

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee of the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 1, 2021
8:00 to 9:00 AM
Meeting Scheduled via ZOOM

Present: Sergio Esteban, Cherie Becker, Edie Arlauckas, Bob Coyne, Jennifer Geiger, Randy Andre, Thomas Schulte, Romanda Gibson-Stevenson

Staff and Guest: Lee Koslow, Mary McKeown, John Premo, Viatta Carter, Theodore Jordan

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the March 2, 2021 meeting minutes was made by Thomas Schulte and seconded by Edie Arlauckas. The motion was carried unanimously.

First Quarter WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Performance Results:

Lee Koslow began the discussion by explaining these are our primary indicators of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, performance, and we get these results quarterly. They are whole County results for the Adult and Dislocated Worker Program. The Youth Program can be looked at by the Youth Committee, so we will not consider them in this committee. There are 6 different primary indicators of performance that we are held to. The reporting period lags and during the year of a pandemic, it lags even more. Lee reviewed our performance for July, August, and September, which is the first program year quarter of 2020. Normally, we would hope to have this information by the end of November. We received it a bit later than that. In a normal year, by the end of May, we really should have the first 3 quarters of performance. Lee shared only the first quarter of performance right now because it is all that we have.

Lee explained with the 6 different indicators, we are looking at 2 different funding streams. To meet the performance goal, we must hit 80% of the benchmark that has been set for us. On these 3 indicators with both funding streams, we have met or exceeded the goal. We have either hit at least 80%, or for most of them, we exceeded 100% of the benchmark. Our Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter after Exit, again, this is a lagging indicator, which means that we are not looking at people that were employed or even exited July, August, September. We are looking back, really 6 months to a full year, for these measures. Our Adult Employment Rate, we were close to 99% of the goal on this benchmark. We just missed it. We exceeded the benchmark for Dislocated Worker, 2nd Quarter Employment Rate.

For all those who are positive in the Employment Rate, in other words, all those who are employed in the 2nd calendar quarter after they have stopped receiving services from us, we also line up their earnings in a big column and take the number in the middle, and that is the Median Earnings. We have exceeded that rate for both our Adults and Dislocated Workers. Because it is just a quarter of earnings, you have to multiply it by 4 to annualize those earnings. We achieved \$6,866 for our Adults and \$7,202 for our Dislocated Workers, both higher than the previous program year. Lee also reviewed the 4th Quarter After Exit measure, 2 quarters further out. These individuals may or may not have been employed in the 2nd Quarter After Exit. It is not strictly a retention measure, though many were employed in both quarters. We exceeded on both of those measures, 72.6% for our Adult Program and 69.9% for our Dislocated Worker Program.

Lee next reviewed the Credential Attainment Rate. What this measure is, of all those who were in an education or training program, not including On the Job Training, sometime during their participation in the WIOA Program. If they were in a high school diploma or equivalency program, did they get that high school diploma

or equivalency plus employment, or did they get a post-secondary credential of some sort, and that is within 1 year after they have finished or exited from services. We met the measure for our Adults. We exceeded 80% of the benchmark, 39.4%. This is better than we did last program year. We have seen some considerable improvement on this measure. For our Dislocated Workers, 33.3%, and this is exceeding the measure, as we got higher than what was benchmarked for us. Lee pointed out one thing that may be asked is, how is it during a pandemic, that we have done so well on all of these measures. They are all lagging indicators, so really what we are looking at here is performance for individuals that exited before the pandemic started. We have not seen the impact of the pandemic on these measures yet but expect that we will start to see the impact with our 3rd Quarter numbers and especially on into the next program year, or so.

