

Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE, TIME: April 12th, 2022, 9:00 AM

LOCATION: Zoom and BECWIB Conference Room

ATTENDEES: Zachary Evans, Charles G. Jones, Jr., Michael Martin, Brenda W. McDuffie, Oswaldo Mestre, Jr., Robert Mootry, Jr., Patricia Riegle, Myrna F. Young

EXCUSED/
ABSENT: Fred Boenheim

STAFF
ATTENDEES: Kit Brown, Jessica Corrigan, Mark Cosgrove, Francine Nicholas, Minesh Patel, Denise Raymond-DiBlasi, Joseph Ricchiazzi, Anthony Scello, Demone Smith, Lavon Stephens, Geoffrey Szymanski

GUESTS: Joseph Brown

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Call to Order	Mr. Jones welcomed everyone, verified a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.	
1. Executive Director's Report	<p>Mr. Szymanski provided an update on the progress and on-goings of the WIB since the last meeting in January of 2022.</p> <p>Erie County Healthcare Careers (EHC) There are currently 241 people enrolled in this newly created program; it is anticipated there will be a significant increase as the Surgical Tech, LPN and RN programs begin. The spending pace is on point and recruiting numbers are far ahead of typical Health Professional Opportunity Grant (HPOG) recruiting numbers. With the growing interest in higher-level nursing programs, which are both necessary and in-demand, an increase in the value of the award to clients is currently being considered.</p> <p>In-School and Out-of-School Youth Services and Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) For the first time in four years, there will be two-year contract Requests for Proposal (RFP), with optional extension years, for In-School and Out-of-School Youth Services which are due for consideration by April 15th, 2022. These programs are set to start on July 1st, 2022. The Youth Standing Committee and Executive Committee will determine which organizations will move forward with these federal programs. This information was also shared with the Youth Employment Coalition (YEC) to provide greater outreach for recruitment. Currently Buffalo Urban League, Catholic Charities and The Service Collaborative provide these services. The Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) program is underway and performing to expectation though not to NYS anticipation. BECWIB has three subcontractors, Buffalo Urban League, Catholic Charities and The Service Collaborative, providing services under the initial GVP RFP. Should NYS consider a significant extension, it is possible the program could perform closer to the State's targeted numbers. As reported last quarter, there was a second RFP for these services but no responses were forthcoming. The WIB is considering options for enhancing GVP programming moving forward. GVP spending has been halted due to NYS budget delays.</p> <p>WIOA Spending Rate WIOA – Federal funds are being spent at a quality pace though training is lagging in a couple of areas, specifically the adult training stream. An increase in spending is anticipated as Spring and Summer courses begin. EHC – This highly successful Erie County program has been spending very well with an anticipated increase in spending as the Surgical Tech, LPN and RN courses are set to begin in the coming months.</p>	

