

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee of the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 7, 2022
8:00 to 9:00 AM
Meeting Scheduled via ZOOM

Present: Cherie Becker, Debra Bell, Elizabeth O'Brien, Jane Sullivan, Jarmani Dozier, Marion French, Patricia Stovall-Lane, Shawna Gareau-Kurtz

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

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the March 1, 2022 meeting minutes was made by Shawna Gareau-Kurtz and seconded by Debra Bell. The motion was carried unanimously.

Inflation-Adjusted Update to Supportive Services Policy - Gas Cards:

Lee Koslow began by noting that last month we had a really good discussion on what more we could do for supportive services for our participants, including finding a way to bring individuals who are on the sidelines back into the labor market, and being able to make sure that our services are being provided equitably, by leveling the playing field for all those who need those supportive services. It resulted in quite a bit being added or updated on the policy. The Board voted and approved the policy back in March. As we were reviewing the policy with staff, it was brought to our attention that gas prices have gone up. Realizing that a \$25 gas card, every 200 miles of travel, wouldn't be quite enough, we looked into average prices and mileage per gallon on the average vehicle, to determine what would be a fair amount, in terms of the amount of the gas card and the frequency. The current policy and proposed revision to the policy are as follows:

- Current Policy: A \$25 gas card for each 200 miles traveled in a 31-day period, up to 4 cards.
- Proposed Revision: A \$25 gas card for each 130 miles traveled in a 31-day period, up to 6 cards.

Lee added the gas cards are not all given out on a 1-time basis. For these cards, the individual has to have an Individual Employment Plan, which would have Planned Services on it. Once these Planned Services equal at least 130 miles of travel, this is where the individual could qualify for a gas card. These cards are given out up to 45 days in advance for a 31-day period. A request form needs to be filled out to obtain these cards. Bus passes, Uber and Lyft cards are also available for individuals that do not have a vehicle for transportation.

Committee Members provided unanimous consent to send this proposed revision to the Board.

Featured Discussion:

What can the workforce system do to engage people who are underrepresented in the workforce?

As an introduction to this discussion, Lee Koslow provided background information which is summarized in the Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee slideshow. This information answers the question of who is underrepresented in the workforce, how many, and what are the opportunities here? Lee reviewed 5-year Census Data for Underrepresented Populations, which included Race/Ethnicity, Youth, and People With Disabilities.

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

- Monroe 2 BOCES: Looking at the Adult level and trying to attract the 18-25-year-old group to take classes and pursue the trades, there is still that push for every student out of high school to go to college. It still seems to be

frowned upon if you go right straight into the workforce, and it is just not encouraged. You can be very successful without going to college straight out of high school, but yet the students are still being pushed in that direction. There is a lot of opportunity there to still encourage students out of high school to go into the workforce and really educate parents, students, counselors, and homeschooled that there are so many opportunities for students to make a career right out of high school and start in that path. Looking how to possibly change this perception, particularly among parents, that the jobs for high school graduates without college are not good jobs.

- WXXI: Are there any direct partnerships between DOL sites, i.e., RochesterWorks, or other programs directly to the schools to partner with guidance counselors, career counselors, and maybe teachers in particular areas to kind of empower them with the knowledge to be able to bring this to younger students, so that when students are making decisions in the younger grades, before getting into a particular track, they know that they have an option for either college or trades programs, and that there are different pathways they can take? Is there any formal process here?
 - Dave Seeley responded that in the suburbs, we work in partnership with our BOCES, who really are linked to the school districts. In some instances, we have worked directly with the school districts. In the City, we are working on building a stronger relationship with the City School District. It is a work in progress and part of this is due to the decision we made a few years ago to not utilize our Youth funding for In-School Youth. We will try and work towards that, but primarily our WIOA dollars are spent on Out-of-School Youth. We do serve In-School Youth through our Summer Youth Employment Program, which utilizes other State funding.
- Antwan Williams reported that he sits on a couple different task forces, 1 being the high school graduation outcome scene, in which they are looking at the 4 Es: Entrepreneurship, Employment, Enrollment and Enlistments. How do they expose young adults to know what their options are beyond graduating from high school? There is still that disconnect with the young people, feeling that it is either college or nothing. The task force is looking into how to bring that information down to the lower grades and also to the parents, as they need to be in the know, and be educated as well. In terms of summer employment and before the pandemic, we took in 2,500-3,000 applications on a yearly basis. This number is cut in half, in terms of the number of students that follow through in the process. In terms of improving this, again it goes back to the parent engagement piece. We realized that when we took out the mandatory parent orientation piece this past year, because we did not want anyone to not get through the process if they did not have a caring adult to walk them through the process, our numbers were low. We had approximately 300 people follow through out of 1,700 who applied for summer employment. Once discovering there was a disconnect, letters were mailed out to parents, including congratulations that their son/daughter has applied and included the steps and documents needed to finish the process and become eligible. This mailing increased the follow through rate from 300 to 700. In addition, moving forward in partnership with the City School District, they will be looking at another way to connect with the young people and have them promote information. Over the years we have been Youth focused, but not Youth led, so we are looking to gather up some young people this year, train them as Youth Ambassadors, so come 2023, these young folks will be out on the forefront promoting the Summer Youth Employment Program. We are really going to take a step back and evaluate, how do we realistically expose Youth to employment opportunities to the point where they are excited, and they want to be a part of the workforce.
 - Dave Seeley added that some of our industry partners, particularly the trade organizations, do a very good job in holding events that expose high school youth to careers, whether it is manufacturing or construction. Just 2 weeks ago, the Builders Exchange held their Careers in Construction Day. Unicon holds one annually. The manufacturers are looking into a work with your hands event that mirrors what is being done in the Finger Lakes and GLOW counties. On the healthcare side, Rochester Regional has an apprenticeship program, which is like a co-op. Industries are trying to engage on our behalf and our goal is to enhance the work that they do.
 - Monroe 2 BOCES added they are also doing Center for Workforce Development with WEMOCO, partnering on Summer at the Center, and they push this out to 7th, 8th, and 9th graders all over Rochester, Monroe County, but not limited to Monroe County. Current camps include welding , culinary, baking,