Lee next reported on indicator number 5, which is a real-time indicator. In other words, we are measuring performance that happened July to September 2020. It is our Measurable Skill Gains. Of all of our participants who were in some type of education or training program, how many of them showed a measurable skill gain of some sort during the program year. We have not gone through the whole program year yet; it is just July through September. If you are in an educational program, leading to either a high school equivalency diploma or English for speakers of other language skills, what we might be looking at is, did you advance at least one educational functioning level. If we are looking at post-secondary education or even On the Job Training, what we might be looking at is, did you make satisfactory progress on your grade report or did you get your credential. If you get a credential, that counts towards a Measurable Skill Gain also. Or did you achieve a skill progression along some benchmark that was set for you, for example, a report from an On-the-Job Training that shows that you have met all the standards that have been set for you for this point that you are in, in the OJT grant. Our performance on these Measurable Skill Gains is very low. We were out of the office July, August, and September. At this point, many still are not in the office. The goal for this is 45% and this is actually the first year that performance is really being measured. It was a baseline measure before this, so this is the first year that we have actually got a goal to meet. We are lower than Statewide, but the Statewide numbers, the percentages are not very high either. One of the things that hampers performance on this is that half of the folks that do this work, our New York State Department of Labor Staff, have been tasked almost fully with unemployment insurance claims during this time. That is one of the things that has made performance a little bit less than stellar. One of the other things that impacts us, and we have asked New York State Department of Labor management to address this, is that anybody who applies for a Work Search Exemption from their unemployment, even if they are not getting funded by RochesterWorks! or have never met with a RochesterWorks! advisor, they are counted in this measure. In a typical year, central office staff would be following up with them on their Measurable Skill Gains. This year, they have been all tasked with unemployment insurance duties, so they have not been doing that. This is the one area where we have asked staff to go back and by mid-June, to get this information in the database, to reach out to all these customers to see if we can bring these percentages up. One of the things that will save us on this measure is that in a recently published technical advisory, New York State Department of Labor management has said that they are not going to hold us accountable for failure of our performance measures this year, due to the pandemic.

Lee added the 6th measure that we did not discuss is our measures of Effectiveness in Serving Businesses. This indicator is not measured at the local level. It is only measured at the State level, so we do not have individual performance for the Monroe County Local Workforce Development Area. We do not have benchmarks or goals to hit. As Lee has not seen a report on how the State as a whole is performing, we will not have any reporting on this measure.

How can we assist individuals who are reluctant to enter/re-enter the workforce?

John Premo began the discussion, noting from a Business Services perspective, the number of job posts that we have to our Job Board now is currently close to 4 times what it had been a year ago. The need and the intensity have picked up considerably, but the application follow through has not. Staff will attempt to do a match and refer. As

staff, we have an opportunity to go into our system and search for candidates that may match or meet the qualifications of a particular job that is posted or particularly important that we are working with. Then staff will send correspondence, including a particular job posting, asking if the customer is interested in the job, before reaching out to the employer on their behalf. John noted that at this point, we are getting very little follow through with this approach. In instances where staff are making phone calls to follow up with individuals where there is a better match, we have had instances where participants have either just not followed up or have literally hung up the phone. These are some of the things that we are seeing today that we did not see previously. One of the things that we are trying to do is to work with some different language, so that as we have our events and promote opportunities for businesses, whether it is recruiting events, job fairs, etc., we are trying to encourage candidates to consider these opportunities, because now is the time with less people following up. Business Services continues to strategize and try different things to engage the individuals that we are connected with. At this time, the question was raised regarding the general perception our employer partners have concerning the impact that extended unemployment benefits are having on people's willingness to go back to work, with the extra money individuals are receiving and in some cases, may be doing better than they were, when they were working. John responded that his observation and with some of the feedback we are receiving is that it is certainly the case for some, but not for all. It may not be fair to make that a blanket statement or that it applies to everyone. John feels the challenge and what we are seeing most is the lower paying jobs and individuals do indeed have an opportunity to make more money in this current situation. John feels this is not consistent across the board, as we have also heard that a big challenge is balancing the home life-school daycare scenario with the children right now, because of the hybrid situation that you have with schools and so forth. We have parents that are trying to adapt and adjust with who will be staying home with the kids and balancing the in-school schedules that schools are offering. Daycare options and availability has been an issue for some with even younger children or school aged children that they are trying to find openings for. John has also noticed where some people are trying to make career changes also. John gave an example of people that have been in retail or food service have considered applying for and pursuing other types of opportunities. There is also an uptick with individuals applying for coursework and certificate programs as well. John included this is a real challenging time and from his perspective, he does not know that there is any one thing that is keeping individuals home, although he does agree that between the added pandemic funds from the Federal Government and the money they are getting from the State, this is affecting their willingness to go back to work. Jen Geiger added that people do have medical conditions or people at home have medical conditions, so we need to look at the reality of the health component also, as to why some people may not be able to go out into the workforce right yet. Randy Andre added another variable where some employees would still like to work remotely, but now that may not be an option.

