

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee of the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 2, 2021
8:00 to 9:00 AM
Meeting Scheduled via ZOOM

Present: Patricia Stovall-Lane, Mark Rogacki, Cherie Becker, Edie Arlauckas, Bob Coyne, Jennifer Geiger, Randy Andre, Jane Sullivan, Marion French, Thomas Schulte, Elizabeth O'Brien

Staff and Guest: Lee Koslow, Mary McKeown, Kathy Ziegler, John Premo, Viatta Carter, Antwan Williams, Michael DeBole, Theodore Jordan

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the December 1, 2020 meeting minutes was made by Thomas Schulte and seconded by Bob Coyne. The motion was carried unanimously.

PY 2020 and PY 2021 Negotiated Performance Goals:

Lee Koslow began the discussion by explaining that these goals are required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and they are how our local Workforce Development area is measured. The goals are our benchmarks for the WIOA primary indicators of performance, and one of the things that is rather new about them is that all 4 WIOA core programs are held to same primary indicators of performance, though each program will have different performance targets. The core programs include WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, WIOA Title II Adult Ed programs, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, and vocational rehabilitation programs (in our State ACCES-VR and NYS Commission for the Blind). Certain other programs that are funded by USDOL, including the Trade Act program and some federal discretionary grants are also subject to the WIOA primary indicators of performance.

There are 6 primary indicators of performance. For WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, we are measured on 5 of the indicators at the local level. The 6th indicator, Effectiveness in Serving Businesses, is only measured at the State level. The numbers Lee presented are only for our WIOA Title I Goals at the local level. You may have different goals, either regionally or statewide, for ACCES-VR, NYS Commission for the Blind and for Title II Adult Ed. Lee added a little background on the negotiation timeframes stating that WIOA requires that the Feds negotiate with the State 2 years of goals at a time. We now have PY2020, which started back in July and will end in June, and we have PY2021, which starts this coming July, fully negotiated. Performance goals were actually supposed to be negotiated with the local areas by September 30th. Even on-time negotiations are late for us and put us at a disadvantage because these measures are mostly lagging indicators. In many cases, we have already exited these participants. We have stopped providing services for them before the year in which performance is being measured.

Lee explained how our negotiations with NYSDOL went. The Feds negotiated the State measures with NYS Department of Labor just before the pandemic broke out. On account of the pandemic, they got a bad deal. That was not anybody's fault, it is just the way it happened. Staff in Building 12 in Albany passed on those hard-to-achieve goals to the local areas, even though the pandemic had already broken out. Lee feels that we negotiated as hard or harder than any of the 32 other local workforce development areas, and we did the best we could, in terms of what we could get without souring our relationship with NYSDOL Management in Albany.

Lee also reviewed, one at a time, our negotiated Performance Goals. They include:

- Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit - A participant Exits during a particular calendar quarter and we look at whether in the 2nd calendar quarter after Exit, are they employed? For PY2020, Adults, 69.0% of them should be employed in the 2nd Quarter after Exit, and 67.0% for Dislocated Workers. For next year, those measures are each increasing by half a percentage point.
- Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit - These are measured along the same time frame as 2nd Quarter Employment Rate. Only those individuals who are employed in the 2nd Quarter after exit are counted in the Median Earnings and what we do, is take the 3-month earnings of every single individual who was employed during the quarter, line them up in a row, and the value in the middle is the median earnings. Because successful performance is defined as 80% of the goal, we will have no problem making the Median Earnings Goals.
- Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit – These goals are somewhat similar, but are a little bit lower, or maybe even with what you would need for the 2nd Quarter amounts, so somewhat similar.
- Credential Attainment Rate, 1 Year After Exit - Everyone who receives a training service leading to a credential is in the denominator of this measure. It is a much smaller group of participants, and it does not include On the Job Training or customized training. It does include Individual Training Accounts. Every individual who receives a High School Equivalency (and in the case of HSE, they also must be employed within one year after exit), a college degree, or another industry-recognized post-secondary credential is counted in the numerator. The negotiated goals on this measure are 41.2% for Adults and 30.9% for Dislocated Workers. The goals increase by 1% each year. These benchmarks are a little bit high, not because it is hard to get a credential for these individuals, but because it is hard to document the credential. It is hard to get proof that they obtained the credential. Where we could do a little bit better here is by working more closely with information release agreements with our training partners, such as the colleges, the proprietary schools, the local school districts and the BOCES, to get this information from them. One of the things, when we were negotiating, that we had insisted upon, and we got kind of a tentative agreement on this, was that everybody that we don't touch, but that is associated with our local Workforce Development area because they're getting unemployment and have a work search exemption, they're all in the system and counted in our performance, we've asked that they be removed from our local performance, because we don't touch them locally, so it's really not fair that they be counted.
- Measurable Skill Gains - Measurable Skill Gains are the only current measure that we have. This counts everybody, in any kind of training, including On the Job Training. What we are looking for is some kind of evidence toward an increase in skills. For example, for those individuals who are in a High School Equivalency Program or a program that teaches adult basic education, or English for speakers of other languages, what we would be looking for is an increase of one educational functioning level within the program year. This is a July-to-June measure and has to happen July to June every single year that a participant is enrolled with us. For both Adults and Dislocated Workers, the goals have been set at 45.0% and 45.5%, respectively, for PY 2020 and PY 2021. As with the credential attainment measure, the hard part is obtaining documentation of the skill gain. Again, all the individuals who are work search exempt because they are approved for Section 599 of the NYS Unemployment Law, we have asked that they be excluded from the measure. You will notice that our performance dates align with our program year for this measure, July 2020 through June 2021. One more thing about this measure and all the rest of them is that we have not been getting performance as quickly as we would like to. In fact, on account of COVID-19, we have not received our July, August, September performance yet for this program year. We do not know how we are doing. Normally we would have received that by now. We only have 4 months left, we are 2/3 the way through the program year, we are not able to correct course until we know how we are doing, and we can only get that information from New York State Department of Labor's Research and Statistics Division. We cannot pull it ourselves.

Updates on Services to Jobseeker Participants and Employers: What's New at RochesterWorks?

Kathy Ziegler reported that one of our contracts from DHS was suspended, which resulted in a layoff of 7 staff members. The remaining 7 staff members are working on the Employability Assessment Contract, which has been increasing, and they are also working on initial assessments. Being that they primarily work with a lot of customers that are receiving some type of benefits, the customers do not always have computers and cannot really participate in Zoom meetings, so they work a little bit differently, and Kathy's team has had to work a little bit differently. They are doing a lot of job readiness training, but they are doing it differently. They are doing it individually, whether it is by sending a topic by mail or email, depending on if they have a computer available, or by phone. That has actually been working well with those that are interested. They have also been doing a lot of specific job search, where they send it directly to the customers. With jobs that customers say they are interested in and are tailored for them, they will send these also by mail, email, or phone, depending on whichever area they have accessible to them. Hopefully, this is resulting in at least a lot more interest in the job search, and a lot more availability, and resulting in job placements for the customers. Kathy added that things have been working out well, with only 7 staff members remaining, with implementing the changes that have been made in assisting their customers during this time.

Viatta Carter reported that within the Career Center, they are working with what they call a 'hybrid employee working model', which includes alternating staff coming into the office. Staff have been working with customers in the community via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and phone calls. They have completed 123 new Initial Assessments for the months of January and February, which include 49 repeat customers they continue to work with. This number does not necessarily include the 5 Steps to Rapid Employment program they have, which they continue to run through Zoom on a monthly basis, along with the Campaign Team, which is part of the 5 Steps program. They continue to work with 11 Ticket to Work appointments, which includes working with customers that are receiving SSI/SSDI. Staff have also been having C3E appointments, which include individuals receiving Unemployment Benefits. They have been scheduling approximately 100 of these appointments per week. They have also begun using a new software program in which these appointments can be scheduled. With this program, an email is sent to the customer saying that this is a particular appointment software that they can go ahead and schedule in. The response rate to this has been low so far, with approximately 5 out of 50 that did use this particular software to schedule an appointment. They will try this approach again with reminding customers to check their emails and to get them used to using this particular software to schedule their appointments. They are looking at this as being the vehicle they will use when they do re-open to the community. Because of the spacing in the Career Center and various COVID-19 restrictions, they are looking to have customers use this particular software to schedule appointments to meet with our staff. They are also looking at alternative ways if the customer does not have access to a computer. Customers still have the option of calling in and communicating that way. Surprisingly, they've got a lot of customers who prefer to do 1-on-1's through Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

