

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee of the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 13, 2022
8:00 to 9:00 AM
Meeting Scheduled via ZOOM

Present: Joe Wesley, Randy Andre, Bob Coyne, Raegen Lawrence, Shawna Gareau-Kurtz, Mark Rogacki, Patricia Stovall-Lane, Marion French, Edie Arlauckas, Jennifer Geiger

Staff and Guest: Lee Koslow, Mary McKeown, Viatta Carter, Antwan Williams, Marisol Young, Laura Seelman, Lindsay Murphy

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the June 7, 2022 meeting minutes was made by Joe Wesley and seconded by Bob Coyne. The motion was carried unanimously.

PY 2022 Primary Indicators of Performance, Adult and Dislocated Worker Outcomes:

Lee Koslow began this discussion by reviewing Adult and Dislocated Worker performance, Program Year 2021, on the WIOA primary indicators of performance for Monroe County. Performance is summarized in the Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee slideshow.

The New Disability Resource Coordinator Role and the Integrated Resource Team:

Lindsay Murphy is our new Disability Resource Coordinator at RochesterWorks. This position is across the state and was created and funded by the Department of Labor. This will allow us to better coordinate our services to a sector of the population which is historically marginalized and underrepresented in the workforce.

Lindsay began the presentation by providing an overview of her role, which includes:

- Act as a resource for staff at RochesterWorks regarding working with customers with a disability.
- Strengthen relationships with businesses to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities.
 - Provide resources and support for implementing accommodations in the workplace.
- Coordinate Integrated Resource Teams (IRT).
- Grow the number of participants in the Ticket to Work Program.
- Outreach through social media, blog, newsletter, job fairs and community meetings, targeting job seekers, businesses, and providers. Work with Business Services to target new businesses.
- Facilitate the Disability and Disclosure Workshop, in addition to revising/adding new workshops targeting the disability population.

RochesterWorks recently hosted a very successful deaf culture awareness training and will be looking to do training on service animals in the workplace. Lindsay is also looking to develop some employer workshops this fall, for businesses who are looking to learn more about assistive technology or accommodations in the workplace.

Lindsay has also been pairing up with our Outreach Specialist, Leroy Banks, to get out into the community. They have been going to libraries, connecting with mental health organizations, other disability resources in the area to really get the word out about our services, as well as our Ticket to Work Program. Ticket to Work is a Social Security program for individuals who are receiving benefits, either SSI or SSD, that are looking to re-enter the workforce or move from maybe part time to full time work. Lindsay works with these individuals to help

develop a plan on what their career goals are, whether short term or long term, how much money they are looking to earn, with an ultimate goal of self-sufficiency, and to work their way off of benefits.

Lindsay added that her position is going to be certified as a benefits advisor. She has been attending classes for this, which will be wrapping up the beginning of November, and she will be getting her certification by the end of November. This will enable Lindsay to do some more 1:1 benefits advisement with individuals in the area who have concerns about going back to work, losing benefits, and just wondering in general how working will affect their benefits. She has also been working with Business Services to get feedback from employers to see what would be beneficial on the employer side as far as disability awareness, disability trainings on-site, and hiring individuals with disabilities.

Lindsay also defined Integrated Resource Teams (IRT), which include:

- An IRT would be convened for a customer when they may be facing barriers to employment that necessitate further assistance from the community.
- Comprised of service providers/agencies, individuals, and others from the disability service community.
 - A team may consist of several members from the following systems (but not limited to): Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health services, Public Education, Centers for Independent Living, Supported Employment service providers, Community and Faith-Based organizations, the local Housing or Transportation system, re-entry programs for persons with criminal history, the TANF agency, and Veterans' programs.
- A customer may already be receiving assistance from other areas and IRT meetings would allow everyone to meet to collaborate on how to achieve the customer's employment goal.
- If a customer is not currently receiving other assistance, Lindsay can assist with developing an IRT that matches the customer's needs.

Featured Discussion:

On what factors should we base the local board's self-sufficiency wage?

As an introduction to this discussion, Lee Koslow provided some background information including that WIOA requires each local area to set a self-sufficiency wage, a wage beyond which you would say that a family or a household could be self-sufficient, and therefore Adults might not be in need of training if they are employed. Our local area's self-sufficiency wage has been \$25/hour for at least the last 15 years. Back in 2006 or so, when we were at \$25/hour and still are, we were one of the areas with the highest self-sufficiency wage in the State. Inflation has happened, and there has been more thought about how much income you need as a household or as a family to be self-sufficient. The question was raised recently when we had an individual who was an Adult, who was receiving Food Stamps or had qualified for Food Stamps within the last 6 months. We do not know if they will still qualify, but the individual just got a job paying more than \$25/hour and wanted training, and because of the WIOA Law, combined with our self-sufficiency wage, we were not able to approve training because they earned too much. This did not seem right, so it prompted us to ask the question "Is now the time to take a look at the self-sufficiency wage, and what should we base it on?"

