

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Via Skype

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

1:32 pm

ATTENDANCE

Dr. Aldo Jackson
Jim Decker
Larry Fannie
Dr. Lisa Miller

ABSENT

Jody Dixon
Gary Shaw

GUESTS

Carmine Camillo
Benjamin Wilson
Nickie Irwin

STAFF

Janet Anderson
Deb O'Neil
Erin Shaffer
Julie Price
Carrie Symes
Jackie Hamilton

WELCOME/ROLL CALL

Dr. Miller called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. Visitors introduced themselves. It was noted that there was a quorum.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 8, 2020

The meeting minutes dated April 8, 2020 were presented for approval.

MOTION

It was **moved** by Dr. Jackson and **seconded** by Mr. Fannie to approve the Business Solutions Committee Minutes dated April 8, 2020 as presented. All were in favor. **Motion passed and carried.**

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ACTION ITEMS

1. **Ms. Anderson will inquire about employer surveys in the region and with the Workforce Needs Assessment vendor.** Ms. Anderson reported that this was related to discussion at the last meeting regarding duplication of efforts as many surveys are being passed around. The workforce needs assessment vendor is working with a list of about 23k employers to decide who to target for responses.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

TITLE I ADJUSTMENTS FOR COVID

Mr. Camillo introduced Nickie Irwin as the new manager of Business Solutions. Ms. Irwin noted that her team has reached out to 1277 businesses since the beginning of COVID. In those efforts, the team has provided various resources including SLIP and WEX referrals, OJTs, referrals to the NWPA Job Connect, UC, and Employer Spotlight web pages, connections to the SBDCs, and registration in virtual job fairs. The team continues to partner with various agencies across the region including chambers and economic development agencies. Committee members asked exactly what kind of services are provided to businesses that respond to outreach requests. Ms. Irwin stated that they are referring businesses to resources and partners. At this time, needs are fluid and there is much uncertainty. Labor market information has been very helpful as are job postings. Dr. Miller asked about employer feedback and Ms. Irwin noted that there wasn't a lot at first, mostly requests on waivers to continue to operate. In April and May, businesses needed assistance with some hiring needs. Recently, it seems some employers are becoming more stable but are concerned about supply and demand. Largely, the opinion is that the third quarter will dictate future decisions.

The committee asked how many businesses responded in the previous two weeks and Ms. Irwin estimated about thirty, including job postings, the job fair, and general thank yous noting that they

will reach out to PA CareerLink® when they are ready to move forward with some sort of assistance. Ms. Irwin noted that 23 employers are signed up for the June virtual career fair from the manufacturing, healthcare, and finance/banking industries. Human services organizations are also considering participation.

Mr. Decker noted that he has also heard that the third quarter will help businesses decide how to move forward. Supply and demand has been affected and supply chains broken or disrupted.

Ms. Anderson noted that in anticipation of next year's Title I contract, staff is working on priorities for Business Solutions. Any feedback on these priorities is helpful.

WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Ms. Anderson referred to her earlier remarks and noted that the anticipated completion of the project is in the first quarter of 2021. The vendor is currently mapping disadvantaged communities with consideration to transportation, childcare, and nearby employers, among other things.

INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP FUNDING UPDATE

It was shared that though the manufacturing industry partnership was awarded funding for a platform for manufacturers to coordinate more local sourcing, board staff recently received notification that the funding for the project has been repurposed for COVID-19. The partnership plans to move forward with a preliminary platform and apply for funding again when it is available.

OTHER BUSINESS

GRANTS UPDATE

Ms. Anderson explained that Ms. Price has been working hard to find placements for forty local interns through the State Local Internship Program. The effort is progressing well. Ms. Anderson noted that the area is applying for an additional \$400k in Economic Transition funding for supportive services and training dollars for dislocated workers. The area previously received \$812k, and about \$270k of that is remaining but most of it is obligated. Other areas with this kind of funding are not as interested in additional funding so that may work in favor of the Northwest's request for additional dollars. Ms. Anderson stated that the area was awarded about \$300k in Rapid Response Additional Assistance funding that day to help implement the cloud-based phone system, Ring Central, and support efforts to serve dislocated workers in the community with the required sanitation and security presence.

Ms. Anderson noted that the state requested about \$22M in a National Dislocated Worker Grant, but was only awarded \$6.8M. It is expected that that funding will go toward supporting contact tracing. Initially, the Northwest requested \$1M of the state's total request, but with the reduced award, the local area's award may be reduced to a couple hundred thousand dollars, if awarded at all. This funding would go toward pop-up transition sites. Ms. Anderson stated that the janitorial and security requirements for PA CareerLink® centers seeing the public creates a substantial financial burden on the partners, about \$175k for Title I specifically.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION INFORMATION

The flyer linked to the agenda was not available at the time of the meeting due to a broken link. The state continues to have difficulty calculating actual unemployment numbers due to the sheer amount of claims waiting to be processed. The current rates across counties range from 13.3% in Warren to 18.2% in Forest, but they could be adjusted as more claims are processed.

RAPID RESPONSE

A report sourced from weekly reports from the state Rapid Response partner was included. Ms. Anderson noted that this report would not include all closures.

RESCARE UPDATE

Mr. Camillo asked that if there were any interest in the virtual job fair, referrals should be sent directly to him. He added that an RFP for life coaching and diversity training is posted on the NWPA Job Connect website.

NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 12

OTHER

The committee discussed increasing utilization of services by local businesses. As only thirty employers are working with PA CareerLink® after 1300 outreach attempts. Ms. Anderson noted that the Governor is suggesting local areas collaborate on creating videos about services offered across the state. Ms. Anderson also noted that due to COVID, virtual services are vital to reaching those who need our services and will be for some time.

Ms. Anderson explained that this committee is responsible for input and oversight of Title I's work with employers. The state does not require a Business Solutions program, only that some services are required to be offered to businesses. Staff wants to ensure that the committee's ideas and expectations are in alignment with actual services being conducted.

Mr. Fannie suggested small industry job fairs. He also added that the Department of Labor & Industry are conducting data match to compare jobs and employers on the Employer Spotlight portal to ensure they are using CWDS. Business Services Teams are required to reach out to them. Mr. Fannie suggested exploring ways that partners can work together to conduct this targeted outreach.

Mr. Decker is looking forward to the next five or six months, noting that many employers are uncertain about their future. Many are uncertain whether the customer base and/or supply chain will return, so it is difficult to conduct meaningful planning. There is also a significant issue with recalling employees receiving unemployment benefits. Mr. Decker noted that services for jobseekers and employers will be different than what the system has conducted in the past, and the private sector needs to get services in a timely manner while it has already proven difficult for the workforce system to move at the speed of business. Additionally, some former employees are expecting to be called back and may ignore other opportunities to fill open positions or be retrained.

The committee meets next on August 12, but decided to meet in the interim to discuss available services, the services employers need, identify gaps, and find solutions for those gaps in the community.

****ACTION****

- **Board staff will work with the committee chairs to schedule a strategy session before the August 12 meeting.**

REPORT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

None.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Board staff will work with the committee chairs to schedule a strategy session before the August 12 meeting.**

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jackie Hamilton
NWPA Job Connect