John Premo reported that over the past year, since COVID-19, they have really had to step up their social platforms, media platforms and sharing job openings and opportunities with our job seekers, connecting with businesses, and so forth. Last April or May, the County, the City, and the Chamber got behind us in directing businesses to post their jobs on our Job Board. We are probably at now, on a typical month, posting 180 to 250 jobs on our Job Board in a month's time, and that is really only a portion of what is available out there. There are obviously plenty of individuals that do not utilize our services or have the mechanisms. The County, when Richard Turner was with the County workforce, was doing kind of hybrid-virtual events with businesses, utilizing Zoom for the most part. As we worked with businesses that were looking for that type of offering, we would typically refer them to connect with Richard, and then Richard and his team would provide those. Since Richard has been gone in December, we are pretty much picking up that slack and we do not have the capacity or the capability to do much from a virtual standpoint totally on our own. We do not have a virtual platform, we do not have the funds and the decision was made a long time ago not to charge businesses for the service in that respect, so we have had to get a bit creative. So recently, the Business Services Team created what they are calling Industry or Business Spotlights. They actually had their first formal one last month with the Childcare Industry. There were about 8 organizations that worked with us. We did a

2-week long promotion and event, where we really just got the word out through all sorts of different platforms and networks. We took in well over 100 applicants for the positions, screened them and then actually forwarded them to the different organizations that were participating. They in turn set up interviews and were going through the process of sifting through them. John included the follow-up piece is always the biggest challenge, as everybody is so busy; but anecdotally, the feedback we have been getting has been very positive. People are very appreciative of the screening tool that we created, so that when people would apply, there was an online screening tool that they could complete, and that was all provided or developed with input from the industry. This did a nice job of pre-screening candidates for appropriateness for the opportunities and there are multiple opportunities within the Childcare Industry. John is looking to expand this offering and they are in talks now with some people from the Healthcare Industry. John found that it is better to do this with a group of businesses or employers versus one. They have tried onesies and they have not gotten the same impact. Hopefully, kind of bridging us through these last months of COVID-19, we are going to try to use this new spotlight opportunity to help businesses draw attention to their opportunities, and we can act as a bridge to connecting job seekers with some businesses. Lastly, John noted that we received a grant over a year ago and are working with a developer to help enhance our Job Board that we utilize on our website. What is really exciting about this is that it will give us a little more flexibility in engaging and connecting through that platform with job seekers and the businesses will have a better means of tracking who applies. When a business says they have not gotten any applicants, we can now have a better means of being able to track the engagement and involvement through that. All of the jobs that we post, we send on to the Department of Labor, which go onto their Job Board. John added that with the ROC 2025 Initiative, they actually are very close to releasing a new career portal, which is regional, whereas we are focused on Monroe County. This is going to be a regional portal, which will be outstanding for businesses and job seekers. We have at least been at the table and had an opportunity to have some input on all that and we hope that something like our local Job Board will complement that regional Job Board, just as it does with the NYS Department of Labor's Job Board.

At this point, Lee asked everyone if there was anything they would like to know or see when it comes to providing services to job seekers or businesses, particularly when it comes to making sure that we are serving individuals equitably and inclusively. Lee asked this, as one of our charges is making sure that we provide good services to individuals with disabilities especially. A question was asked, being that we have gone so technical, with everything being remote, regarding providing services, if they cannot be face-to-face, the other option would be by phone. How would you refer somebody to the Career Center, and they do not have either access to technology, or they do not have assistive technology to be able to do anything that way? How does the communication take place in terms of assessment or job seeking? Is it on the customer to be contacting somebody by phone or is somebody staying in contact by phone or how does the process work? Viatta Carter responded that a lot of their referrals for individuals with disabilities have been through community organizations, which has helped a lot. When they receive that referral form, the information is on there, as far as what the situation is with the customer. One of the things the Career Center will do is they will respond back to the customer, whether it is via phone or email, if that is what they want. They are also communicating with the referring agency to see what is going to be best. They have not yet had a situation where someone with a disability has not had some type of technology for us to communicate with them. That may certainly come down the pipeline, but because a lot of the referrals have been coming through community agencies, it makes it a lot easier for us to coordinate that with the referring staff from that agency and the customer.

Next Meeting Scheduled: June 1, 2021

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 AM
Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:
Lee Koslow 3/18/2021