Lee Koslow continued with a question to those attending the meeting today; Do you think we have enough information from our workers or job seeker participants that we serve right now to be able to address their reluctance to go back to work, or do we need more information on the reasons why they are hesitant? Cherie Becker responded that another struggle is that there have been so many changes in the past year, that by the time you figure out how you are going to gather the data and review it, circumstances will have changed so drastically that it does not necessarily apply. Lee asked members, what if we had a survey where any of our partner organizations could send out a link to people that are not working right now and what if RochesterWorks! could put this out in our newsletter and on social media? We could do some outreach to anyone who might be unemployed, where they could answer some questions anonymously including who they are and what barriers they are personally experiencing that are preventing them from getting back to work. Lee included the good news is, RochesterWorks! now has such a survey, live and ready to be sent out. What we have developed, and this just came together over the weekend, is relative to Cherie's concern in that we would like to get this out and get the data back in quickly, while it is still relevant. We have developed this survey which asks a number of demographic questions so that we can tell; are there differences by gender, by age, by race and ethnicity, by whether they are vaccinated or not, are there differences for them if they have a disability, provided that enough people with disabilities were to answer the survey, to make the information meaningful. There are questions on 29 different potential reasons why somebody might be hesitant or unable to go back to work and we have even asked them to rank their top 3. We are allowing

for the chance for individuals who would like to have a follow-up conversation and give more details to potentially form part of a focus group in the future. Contact information is optional. Lee added with this survey, we could actually reach out to all unemployment insurance recipients for whom we have an email address. If we wanted to go that far, that would be the limit to our reach, which is not very limited at all. Lee is unsure whether we should do that yet or whether we should advertise it first and see who responds and if we get enough voluntary recipients without doing that broad outreach. John Premo added we have an opportunity for gaining a meaningful number of responses to get a feel for what is happening. The challenge will be whether people are going to choose to respond to it. We will have a reach, depending on our distribution numbers, probably between 10,000-15,000 individuals through this, but if we are able to utilize unemployment, there would be some overlap in that as well. Also, with our Partners and their help in pushing it out and getting it in front of folks, this will be helpful as well. One concern John has is in the length of the survey but concludes it is all very important and necessary information and does not know how it would be done any other way. Regarding the length of the survey, Lee set up the questions in 6 different matrices, so it makes it feel a little bit less lengthy because you have got them grouped together. In terms of the response rate, one item that may help is the messaging. If we were to frame the survey something like, for example, "Is there something/anything holding you back from returning to work? Here is your chance to anonymously share the challenges that you are facing in the form of a multiple-choice survey. We will use this information to work with employers and community leaders to improve the post-covid work environment." This might give individuals a little bit better motivation and put them at ease in terms of why they are being asked these questions. Viatta Carter added that as staff in the Career Center work with customers here, they could also provide a link to the survey for customers to complete. They also offer the Job Strategy Group, 5-Steps to Rapid Employment and Campaign Team meetings, where the survey could be sent to these attendees as well.

John Premo continued that Business Services is gearing up to include this survey in their weekly newsletter, which will be going out on Wednesday, and will get it going out in all other ways at the same time as well. At this time, Lee Koslow shared the survey link to meeting attendees noting there is no reason why we have to hold this survey back from anyone who wants to take it and to feel free to send it out to their participants if they are unemployed. He also included some sample language that could be used with sending out the survey. Sergio Esteban agreed with us to go ahead with the survey and to think about any other media outlets we can share this with to help spread the survey out into the community. He also noted to send a message to the Board members and Partners not in attendance today, explaining the survey and what we are looking for.

Other:

At this time Sergio Esteban shared an update with everyone regarding the search for a new Executive Director. The work being done by Qualifications and Selection Committee is right on schedule. The idea in mind was to have a selection made around the end of May. The details will be covered at the next Board Meeting. In all, a tremendous amount of work has been done, including going from approximately 50 candidates down to 12, then to 4. We have completed the interviews of the final 4 candidates. Within a week now, the Committee will have a recommendation that will be shared with the Board at the upcoming Board Meeting. Overall, things have been moving along as scheduled.

Next Meeting Scheduled: September 14, 2021

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 AM
Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:
Lee Koslow 6/8/2021