<p>2. Minute Approval for January 11th, 2022 Meeting</p> <p>3. Resolution for Website Redesign</p>	<p>Business Services There has been some tremendous work conducted by the Business Services team, led by Jessica Corrigan, including Pathways Programming, On-The-Job Training (OJT), mini-job fairs, and business and partner outreach. The team has been gearing up for a very busy summer.</p> <p>RFP Status of the CAREERS Grant Website There was a review of the three companies who submitted a response to the RFP for Website Redesign. The Review Team consisted of members of the WIB/WDC and three members of the Executive Committee. The team thoroughly reviewed all proposals and recommends Mr. Smith Agency be selected to revamp the Workforce Buffalo website. The goal is for the website to allow greater accessibility on all platforms and be more user-friendly and easy to follow. The \$50,000 federal CAREERS grant will be used for the website redesign.</p> <p>COVID Protocols Work schedules have continued to be adjusted with the pandemic. Ongoing adjustments will be made as necessary for the safety of staff and clients.</p> <p>Thank You Katherine Williams for 22 Years of Service After twenty-two years of service to Workforce Buffalo and many more with the Buffalo and Erie County Private Industry Council, totaling an impressive 47 years, KB has decided to enjoy the next chapter of her life in retirement.</p> <p>Molly McCarthy is the Newest WDC Member Ms. McCarthy comes from a wealth of financial institutes including Delaware North, Seneca Gaming Corporation and Randstad USA. She has a background in Human Resources and will be working with the financial team in multiple capacities.</p> <p>Rachel Eastlack Joined Business Services Team Ms. Eastlack joined the Business Services Team in March of 2022 as a Business Services Specialist filling the vacancy created by Minesh Patel's promotion to Manager of Grants and Compliance. She most recently served as the Program Manager at Assembly House 150 where she worked closely with the Workforce Buffalo Business Service Team through partnership on Pathways Programming.</p> <p>Mr. Jones asked for any adjustments to the minutes from the January 11th, 2022 meeting. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve.</p> <p>Mr. Patel began by providing background on the RFP for Website Redesign which was posted on February 24th, 2022 seeking a vendor for the redesign and development of the WorkforceBuffalo.org website. BECWIB received three proposals in response to the issued RFP by the stated deadline of March 18, 2022. Mr. Patel further explained on March 29th, 2022 the BECWIB Evaluation Committee reviewed and evaluated the submitted proposals based on qualifications, experience, administrative and financial capacity, proposed approach and methodology, references and cost. After a comprehensive review, the Evaluation Committee unanimously agreed Mr. Smith Agency, LLC was best qualified to meet the required scope of service. Mr. Patel presented the Resolution for Website Redesign which would award a contract to Mr. Smith Agency, LLC for the express purpose of providing the website redesign of WorkforceBuffalo.org. The total budget amount of said contract will not exceed \$40,000 for the contract period of May 9, 2022 to September 31, 2022. Mr. Mestre posed a question regarding the members of the Review Committee. Mr. Patel explained the committee consisted of three board members and five WIB/WDC</p>	<p>Motion to approve the minutes from the January 11th, 2022 meeting was led by Mr. Mestre and seconded by Mr. Mootry. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p>
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<p>4. Erie County Healthcare Careers Update</p> <p>5. Third Quarter Budget Report</p> <p>6. Demand Occupation List Change</p>	<p>staff members. There was also a question posed if any of the applicants were MWBE and Mr. Patel answered in the affirmative. A motion to approve the Resolution was then called for by Mr. Jones.</p> <p>Mr. Cosgrove provided an update on the Erie County Healthcare Careers program (ECHC) which is going even better than anticipated in terms of enrollment. As of last week, there were actually 250 enrollees in the program. The top career choice amongst participants is still focused on nursing with 118 LPNs and 54 Registered Nurses, three of those pursuing a BSN. Aside from nursing, Pharmacy Technician, Phlebotomy and Physical Therapy Assistant are popular. There are currently 25 participants in Pharmacy Technician, 19 in Phlebotomy and 8 in Physical Therapy Assistant. Enrollment is expected to climb in the coming months with summer and fall applications; a projected total of 350-400 enrollees is anticipated for the program year. Mr. Cosgrove gave a staff "shout-out" to Coordinator Liz Rivera, Job Counselors Ella Hollaway at BETC, Joe Bradley at ECC North and Gabe Clark at ECC South for all of their efforts which have lent to the success of the program. The floor was opened for questions but none were posed.</p> <p>Mr. Ricchiuzzi presented the Program Year (PY) 2021 3rd Quarter Budget Report and indicated everything is on track for the third quarter. Total Salaries and Fringes were \$2,645,971, Total Operating Expenses were \$653,612 and Total Training and Support Expenses were \$1,690,954. 36% of the budget remains for WIOA funds. The Erie County Healthcare Careers (ECHC) Grant, intended to be a continuation of the HPOG Program, has about 44% of its budget remaining and the funds are being spend expediently. 45% of the budget remains for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program. 73% of the budget remains for the Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (ER-NDWG) as \$247,000 in additional funds were awarded, though the end date of the grant has not changed. 99% of the budget remains for the Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Initiative. Funds were made available from August 2021 through July 2022 though it is anticipated this grant will be extended with the approval of the 2022-2023 New York State Budget.</p> <p>Mr. Cosgrove presented changes to the Demand Occupation List, explaining he works very closely with Tim Glass, NYSDOL's Labor Market Representative for WNY, in reviewing and updating the list. The additions to the list are "Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters," "Roofers," "Personal Care Aides," "Cooks, Institutions and Cafeteria" as well as "Receptionists and Information Clerks." The single deletion from the list is "Cooks, Fast Food" as the occupation is now considered unfavorable and is being replaced with "Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria." Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters have an entry wage of \$43,120 annually; experienced making \$77,880 annually. Qualified workers in many construction related trades are in growing demand as baby boomers continue to retire. Local plumbers and steamfitters unions are currently in need of people. Roofers have an entry wage of \$35,770; an experienced roofer making close to \$70,000 annually. Much of the training for roofers is done right on the job and there is a great local need for roofers. Personal Care Aides, Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria and Receptionists and Information Clerks are all short-term trainings and would all be considered "tier one." These types of trainings are intended to give people an opportunity to get into something which could then lead to something even greater along a career pathway, for example, a person might start as a Personal Care Aide then eventually become an LPN or even an RN. A question was posed</p>	<p>Motion to approve Resolution for Website Redesign was led by Mr. Mootry and seconded by Ms. Riegle. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p>
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<p>7. Business Services Update</p>	<p>by Mr. Evans regarding the origin of the wage information, especially the roofing wage, and Mr. Cosgrove explained it is provided by NYSDOL. Mr. Evans inquired whether or not wages are adjusted for areas outside of NYC and Mr. Cosgrove responded in the affirmative.</p> <p>Ms. Corrigan began by announcing updates to the Business Services Team. Rachel Eastlack has been hired as a Business Services Specialist to fill the vacancy created by Minesh Patel's promotion to Manager of Grants and Compliance. Pathways Programming Update: Five programs are scheduled for Program Year (PY) 2021-2022. Regarding Pathways Programming, Ms. Corrigan shared that the Business Services Team has been nominated for a Workforce Innovation Award with the Business Council of New York State; voting information will be shared with the Board. OJT Update: There are currently 85 open OJT applications out with businesses for PY 2021-2022. The highest industries of impact for OJT are Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Technology, Hospitality and Tourism. Mini Job Fairs for Building Trades Unions: The Business Services Team has been working collaboratively with SUNY Erie, BETC, and Jomo Akono from Carpenters Local #276 on mini job fairs specifically for the building trades unions with the goal of sharing union opportunities with populations who have been historically underserved through these events. The first event was held in March of 2022 and a second event is scheduled for May of 2022. More news and updated will be shared during the June 2022 board meeting. Business and Partner Outreach Update: Business Outreach for January - February 2022 totaled 140, March metrics will be provided at the WIB meeting on April 26th, 2022. Partner Outreach for January - February 2022 totaled 51. March metrics will be provided at the WIB meeting on April 26th, 2022. Eleven unique industries were served. Ms. Corrigan opened the floor for questions and comments. Both Mr. Mestre and Ms. McDuffie made suggestions of ways to share voting information.</p>	<p>Motion to approve Demand Occupation List Change was led by Mr. Mestre and seconded by Mr. Martin. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p>
<p>8. SUNY Erie Career Center Update</p>	<p>Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi presented the SUNY Erie Career Center April 2022 Report regarding constituents served from 07/01/2021 through 03/31/2022. The Career Center continues to be very busy. Approximately 95% of registered customers have chosen to interact virtually via video appointments. This quarter there have been quite a number of walk-ins requesting assistance with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and/or help with the IDme process which allows people to prove their legal identity online. Neither One-Stop Center provides assistance with UI or IDme. Most of the constituents seeking assistance for UI or IDme are not registered with the Career Center and are seeking help because they are experiencing problems completing their UI claims through the UI Claims Center. Another issue that has come up is reduced availability of online jobs as compared to a year ago. Many constituents have found advantages to working remotely and want to continue to do so. There are tons of local jobs available which a customer may qualify for, but not as many are offering the option to work remotely for professionals in fields such as engineering and marketing. 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 helpful in providing a report for the SUNY Erie Career Center for the period of 07/01/2021 – 03/31/2022. The Monthly Summary report showed 537 Adults, 820 Dislocated Workers and 56 TAA Workers were served by SUNY Erie Career Center Staff for a total of 1,413 individuals during the past two quarters. This does not include walk-ins looking for assistance with UI or IDme. Staffing</p>	

