

Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board
Meeting Minutes

DATE, TIME: April 26th, 2022, 9:00 AM

LOCATION: Zoom and BECWIB Conference Room

ATTENDEES: Jomo Akono, Fred Boheim, Cheryl Byrne, John Cappellino, Zachary Evans, Joseph Hanna, Charles G. Jones, Jr., Tracy Jordan-Cardwell, Thomas Kim, Brian Manley, Michael Martin, Dennis Martinez, Brenda W. McDuffie, Oswaldo Mestre, Jr., Robert Mootry, Jr., Silvia Morales-Fakler, Scott Pallotta, Patricia Riegle, April Sanders, Michele Taylor, Myrna F. Young

EXCUSED/ ABSENT: Julius Adams, Steven Davis, D. Sylvester Dihaan, Elizabeth Galanis-Miller, Cory Haqq, Spencer Murray, Bridget Russo, Ralph Salerno, David Sullivan, Edward Walsh, Jr.,

STAFF ATTENDEES: Kit Brown, Jessica Corrigan, Mark Cosgrove, Rachel Eastlack, Dixie Farr, Bukola Mallia, Francine Nicholas, Minesh Patel, Denise Raymond-DiBlasi, Joseph Ricchiazzi, Elizabeth Rivera, Anthony Scello, John Slenker, Demone Smith, Lavon Stephens, Geoffrey Szymanski

GUESTS: Joseph Brown, Christina Schweitzer

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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>EHC – This highly successful Erie County program has been spending very well with an anticipated</p>	

<p>2. Minute Approval for January 25th, 2022 Meeting</p> <p>3. Resolution for Website Redesign</p>	<p>increase in spending as the Surgical Tech, LPN and RN courses are set to begin in the coming months.</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 as warranted 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 25th, 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. Patel opened the floor for questions. Ms. Morales-Fakler</p>	<p>Motion to approve the minutes from the January 25th, 2022 meeting was led by Mr. Mestre and seconded by Ms. McDuffie. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p>
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<p>4. Demand Occupation List Change</p>	<p>inquired about money set aside for small businesses and Mr. Ricchiazzi explained the CAREERS grant is a separate grant secured for the purpose of redesigning the website. A motion to approve the Resolution was then called for by Mr. Jones.</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. Ms. Morales-Fakler expressed a concern with the starting wage of the "tier one" demand occupations and Mr. Cosgrove further explained these trainings give people a place to start.</p>	<p>Motion to approve Resolution for Website Redesign was led by Mr. Mootry and seconded by Mr. Mestre. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p> <p>Motion to approve Demand Occupation List Change was led by Ms. Riegle and seconded by Ms. McDuffie. All were in favor. Motion carried.</p>
<p>5. Third Quarter Budget Report</p>	<p>Mr. Ricchiazzi 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. \$4,990,537 in WIOA funds have been expended against a total budget of \$7,821,378 leaving \$2,830,841, or 36% of the budget, remaining. The Erie County Healthcare Careers (EHC) Grant, intended to be a continuation of the HPOG Program, has about 44% of its budget remaining; Mr. Ricchiazzi commented the rate of disbursement has been very impressive. 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 originally made available from August 2021 through July 2022 though the program was recently extended through March of 2023. Mr. Ricchiazzi opened the floor for questions and none were posed.</p>	
<p>6. Erie County Healthcare Careers Update</p>	<p>Mr. Cosgrove provided an update on the Erie County Healthcare Careers program (EHC) which has been incredibly successful and is going even better than anticipated in terms of enrollment. As of last week, there were actually 279 enrollees in the program. These trainings will lead to jobs in the \$20-\$35/hr range. The top career choice amongst participants is still focused on nursing, with 146 LPNs and 55 Registered Nurses, three of those pursuing a BSN. Aside from nursing, Pharmacy Technician, Phlebotomy and Physical Therapy Assistant are popular. There are currently 28 participants in Pharmacy Technician, 20 in Phlebotomy and 8 in Physical Therapy Assistant. Enrollment is</p>	

	<p>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 hard work which has lent to the success of the program. Mr. Evans asked for clarification on the total number of enrollees and Mr. Cosgrove explained the numbers have been increasing rapidly and the current total is, in fact, 279.</p>	
<p>7. WIOA In-School and Out-of-School Youth Services for Program Year 2022</p>	<p>Mr. Scello touched on the recent Request for Proposal (RFP) for WIOA In-School Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Services for Program Year 2022 (PY 22), explaining extensive outreach was done. Three proposals were received for OSY and one proposal was received for ISY. There is a current need for additional volunteers for a review team, the responsibilities of which would include reading and scoring proposals. So far, the review team consists of Mr. Mestre, Chairman of the Youth Standing Committee, and staff. Mr. Jones encouraged all who may be interested to participate in the process. Mr. Mestre also welcomed involvement on the review team as well as the Youth Standing Committee. Mr. Akono commented on the need to have a conversation regarding social and cultural factors affecting youth in today’s society and Mr. Mestre indicated a discussion would certainly be welcome.</p>	
<p>8. Business Services Update</p>	<p>Mrs. Corrigan began by announcing an update 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. Ms. Eastlack has a wealth of experience and talent and boasts a master’s degree in social work. One of her focuses within the Business Services team will be working with minority and women-owned businesses. Pathways Programming Update: Mrs. Corrigan shared that the Career Pathways Program nominated for the Workforce Innovation Award with the Business Council of New York State has made it to the finals. The highlight of this nomination and advancement to the final four is increased visibility for BECWIB, as WIBs/WDBs across the state struggle with awareness and visibility. Mrs. Corrigan expressed her gratitude to everyone who took time to vote. Five programs are scheduled for Program Year (PY) 2021-2022. 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. OJT has seen significant growth from PY 2020-2021. 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 updates will be shared during the June 2022 board meeting. Business and Partner Outreach Update: Business Outreach for January - March 2022 totaled 229. Partner Outreach for January - March 2022 totaled 89. Eleven unique industries were served. Mrs. Corrigan opened the floor for questions and a brief discussion with Ms. Morales-Fakler followed regarding reports, metrics and outreach.</p>	
<p>9. SUNY Erie Career Center Update</p>	<p>Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi presented the SUNY Erie Career Center April 2022 Report regarding constituents served for the period of 07/01/2021 through 03/31/2022. The Career Center continues to be very busy. Approximately</p>	

