



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Planning/ Career Center Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 19, 2019 - 8:00 a.m.
255 Essex Street, 4th Floor
Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Ann Marie Borgesi, Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Carol Riemer

Members Absent: Bob Wescott

Staff Present: Abel Vargas, Susan Almono, Corina Ruiz

Other: Lisa Remington, Shirley Lusty

I. Approval of Minutes of the January 17, 2019 meeting (vote required)

A quorum being present, Chairwoman Ann Marie Borgesi called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the January 17, 2019 meeting.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Carol Riemer, to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2019 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of February 28, 2019

Abel Vargas presented the performance reports. He said that the area of concern is adult and youth enrollments.

Lisa Remington said that the career center assistant director put information together from a constant contact outreach they did. They outreached to about three hundred people, 38 registered for the event and only 11 came to test. Out of those 11, 7 had low scores and did not qualify for training. Lisa mentioned the CEIS and WPP programs from DTA and the fact that they are seeing less referrals for those job search programs.

Lisa said that for WIOA youth, individuals are having a hard time passing testing. There have been some challenges recruiting for on-the-job training in carpentry. There are many steps prior to getting them into training.

Lisa said that GLFHC agreed to help with work experience component and they will train one youth for their call center location. The career center sent out a constant contact targeting 18-

24 year old who have a GED and half of those youth are ESL learners. Lisa said they have a lot of inquiries about Spanish trainings.

Abel Vargas added that English language is a big factor in our region. Mr. Vargas said that 41% of the Lawrence population makes less than \$35K a year. He wonders how we can better engage that population or how can dual training be delivered to them. Lisa said it is hard because employers seek specific education levels.

Lisa said that the career center is looking to change their hours of operations to be able to open Thursday evenings for customers who cannot access the career center during regular business hours.

Abel said that Andrew had mentioned in past meeting past practice of transferring adult training funds to dislocated worker funds but the board is keeping away from that.

Ann Marie asked if there is anything employers can do and Abel said no. It is hard to be supportive and MassHire MV just needs to be more present in the community. Lisa added that employers can help by being aware of the programs available.

Susan Almono said that WIOA now allows for incumbent worker training but Lisa said they still have to qualify as a low income adult or youth.

III. Budget Update as of February 28, 2019

Abel presented the budget report and said there's nothing ground breaking. Our partners, the Lawrence Working Families Initiative, received an urban agenda grant to train Lawrence Public School and Greater Lawrence Tech School parents in IT.

Abel said they have yet to receive full funding for Polartec. This is important because services have been provided to customers but the money is yet to be received. Susan added that although we have the reserve money we don't want to deplete it.

Abel said the MMVWB has hired a youth counselor, Robin DelNegro, and plan to hire another one to work with our other cities and towns. Andrew added that Robin is a great asset to the MMVWB. Abel said the MMVWB will definitely continue to apply for outside funding.

IV. Grants Update

Susan went over the grants update. A copy of the update can be viewed by clicking on the following hyperlink: [Grants Update 3.18.19](#).

Susan said the SISU program started moving and there's 6 youth enrolled and 30 in the pipeline. Abel added that the grant has potential to have a huge impact in the community.

V. Career Center Report

Shirley Lusty talked about the collaboration with EforAll to provide support to business affected by the Columbia Gas Disaster. Shirley said there were many businesses who were not ready to receive services. A list was created of the 800 businesses affected and close to 400 of them have not responded. The MassHire MVWCC has inherited this list and what they are doing is

old fashioned outreach; knocking on doors. Shirley said that most of the time they sit down and listen the employers and realize they are struggling. Shirley said that many restaurants are struggling and that a lot of training is needed.

The MassHire MVCC created a specialized recruitment happening on April 4th. They are making job descriptions generic so everyone is invited. Customers can bring resumes and the BSR team will triage. The BSR team plans to add more restaurants to the existing list. There is another list in the works and the BSR team is trying to work as fast and effectively as possible.

Abel anticipates being in a better position to help larger employers. This collaboration is making is more visible in the community and if we do it right, it can be also be done in Haverhill, Newburyport and other cities and towns.

Shirley finalized saying that all the services they are providing is under MassHire BizWorks.

VI. Other Business

Abel said he wants to start having discussion on how to prioritize the MMVWB training dollars. Mr. Vargas said he attended a meeting where he was surprised by the number of employers present.

Abel emphasized on the need to have future discussion on how to build a program to bilingualized a job. There are employers such as New Balance and Southwick who are doing it already. We can look at ten basic skills that's needed to develop a program.

Susan said that's a starting point and they need to find out the employer needs. Abel said we should think outside the box and the model he presents of bilingual floors works.

Andrew Herlihy said there's major hiring for the 2020 Census. It's a job many retired and bilingual people can do.

Abel said Encore Casino is in the hiring process and will be hosting a job fair in April.

VIII. Adjourn (vote required)

Having no further business Ann Marie called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Andrew Herlihy, seconded by Ron Contrado to adjourn the meeting. Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder