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**METRO NORTH REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD**

**QUARTERLY REB MEETING NOTES**

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

Present: Richard Dalton, Reed Brockman, Susan Jepson, Karen Sampson Johnson, Rose Lydon, Kambiz Maali, Mina Reddy, Cheryl Scott, Sandra Smith, Steve Sullivan, Sue Walsh

Absent: Charlene Bauer, James Donovan, Joanna Dowling, John Drinkwater, Yvette Drinkwater, Madeline Hoffman, Debbie Jacobsen, Robert Jones, John Kendzior, Danny LeBlanc**,** Lisa Amaya Price, Larisa Schelkin, Valerie Sutton, Mark Tardiff, Mary Tighe, Kerry Wollner

REB Staff: Linda Bass, Robin Dion, Peter Farkas, Jonathan Hasak, Michael Hatfield, Kimberly Napier, Holly Vogel

Guests: Linda Rohrer, Career Source; and Chris Brennan, The Career Place

**Review of December 2015 Meeting Notes: Sue Walsh**

Sue requested a motion to approve the notes of the December 2015 REB meeting. The motion was moved and seconded, and the notes of the December 2015 REB meeting were approved as presented.

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**Committee Reports**

*Adult Basic Education Transition to College and Careers: Mina Reddy*

This past meeting focused on strengthening existing programs. Conversation focused on obtaining reduced-cost T-passes for ABE students; members will follow up on some of the strategies that were suggested in the meeting. They are also working on developing a survey that will be distributed across the state. The next meeting will focus on technology.

*Youth Council: Reed Brockman*

This past quarter Robin Dion, Manufacturing Manager for the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium, led an informational session about manufacturing career pathways. Other discussions focused on creating opportunities for youth by understanding some of the many challenges they face, as well as the importance of networks for youth. One of the meetings also included a debrief of the Technical Assistance session.

**Update on REB Activities: Linda Bass**

* Jonathan Hasak has resigned, and will soon be working for Year Up. Priscilla Golding will rejoin the staff on a part-time, temporary basis.
* The REB and Career Centers applied for an $800K Training Grant, and it looks like we may be a finalist. We will keep everyone posted.
* (Mike Hatfield): There will be a retirement celebration for Linda on May 5th at 5pm at The Summer Shack, Cambridge.

**Overview of Executive Director Search Process: Sue Walsh**

To date, we have received 70 resumes, conducted a series of interviews with 10 candidates, and have recently narrowed it down to two finalists. The new ED will ideally overlap with Linda by about two weeks, and should begin at the end of May/beginning of June. The final candidates will be meeting with any interested REB members following the meeting today.

**REB Changes and Election of Chair and Vice Chair: Sue Walsh**

In addition to Linda’s upcoming retirement, REB member Charlene Bauer and REB Chair Paul Richard recently announced their resignation from the Board due to new circumstances, and Joanna Dowling expressed interest in resigning as Vice-Chair, but will remain on the REB as a member. Before leaving, Paul appointed Valerie Sutton to the Executive Committee as an at-large member. In April, Linda sought nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair positions, noting that Sandra Smith and Lisa Amaya Price were willing to serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. No nominations were submitted at that time. Sue requested a motion to nominate Sandra Smith for Chair, and Lisa Amaya Price for Vice Chair. Both motions were moved. Voting was then conducted via closed ballot. The results were tallied, and Sandra Smith was elected as Chair, and Lisa Amaya Price was elected as Vice Chair, of the Metro North Regional Employment Board.

**Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF) Recommendations: Linda Bass**

Over the past four SPTF meetings, the following themes/recommendations emerged:

* Emphasis on business engagement and demand-driven services
* Engage businesses on an ongoing basis – not just in the context of grants
* Inclusion – including business representatives, ABE, people with disabilities, TANF, postsecondary education, community-based organizations, and more industry partnerships
* Create partnerships that cross regions, secretariats
* How can we help incumbent workers more?
* Career Pathways – not just get people getting in at one point of a career pathway, but also help them get to the next step. (Note: Career Pathway charts are almost complete).
* Flexibility – be nimble, customize depending on customer/business
* Creative Solutions:Pair services to better meet customer needs; to incentivize hires
* Marketing and Metrics: Ensure awareness of services and partnerships; market successes through tracking and reporting of activities

Linda then explained that this work has been in preparation for a recertification process originally slated for July 2016, but which has been delayed. The new Executive Director will likely make additional contributions moving forward.

**Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, Key Issues, and Business Engagement: Pete Farkas**

What industries/occupational clusters should we target?

* Maintain current priorities: Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, IT, Life Sciences

STEM Occupations (which cut across industry sectors). Comment: Incorporate global aspects of STEM.

* Services Cluster: Retail and Hospitality (which encompass positions that would better align with the overall experience/skill level of a large percentage of our career center customers).
* Building/Transportation Clusters: Construction, Property Management, Transportation

**Strategic Planning Goals**

(These are on the benchmarking charts which are distributed quarterly at the REB Meetings).

