

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board
October 19, 2023; 8:30 AM
Via MS Teams – phone & online

Meeting Minutes

The following members/proxies were present: Paul Gilbody (Chair); Janice Ryan Weekes; Joshua Froimson; Kevin Kuros; Robert DelMastro; Jack Houliker; Robin Hooper; Libis Bueno; Kathy Rentsch (QCC); Michael Williams; Nicole Trombly (Job Corps); Joyce Clemence; Emily Lehman (Worcester Public Schools); Kimberly White (QCC)

Guests/Staff: J. Turgeon (MCRWB); Raija Vaisanen (MA Workforce Association)

Call to Order, Announcement of Quorum & Note of Conflict of Interest: P. Gilbody called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM, and asked the members if anyone wished to note any conflicts of interest on the agenda. No conflicts were noted. P. Gilbody then welcomed all the attendees and thanked them for their attendance. J. Turgeon then reviewed the attendance log.

Approval of July 20, 2023 MCRWB Meeting Minutes: Upon a motion and second from the attendees, the minutes were unanimously approved.

P. Gilbody then welcomed Raija Vaisanen, the Director of the MA Workforce Association, who discussed the challenges involved with collection performance and outcomes data in workforce programs – including for the career center and MassHire Board and career Center training programs. She highlighted that this limits the ability to see who is getting successfully served and who may be struggling to access our support from an equity standpoint. It also limits policy and program leadership decisions around where to use limited resources and undermine public confidence in our system and the value we offer. She noted Kentucky and other states are ahead of Massachusetts in this regard and so there are two bills before the MA legislature intended to help address this. The first sets up the governance structure to oversee public agency data collection and sharing, and the second address the need to share make informed decisions about the outcomes for workforce training programs. R. Vaisanen asked that attendees consider expressing their support for these bills and will send along further information that people can use to contact elected officials if they chose. K. Kuros noted that people should offer personalized appeals for support to officials and not just cut and paste a message as it will better show the need for adopting these policies.

J. Turgeon then discussed Board programming, including the YouthWorks program (now entering the “year-round” cycle to serve approximately 125 youth in Worcester, Milford and the Blackstone Valley area), CDL driver training project – noting challenges trainees are having with passing their road test through the MA Registry of Motor Vehicles, and projects being funded through the Board and Worcester Jobs Fund, including 17 new programs funded with City of Worcester ARPA resources.

J. Turgeon also discussed the regional workforce “blueprint” revision process happening this fall/winter in partnership with the MassHire North Central Workforce Board – with an anticipated spring release date for the new version of the blueprint. He then gave an overview of the state and Board oversight process which includes an annual review of the career center (done while the state reviews the Board) and the career center certification process that occurs every three years – done in alignment with the

annual monitoring effort. He shared with the attendees that a finding from last spring's monitoring, involving how and Veterans services enrollment data is collected and entered had not been addressed by the career center and Board staff followed up on this with career center leadership – escalating the matter to put the program on a probationary status until it was resolved – which the career center staff took care of, and is now in full compliance.

J. Weekes then informed the Board that the career center move in Worcester to 554 Main Street has gone well, and invited the members to a ribbon cutting with the City manager on November 2nd. She also discussed the success of the recent job fair at Polar Park, which drew more than 1,000 job seekers and 110 employers, as well as a job fair at the Milford youth Center that attracted 38 employers and 145 job seekers. J. Weekes also gave an update on staffing and the need to hire a facilitator for the Access To Recovery program, along with informing the attendees about other career centers programs, including the Bounce career readiness/social emotional health program, and services being set up for refugees staying at area shelters (Sutton and Sturbridge to start).

J. Turgeon reviewed some of the current training programs and reminded attendees that these and others are listed on the board's website (www.masshirecentral.com) and asked folks to share them with their respective networks. He then highlighted some of the region's projects being led by other organizations that the Board has lent support to and reviewed a listing of the projects being considered or worked on through the region's market maker, Penny Doolittle, and others.

Several upcoming events was reviewed with members, including the MA Workforce Summit happening up in Devens, MA on October 26th. J. Turgeon noted that a local youth will be receiving a statewide award for her work with the Regional Environmental Council's YouthGrow summer program funded through YouthWorks. He also welcomed the new Center Director for the Grafton Job Corps Center, Nicole Trombly, to the Board and congratulated her on her new role with the program.

P. Gilbody then asked members if there were any additional announcements and hearing none, thanked all for their attendance and reminded members that the next MCRWB full board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 8:30am.

P. Gilbody then invited members to make a motion to adjourn, and after a motion, a second and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:36am.

Respectfully drafted by, J. Turgeon; MCRWB