Lee prepared some background information from one of the ALICE (Asset-Limited Income Constrained Employed) reports, which was summarized in the Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee slideshow. This is where you have households that are earning more than the poverty level, maybe so much more than the poverty level that they do not qualify for any public benefits, but they are still having trouble making ends meet because their income is over the poverty level but under what you would need to really survive as a family or as a household. Lee reviewed an example comparison of household budgets, family of four, 2018. Also reviewed was the ALICE survival wage 2018, for Monroe County. From this discussion, Lee prompted the following questions that we might put out there: Should we consider using the ALICE self-

sufficiency wage to set our self-sufficiency wage for WIOA, for Monroe County? If so, should we pick a particular family composition? For example, should we do it for 2 Adults, 2 Children? Should we do the average? If we do the average, it might well be over \$25/hour come March. This would give us a benchmark to keep increasing the self-sufficiency wage for Monroe County. Or should we use a different measure?

If the self-sufficiency wage goes up, it allows us to provide our Individual Training Account, the RochesterWorks Training Grant, to individuals who are employed, earning a higher wage, but maybe not a high enough wage to support their family. It will also allow us to approve On-the-Job Training Grants for someone going in at a higher wage.

Lee opened up the floor for group discussion for thoughts on this topic. Discussion included the following:

- Being out in the community and working with advanced manufacturers, pretty much \$15/hour is not the official minimum wage, but that is pretty much what people are looking to at least start people at as a minimum. With the Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship, all seniors were paid \$15/hour. This falls pretty much in line with the Two Adults, Two Children, No Child Care. Raising the rate above \$25/hour, especially for a household of four, is certainly necessary.
 - Lee responded that with what we are being asked to do with a self-sufficiency wage, it is really a one-person wage, it is not a household income that we are being charged with setting here, although we could take into account the fact that with this wage, some individuals are going to have a double income. Those who are really struggling are the single-income individuals.
- As we are not proposing to reduce the self-sufficiency wage below \$25/hour, do we want to increase this and if so, what scale do we want to use? The advantage, if we were to tie the self-sufficiency wage to a living wage calculator, would allow us to let that wage increase with inflation, rather than just have to revisit it, and try to figure this out every two years.
- Looking at the self-sufficiency wage, increasing that would be really beneficial for all of our customers in regard to Individual Training Accounts, but the other piece of that is just because an individual meets the self-sufficiency rate of \$25/hour doesn't mean that they will get the Individual Training Account, as there are other factors involved.
 - The self-sufficiency wage has been a ceiling for us for employed workers; however, at this wage, the way our rules are currently set out, you would have to either be a Dislocated Worker or you would have to be an Adult who qualified for public assistance, either SNAP or cash assistance, or be making less than the 70% of the lower living standard income level or the Federal poverty level. Where this comes more into play is for those who recently got a job at this wage and for our On-the-Job Training Grants.
- Are we turning people away because they make too much money right now?
 - It has not happened much yet. We have not collected information on it, and we think that is just because we may have only had one case so far. The fact that we had it though, and the fact that inflation has been so high over the last year and a half and is not going to stabilize any time soon, tells us that this one case could be the tip of a small iceberg going forward. As costs continue to rise, you are going to see more of these cases come up. It might not be a lot, but a handful might be more than we can tolerate.
- The data being shared today is from 2018 and was in the 2020 report. The next report will not come out until 2023. Based on this, the \$25/hour rate would still be in line. Rates will very likely be higher in the next report. If we either held off on doing anything right now and waited for the report to come out, and then maybe decided that the One Adult, One in Child Care looked good to us, or even the average looked good to us, because the average is not that far below the One Adult, One in Child Care. The average comes up to \$27.50-\$28/hour, and then say it came out in time for our March committee meeting, we were to decide to make a recommendation to the Board at that time. That is one option we could take. An additional comment included that as we look to stabilize families and deter people from maybe some of the utilization of their benefits as they start to reach self-sufficiency, ideally we would like to look at Two Adults, Two in Child Care.

Lee concluded, the meeting has been a really good discussion and stated that he is hearing two possible paths here:

- 1) Make a recommendation to the Board now to adopt the Two Adults, Two Children ALICE Self-Sufficiency Wage,
or
- 2) Hold off until possibly March, when the new report comes out, and look at adopting the One Adult, One in
Childcare wage at that time.

Lee continued, if we were to choose one of those two, do we want to take a vote and see what everybody here would like to recommend? A question was raised, What is the family model that we want to target, as the dollars are dictated off of that.

Lee then rephrased the question with, Should we just take a vote on Two Adults, Two Children, or One Adult, One Child? Another question raised included, What about One Adult, Two Children, because most households this committee member serves and that actually need the help are single-parent households.

Upon further discussion, it was decided that maybe it is more important to make a thoughtful decision on this than to make a quick decision. Lee then proposed that we revisit this in December. Everyone will have time to think things over and we can have some kind of vote on it, whether it be a vote to wait for the new report to come out, or to make a recommendation right away. Everyone agreed this is a good idea.

Lee thanked everyone for the very good, thoughtful discussion today.

Next Meeting Scheduled: December 6, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 AM

Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:

Lee Koslow 9/30/2022