<p>10. Buffalo Employment and Training Center Update</p>	<p>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. 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 – at the time this report was written, the report run from the Center’s system showed an additional 276 constituents visited the Center but were not able to be enrolled. Staffing Update - Assistant Director Vicki Simmons has retired. SUNY Erie is already a tiny team and with Ms. Simmons retirement, the team is even leaner. Ms. Simmons was the internal auditing and compliance manager and handled a variety of technical reports and issues for the team; her role was essential for WIOA enrollments and training. It is crucial to hire a highly skilled replacement in order to effectively serve constituents. Business Services Update – The Business Services and SUNY Erie teams continue to work in tandem with the goal of being a hub for business support and employment services. Hiring employers are routed to Mr. Perez and contacted the very same business day. The team is working on a couple of other projects and is always open to new ideas, though it is important to keep in mind the Center is an affiliate office with a limited budget. Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi opened the floor for questions. Ms. Morales-Fakler posed a question regarding the need for additional support and Ms. Raymond-DiBlasi assured her the WIB staff is always tremendously helpful within their means.</p> <p>Mr. Smith gave an update on the Buffalo Employment and Training Center. There has been a shift in the average client coming into the Center since the pandemic began. At present, the average client is male, age 25-45, unemployed and living in the 14211 zip code. Previously, clients were primarily female. This shift is most likely attributed to women being forced to leave the workforce due to childcare challenges. BETC will continue to make a concerted effort to reach out to and assist women. 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. Over 100 companies are currently registered, with even more companies expressing interest. Customer traffic at the Center has been increasing by the day. The highest percentage of training contracts are for CDLs, medical professions, welding and HVAC. All staff members are cross-trained. BETC has an extensive network of virtual contacts, totaling approximately 4,000 customers and partners in workforce receiving employment announcements two-to-three times per week. A new Deputy Director has been hired – Dixie Farr had joined the BETC team, coming from CBO with an extensive workforce background. Ms. Farr introduced herself and gave an overview of her background in workforce – she comes from a national organization with a focus on reentry. She indicated she is a Buffalo native well-versed in the needs of the community with a strong desire to increase the impact of BETC in the community.</p>	
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<p>11. Immediate Considerations</p>	<p>She has implemented a number of process improvements and procedures and is working closely with the entire team at BETC to further develop effective strategies for outreach. There will be additional professional development and monitoring measures to ensure the highest levels of service and performance. There will be an on-going focus on cultural competency and education with the goal of tailoring services accordingly. BETC is currently hiring an Employment Training Specialist, Employment Training Specialist - Reentry and a Computer Instructor. Top priorities include strategic planning, rebranding, redesigning the Center and the Center literature, increasing visibility, revamping workshops, working with ITA vendors to ensure trainings result in livable wages, planning a robust collaboration with Business Services, restoring partners on-site and conducting a needs assessment to establish new partners. There is a vision for a reentry board in the future as well as an internship program. The hope is for BETC to increase awareness and outreach by keeping events relevant and meeting customers where they are – broadening the locations of job fairs, having a greater presence on social media and attending existing community events. Mr. Smith touched on the success of recent targeted community, reentry, young adult and dislocated worker job fairs. 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. The Center is working with Business Services to plan mini job fairs and recruit building trades. 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 recruitment and civil service exam preparation. A partners meeting with the NYSDOL showed both employment numbers and unemployment claims are at a low, meaning people are not engaging with the DOL but are still in need of work. This information was helpful in identifying strategies to engage unemployed job seekers and indicated a need to BETC staff to refocus, readjust and increase their efforts. Mr. Akono commented on the importance of awareness regarding entry into the building trades and how unions work as well as the importance of bridging the gap of understanding for underserved communities because of the significant impact this can have on families and communities. Mr. Mestre congratulated Ms. Farr on her new position and commented on the importance of targeted community outreach, thanking the BETC staff for all of their efforts in partnership with the City.</p> <p>Mr. Szymanski announced an adjustment to the June meeting schedule – 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 further commentary and questions. Mr. Mestre stressed the importance of committee involvement as the bulk of the work of the WIB is done in committees. Mr. Jones thanked everyone for their time and attendance then called for adjournment.</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn led by Mr. Kim and seconded by Ms. Young. All were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:22 AM.</p>