* Partnership Development
* Career Pathways and Curriculum Alignment
* Training, Skill Building
* Job Placement
* Knowledge-Sharing and Information Dissemination
* Resource Development (within these industries)

**Partnership Development**

* Increase collaboration – private sector, ABE programs, CBOs, career centers, training providers (our best example of collaboration currently is Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium) Member Comment: with regard to collaboration around STEM – important to include A (STEAM) for Art --- language, design, etc.
* Industry Partnerships
	+ Trade associations related to industries – we have worked with MassBioEd but we need to research others and bring them in
	+ Continue/enhance relationships with vocational technical/comprehensive high schools
	+ Identify companies in newly added clusters (e.g., hotels – build relationships with them)
	+ Integrate training providers

**Objectives**

Service Strategies:

* Increase job placements
* Increase job retention/long-term employment outcomes (make sure they can maintain position long term – not just short-term fix)
* Increase training-related outcomes
* Increase wages – earn a living wage

Services to People with Barriers to Employment:

* Lower levels of literacy or limited English
* People with disabilities (Comment: Develop a strategy to connect Veterans and people with disabilities – who have specific skill sets – with employers in need of people with those skillsets).
* Youth: in-school and out-of-school

**WIOA Funding and Training Decisions**

**Issue –** we have the option to transfer up to 100% of funds between low-income Adults and Dislocated Workers

**Recommendation -** Maintain funds as allocated for Adult and Dislocated Worker – we do not want to reduce our commitment to either population. But, consider option to shift funds during year—if there is a compelling reason

**Issue -** Option to set aside up to 20% of funds for incumbent working training

**Recommendation -** Maintain flexibility - wee do not want to rule out the option, but with limited funds, the REB currently does not want to set aside funds specifically for this purpose

**Issue** - Setting aside funding for specific industries (Individual Training Accounts - ITAs) or industry partnerships

**Recommendation -** No, not for specific industries - maintain flexibility on potential group training programs.

**Issue -** Utilizing OJT model with core WIOA funds

**Recommendation -** Want to maintain as an option - possible options include establishing a target number of OJTs (since ITAs can be very costly).

**Issue -** Utilizing ITAs for individuals with college degrees

**Recommendation -** No restrictions on individuals with college degrees - we do not want to create barriers for training. REB will reevaluate if percentage of customers with college degrees receiving training increases.

**Issue -** Placing a limit on the number of non-Metro North residents served with WIOA training funds.

**Recommendation -** Leave current policy in place – no rules about residency. If percentage climbs above 40%, the REB will re-review the policy.

Question – how will the Strategic Plan be operationalized over the next few years? Answer: the Joint Committee and Policy, Funding and Oversight Committee will help provide checks/balances.

**Business Engagement - Goals**

* Put businesses in the driver’s seat
* On-going relationships, not just on a project basis
* Involve private sector in industry partnerships to address broad array of their needs
* Use chambers of commerce and trade associations
* Determine their needs and respond in a timely manner
* Engage from ground up: apprenticeships, curriculum development, etc.

 **Business Engagement - Challenges**

* Multiple points of contact with different organizations – colleges, training providers, career centers, WIBs
* Multiple business services workgroups across the Commonwealth working on similar issues/duplicating efforts
* Regional partnerships, which vary by industry, do not correspond to WIOA super-regions
* Need state leadership to align data systems

**Presentation on Career Center Redesign and Procurement of Operator: Kimberly Napier**

*Note: Due to procurement regulations, this portion of the meeting was held in Executive Session.*

**Overview**

* Career Source and TCP have been operated/managed by Middlesex Community College for a number of years (TCP since 1997 and Career Source since 2012)
* WIOA is requiring new procurement of the career centers’ operator
* Metro North (plus 3 other competitive regions) waiver
* Selection of the new operator must be in place by 7/1/2017 (expectation that operator procurements will be conducted in the summer after the WIOA regulations are released)

**What is important to ensure during this procurement?**

* Geographic accessibility for customers (Decision: divide region into southern and northern tiers for location of career centers - Applicant could apply to operate one or both centers)
* Continuity in service provisions
* Changes are beneficial to customers (jobseekers and employers) and the region as a whole

**Addressing concerns without limiting competition:**

* Costs of layoffs (UI) in a limited funding environment
* Loss of continuity and expertise
* Costs related to potential move to new location; debts related to existing leases, etc.
* Loss of accommodations (e.g. will parking be available?)
* Solution: Award extra points in RFP

**Opportunities for Changes and Innovation**

* Business-driven services and strategies (e.g., organizing staff around priority industries)
* Services accessible through technology
* Designing services that address the volume of employers and customers
* Needs of customers with employment barriers
* Services designed to respond to changing workforce dynamics

**Request for Proposals Approach**

* Career Center Committee (or Joint Committee) will flesh out RFP
	+ Define principles that bidders are then asked to operationalize
	+ Elements for inclusion: vision, principles, staffing structure/experience, past performance, accessibility, etc.
* Submit to Task Force/REB members for review, comment, and approval
* RFP to be issued after WIOA Regulations are issued (June/July)

Question: Is it realistic to think this will be a healthy competition? Answer (from a few other members): Other community colleges, previous operator, and community-based organizations are all potential applicants. In 1996, we had 11 respondents: CBOs, training providers, and some national companies focused on workforce development.

Question: How do you get the word out about the opportunity? In the newspaper? Answer: e-blasts, website, newspapers, etc.

Announcement from Mike Hatfield: We are putting out an RFP for Audit Services tomorrow. If you know of any CPAs in your network who might be interested in bidding, please have them contact Mike (mhatfield@mnreb.org).

**The next meeting of the REB will be held on Wednesday, June 15, 2016.**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.