<p>9. Buffalo Employment and Training Center Update</p>	<p>Update - Assistant Director Vicki Simmons is retiring. SUNY Erie is already a tiny team and with Ms. Simmons retiring, the team will be even leaner. Ms. Simmons is the internal auditing and compliance manager and handles a variety of technical reports and issues for the team. Her role is essential for WIOA enrollments and training and it is crucial to have a staff member dedicated to auditing and compliance. Business Services Update – The Business Services and SUNY Erie teams continue to work well together serving business and customers. Hiring employers are routed to Mauricio Perez and contacted the very same business day. Mr. Perez deserves recognition for his responsiveness. Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi opened the floor for questions; none were presented.</p> <p>Mr. Smith gave an update on the Buffalo Employment and Training Center, indicating staff have been hard at work. Customers have been coming into the Center; traffic at BETC is increasing by the day. A meeting with Mr. Glass at NYSDOL was helpful in identifying strategies to engage unemployed job seekers who are not engaged with the DOL. It also indicated to BETC staff the need to refocus, readjust and increase their efforts. A job fair is scheduled to be held on April 28th, 2022 at the Delevan-Grider Center which will provide a considerable opportunity for outreach. 80 companies are currently registered with even more companies expressing interest. Buffalo Public Schools will be resuming computer classes on the 19th of April. There is always a great interest in classes for Microsoft programs; once computer classes resume it will bring in a number of people. Workshops were all being referred online and are now coming back in person at the end of April – there will be soft skills workshops such as Dress for Success and job training and research tips. All staff are cross-trained. Customers see one counselor through the entire process. A new Deputy Director has been hired – Dixie Farr had joined the BETC team, coming from CBO with an extensive workforce background. BETC is currently hiring an Employment Training Specialist, Employment Training Specialist - Reentry and Computer Instructor. Once all hires have taken place, strategic planning and redesign of the Center literature will lead into the June Open House and Relaunch. BETC has collaborated with Burgard High School and the City of Buffalo to develop a career track in Auto Mechanics to fulfill an urgent need for mechanics in the City of Buffalo. There is an interest in collaborating with Catholic Charities and E. Delevan Academy for construction training and preparation. BETC is helping the Buffalo Fire Department with recruiting and civil service exam preparation. Mr. Mestre commented how civil service opportunities are great for young folks.</p>	
<p>10. Immediate Considerations</p>	<p>Mr. Szymanski announced an adjustment to the June meeting schedule – the June Executive Committee Meeting will be moved up one week to Tuesday, June 7th, 2022 and the June WIB Meeting will be moved up one week to Tuesday, June 21st, 2022.</p>	
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Mr. Jones opened the floor for any further questions; none were posed. Mr. Jones thanked everyone for their attendance and participation, then called for adjournment.</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn led by Mr. Mestre and seconded by Ms. McDuffie. All were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:09 AM.</p>