

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Via Skype
April 22, 2020
10:02 am

ATTENDANCE

Dr. Aldo Jackson 📞
Dr. Ray Feroz 📞
Tyrone Clark 📞
Jill Foys 📞
Brittany Eisenman 📞

ABSENT

Gary Shaw
Steven Davis

GUESTS

Carmine Camillo 📞
Benjamin Wilson 📞

PEP STAFF

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

WELCOME/ROLL CALL

Ms. Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. Roll call was taken. It was noted there was a quorum.

VISITOR RECOGNITION/PUBLIC COMMENT

Visitors introduced themselves. There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JANUARY 15, 2020

The Governance Committee minutes for the January 15, 2020 meeting were presented for approval.

MOTION

It was moved by Dr. Feroz and seconded by Ms. Eisenman to approve the Governance Committee Meeting minutes dated January 15, 2020 as presented. All were in favor. Motion passed and carried.

COMMITTEE CHAIR SELECTION

Ms. Anderson noted that committee membership has been updated and reestablished, so committee chairs will need to be determined. Chairs are nominated by committee members and must be board members. Once nominated, the board chair appoints the committee chairs.

MOTION

It was moved by Mr. Clark and seconded by Dr. Feroz to nominate Dr. Jackson for Governance Committee Chair. All were in favor. Motion passed and carried.

Dr. Jackson accepted the position as chair.

CURRENT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Ms. Anderson noted that NWPA Job Connect staff has been working from home and all phone extensions have been forwarded to cell phones. Staff ran a dry run of remote work in the week before the office closed to work out any issues. Staff meets daily at 3pm and they coordinate daily with partners at 1:30pm. The operator was recently informed that the mobile toll-free number was still accepting calls at the closed PA CareerLink® Oil Region office, and not forwarding calls nor taking messages. The main line at the office was collecting messages, but these were only accessible to state staff. About 500 calls amassed over two weeks. These messages have since been retrieved and the phone system is now being regularly monitored to

avoid backlogs. At this point, about 90% of calls received by PA CareerLink®'s various contact methods are regarding UC benefits. Staff continues to attempt to redirect these callers to supportive service options.

WAYS TO CONTACT NORTHWEST PA CAREERLINK®

Ms. Anderson noted that there are multiple ways to reach PA CareerLink® as listed on the agenda. The current phone systems would not allow forwarding, so multiple press releases have gone out sharing this information. While in-person training options are limited at this time, WIOA Supportive Services are still available and unemployed individuals qualify for these as dislocated workers. Supportive services dollars are being used to offset the cost of bills for those who qualify.

JOBSEEKER BLOG

EMPLOYER BLOG

Ms. Symes walked the committee through locating the new jobseeker and employer blogs on nwpajobconnect.org. These blogs are being updated regularly with information pertinent to each audience.

The most up-to-date UC contact information flyer was shared with the committee. Ms. Anderson noted that she has been working with Mr. Fannie and he has been able to provide helpful information about UC.

PLAN GOING FORWARD

Ms. Anderson shared that the Northwest was fortunate enough to be well-prepared for short-notice remote work with cell phones and mifis thanks to the ongoing mobile service delivery effort. NWPA Job Connect staff also worked to help a BWPO staff member with an available laptop and mifi.

Ms. Anderson noted that board staff worked to submit a Strategic Innovation Grant to support a new system-wide phone system and technology to support increased virtual operations. This submission was largely based on a previous WORC grant that was not awarded in 2019. Ms. Anderson and Ms. Brick are working to secure \$300k in Rapid Response Additional Assistance funding and are looking into requesting additional Economic Transition funding for supportive services and individual training accounts. The state is considering an application for a National Dislocated Worker Grant and asked all local areas to submit post-pandemic plans to inform that application. This was included in the meeting packet. Local PA CareerLink® offices will not be permitted to reopen until the state allows and it is likely that operations will be by appointment only with preference for mitigating barriers to virtual service delivery when possible. Ms. Anderson and Mr. Fannie attend weekly state calls.

Virtual services continue to be utilized since meeting in person is not permitted. This is accomplished through phone and video calls on various platforms. Some funding is being used to purchase the cloud-based phone system that allows computers and cell phones to be used as the office telephone. Planning continues for pop-up transition centers, especially in the rural areas, but logistics have yet to be worked out as many potential sites are still closed. Staff is awaiting guidance for policy work on several subjects including electronic signature and assessment waivers for dislocated workers.

