops and clubs have been conducted online. A handful of customers have participated in person at the North Campus Video Conferencing Room with COVID precautions in place. It has been challenging to obtain data at the Center level for New Monthly Participant Reports due to the management system. Thomas Mormile of the NYSDOL was obliging in providing a report for the SUNY Erie Career Center for the period of 07/01/2021 - 12/31/2021. The Monthly Summary report showed 416 Adults, 652 Dislocated Workers and 56 TAA Workers were served by SUNY Erie Career Center Staff for a total of 1,124 individuals during the past two quarters. Ms. Raymond also explained the Business</p>	

	<p>Services and SUNY Erie teams have integrated. There is a shared employee, Mauricio Perez, on-site three days a week at North Campus. The integration has lent to engaging more with employers regarding job orders and resumes sent on behalf of customers. Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi also explained it has been challenging to place entry-level customers in minimum and low-wage jobs – this is not because there isn't a pool but rather that customers are requesting higher wages. Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi opened the floor for questions and none were posed.</p>	
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Ms. McDuffie opened the floor for any further questions and none were posed. Mr. Jones thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and offered praise to WIB staff for their continued diligence and hard work. In conclusion, Mr. Jones congratulated the staff members who recently transitioned into new roles and thanked Mr. Sferlazza for his forty years of service. Ms. McDuffie then called for adjournment.</p>	<p><b>Motion to adjourn led by Ms. Riegle and seconded by Mr. Mootry. All were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.</b></p>