cosmetology, and skilled trades (construction/carpentry). They also offer a 3-week machining program. Overall, they are trying to expose these students a little bit to the workforce and careers.

- Antwan Williams added they are working with the Young Adult Manufacturing Training Employment Program. They currently have 24 young adults who are going through the warehouse distribution training program, which is slated to end 2 weeks from now. All of these individuals are still engaged, and looking forward to from there, connecting them with employers in that field.

Lee continued the discussion by noting that as we are talking about the Youth, this goes for other populations as well. We have talked about the potential workers not being ready, needing some additional training and we have talked about perceptions of what is a good job and what is not a good job. If we put jobs or opportunities out there, there are still a lot of youth and adults who are not showing up. This may not be all just perception, as there could be more to it. Some of it could be other barriers that just have been insurmountable. Some of it could be that these really are not good jobs or these really are not good jobs for “me”, or people like me.

Lee opened up the floor for group discussion for any thoughts on addressing those issues or anything else that might be really significant in getting young people, particularly young people of color, or young people with disabilities, or adults, off the sidelines and into opportunities. Discussion included the following:

- WXXI: Are there any testimonials or little video pieces, for example from the Summer Youth Program, that could be shared about different kinds of experiences they have had? Marion French would love to have WXXI work with people on this and there is some potential national funding that may be coming up soon that would allow them to do that kind of work. Testimonials from the Youth could be an effective way to share their experiences.
 - Antwan added that we do have testimonials, but not necessarily in video format, so we definitely can do a better job in promoting that; youth voice, youth-led, as young people will listen to each other before they listen to the adults.
- NYS Commission for the Blind: Thinking of Youth with disabilities and Youth in school, Jane Sullivan asked how Monroe 2 BOCES gets their communications out to the schools or districts for something like the camps, as there is a concern the information does not get to students with disabilities, particularly students who are blind, because of the thought that they could not possibly do that. Is there a way to get Commission for the Blind on email distribution lists for information like this? Jane also inquired if there is a way to add this category, or do some focus on businesses or employers, who do work with the Youth with disabilities.
- Monroe 2 BOCES spoke to how their information is distributed. They begin by developing their camps to help give middle schoolers more career experience/career exposure. The Center for Workforce Development is actually offering these camps and BOCES charges families \$199 for the camps. There is 1 teacher in each class and unfortunately during the summer, the entire staff is not present to provide any additional supports that may be needed. BOCES would like to try to get more funding for some of these camps, because right now it is all parent-paid. Last year was their first time running the camps and by next summer, they would like to seek more funding so they can grow it and try to offset the cost for the parents. Flyers with camp related information are distributed within their districts and middle school counseling offices.
- Commission for the Blind: If they have a student who is interested in attending the camp, there is a possibility the Commission could reimburse the parents for paying for that, or have a job coach attend with the person, even with the student, even for the class, for exposure, and providing some of that support that the Commission could provide.
- Question for Monroe BOCES 2: Do you only work with suburban districts for the camp programs, or do you also work with the City School District for these camperships? Where do the trainings take place?
Answer by Monroe BOCES 2: We shared out primarily with our component districts in Monroe 2. No one will be turned down, although the component districts in Monroe 2 are our target audience. Trainings are held in the Career and Tech Center in Spencerport. There is also a machining program held at Monroe 1 & Monroe 2 BOCES.

Discussion around really engaging younger individuals at the junior high level continued with the following:

- Could we figure something out locally for the individuals with transportation challenges? Are there any additional fundings available that could pay the fees?
- Monroe 2 BOCES has started doing some middle school tours of their facility in hopes of exposing these students to Career and Tech at a young age so they would know that there are careers out there. There is a lot of opportunity across the entire County to do more of this. The career and technical field is a great answer for those not pursuing the traditional college route. Exposing students early on will help those become aware that College is not the only path one can follow after getting out of high school.

Lee concluded the meeting has been a really good discussion in highlighting the importance of partnerships, including:

- How can RW Youth Services work with WXXI and in terms of getting some awareness out there?
- How can ACCES-VR, NYS Commission for the Blind, maybe working a little bit with our Business Services, do something for National Disability Employment Awareness month?
- How can BOCES, RW Youth Services, and DHS possibly work together a little bit more closely on reaching some of these younger youth, or even some of the youth that have dropped out, aged out, or graduated from school?
- If anyone has any ideas for one big thing that RW Youth Services, the Career Center, or our Business Services could help you with in partnership with your organization, to help reach some of these underrepresented populations, please reach out to us.

Next Meeting Scheduled: September 13, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 AM
Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:
Lee Koslow 6/22/2022