Ms. Anderson noted that board staff has asked Title I to keep them up to date on successes and what's working well. Ms. Foys noted that there are lots of rumored activities pertaining to layoffs in the rural counties, but not much public information is available.

RESCARE UPDATE

Mr. Camillo noted that many calls are about UC, and staff are passing along the appropriate information that is currently available. Then, those callers are engaged through the possibility of providing WIOA supportive services. If all documentation is readily available, these assistance funds may be provided within as little as 2-3 days. Clients are still counseled on the forbearance process prior to applying. This funding can be used to help with urgent needs, bridging the gap before unemployment benefits kick in.

Mr. Camillo noted that Mr. Clark was instrumental in organizing a three-hour telethon at Erie News Now and 25% of those calls led to appointments, about 31. This tactic has been shared with Mr. Camillo's counterparts throughout the country. He noted that staff are still conducting one-on-one workshops virtually to prepare people to return to work. They continue to assist with upgrading resumes and working on interviewing skills. Rapid Response events are scheduled for two businesses. The first virtual career fair is scheduled for May 4, and that information will be sent out and posted on the NWPA Job Connect blogs as well. The Business Services Team continues to share info among staff and with outside agencies and chambers. They have also assisted in getting eight employers on the Commonwealth's new Employer Spotlight website for essential employers needing ten or more employees immediately. The Youth Team is focusing on work experiences which can provide up to 720 hours of full-time employment to the benefit of participants as well as struggling employers. TANF programs are modifying operations to still operate under the current conditions, and Mr. Camillo noted that the situation has strengthened the relationships with the TANF subcontractors.

Mr. Camillo noted the upcoming implementation of Atlas AI, a virtual assistant technology that will help automate follow up contacts using text messaging. This info will be used to get information out about the career fair and has the capability to plug into CWDS if permitted by the state.

OTHER BUSINESS

CONTACTING UC

Ms. Anderson noted that UC is handling an unprecedented amount of claims and it is difficult to get up-to-date and county specific information. Local areas tried to find ways that the PA CareerLink® could assist, as the UC call centers cannot operate at max capacity due to social distancing requirements, but the state opted to equip employees to work from home. They've also pulled back furloughed employees from other departments and trained them to work with UC. The state is also exploring options to cross train staff from other departments.

Ms. Anderson noted that pandemic unemployment assistance in Pennsylvania went live the previous weekend and they already have at least 50k claims. There is a bottleneck for processing these as they need to be reviewed by multiple individuals for approval. A lot of information is required to apply for this assistance, but a checklist is not provided prior to beginning the application process. The form has already changed once, creating additional confusion. Ms. Anderson shared this as informational as committee members may be hearing about people having trouble with applying for this assistance. There are no plans to bring the UC phones back to PA CareerLink® centers when they open at this time.

OTHER

Ms. Anderson noted that the comprehensive sites will likely hold soft openings as the Governor begins to reopen Pennsylvania. This process is expected to be implemented on a county-by-county basis and may not be uniform across the workforce development area. During a soft opening, virtual services will continue, but staff will be allowed back in the buildings to get caught up on filing while maintaining social distancing. Appointments will be set to meet with clients to manage occupancy, and walk-ins will not be permitted or they may be asked to wait in the car as if the parking lot were a

waiting room. Some workforce areas are considering conducting triage in parking lots but our comprehensive sites cannot accommodate that. Restaurant-like pagers are not an option in Oil City due to the ongoing parking issues. The state is requiring security for open operations to keep people calm and ensure they maintain social distancing. If pop-up transition centers are implemented, security will also need to be present there. Ms. Anderson added that a soft opening would need clear communication to the public, including hours of operation, the need to make appointments, and emphasizing that PA CareerLink® does not provide UC services.

Ms. Anderson noted that adjustments in service delivery during this time will lead to policy work, and that is the Governance Committee's charge. The system will be subject to Federal law as well as state guidance and requirements, but still need to be responsive to the needs of individuals. Staff continues to work to identify areas of flexibility.

REPORT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

None.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

It was moved by Ms. Foys and seconded by Mr. Clark to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Motion passed and carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:09 am

Respectfully submitted,
Jackie Hamilton
NWPA Job Connect