

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee of the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 1, 2020
8:00 to 9:00 AM
Meeting Scheduled via ZOOM

Present: Danielle Maloy, Patricia Stovall-Lane, Edie Arlauckas, Jennifer Geiger, Richard Turner, Jane Sullivan, Romanda Gibson-Stevenson, Randy Andre, Thomas Schulte, Cherie Becker, Joe Wesley, Seanelle Hawkins

Staff and Guest: Lee Koslow, Peter Pecor, Viatta Carter, Mary McKeown, John Premo, Antwan Williams

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the June 2, 2020 meeting minutes was made by Thomas Schulte and seconded by Richard Turner. The motion was carried unanimously.

Overview of local COVID-19 economic recovery data and WIOA services provided during the last quarter of PY 2019:

Lee began the discussion by presenting an overview on how the economy has been doing during the pandemic. He shared what we know about the environment we're working in, here in the Finger Lakes Region and the Rochester Metro. One of the things we're going through right now is that with the New York State Department of Labor so heavily focused on Unemployment, some of our data systems have broken down on the reporting side, so there is a lot of data we cannot get. Lee provided participant services data that we can get to give a picture of how the Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted services. Regarding some of the data on Unemployment claims, which include numbers of people who are filing new claims, filing for Unemployment week to week, it kind of gives us a leading indicator of where the economy has been and where it's heading. Lee focused on the number of claims with the actual numbers, noting that toward the middle or end of March, we had a real peak in initial claims. That was when everything shut down. Then we kind of plateaued out in April on into May and then things started to open up. Then noticed was a further drop and we've seen some steady decreases in the number of Unemployment claims in recent weeks. This is a good development and is promising, but we don't know where that's headed.

Lee also discussed the Unemployment rate in the 9 county Finger Lakes Region and noted that it peaked in April, then dropped in May, but has been inching up. Lee explained why we should and shouldn't worry about the increase in the Unemployment rate in the Finger Lakes Region. Lee included that we shouldn't worry because that although Unemployment increased by 11,000 between June and July, Employment also increased by 1,400, so this Unemployment rate isn't the result of people losing jobs, it's more the result of more people entering into the labor market. A net of 12,000 people either entered or re-entered the labor force during the month of July and that could be an indicator of job seeker confidence in the job market. It's also a good thing for businesses because it means that there is a supply of workers out there for them. The bad news on the Unemployment rate is that you would expect to see it coming down and we're looking at the time it takes to recovery and at the rate that new jobs are being created right now, it would take more than 2 years to come back to a normal Unemployment rate. Regarding Employment numbers, Lee reviewed the year over year change in the Finger Lakes Region. It's not seasonal, it's how many we've lost since this time last year. Again, we peaked in April, the most job loss year over year, and we're a little bit lower than May in terms of year over year change in Employment. June definitely was a seasonal down tick in jobs or employment.

At this time the question was raised if there was a breakdown available by industry, the segments of where those losses are? Lee replied that he has information for the 6 county Rochester metro area, of the 43,800 jobs that were lost, what percentage of them were from which industry. There's kind of a variety, the biggest area labeled 'all other industries', along with a lot of small industry sectors contributing to this. One larger area is the Food Services and Drinking Places sector, which includes 13,300 jobs lost in this industry. The second highest industry sector labeled 'Local Government' lost 11,000 jobs year over year, which includes public education jobs. Since it's year over year, we can't attribute it to seasonal support staff at schools being out of work, although perhaps there are some that were not or haven't been working at the school districts that are on Unemployment right now. For example, bus drivers, paraprofessional staff, other support staff and office staff with the school districts might contribute to this number. Lee also noted, there is a lot of pressure on local governments right now because money that would have come in from the State isn't. It's hitting the State hardest, because hopefully people are still paying their property taxes and that sales taxes have decreased dramatically, so the share of sales taxes that come to local governments isn't coming in right now. That's a problem that, until the economy really starts to recover, isn't going to improve. We don't know how this will play out with local governments, but it is concerning.

A question was raised in terms of the local government, around the same timing that Covid-19 was coming out with the City School District making their significant budget cuts, would it be fair to say even some of those numbers are probably reflective of that? Lee replied that it's possible, although this 16% share would still be close to that or quite large even if it hadn't been for the City School District budget difficulties they've been having.

The next group Lee reviewed that is a loss of more than 3,000 included Non-Durable Goods manufacturing. No other industry or sub-industry has lost more than 3,000. This includes textiles, printing, food manufacturing but doesn't include heavy equipment or automobile manufacturing. This sector has also taken a hit more recently, whereas Food Services and Drinking Places were hit early and hard and formed a larger segment of the pie back in April. Non-Durable Goods has emerged more recently as a sector that is losing jobs year over year. If we look at not just numbers or share of the jobs, but look at the decline compared to last year of individual sectors, these are the 5 that come out as having declined more than the average.

A question was raised regarding what is included in the All Other Industries sector? Lee replied that this list includes 'everything' and noted while adding up to 36%, there is no other industry in this group that contributes that significantly to the numbers. Lee will provide this list of information post meeting.

Lee also reviewed the Year Over Year percentages for individual industries, noting the top 5 that are declining more so than average, of which include Food Services and Drinking Places, Local Government and Non-Durable Goods. There are some smaller industries sectors that don't contribute as much to the job loss but themselves are suffering percentage wise, which include Transportation and Warehousing and Machinery Manufacturing. This is how we're looking from an industry standpoint.

Lee also reviewed our Activity and provided a comparison of 2019-2020, noting the information shown is reflective of 2 things. The first includes Career Centers closed to the Public, so this is the traffic that can be handled or services that are being taken advantage of through virtual services online, workshops online, 1-on-1 meetings over Zoom or other technologies including telephone. It's also a measure of the fact that though we have tens of thousands of people unemployed, none of them are required to report to the Career Center, even virtually, for services during April, May and June. The individuals that are coming in want to come in, not because they have to. Youth numbers have decreased not quite as dramatically because they are all 1-on-1 services provided by Navigators. Looking at our non-Dislocated Worker Adults, these totals don't add up because this is customers that were Active during the quarter. You might have customers that are counted during 2 or all 3 of these months in the monthly totals, we're only counting them once in the quarterly totals, which is why the numbers shouldn't add up. What we're seeing here

is a third to a fourth of the number of customers that we've seen in 2020, though there are tens of thousands of people that are unemployed. We can't get to them yet, although we're hoping that as the Unemployment numbers start to stabilize, as the systems to serve them start to be able to serve them a little bit better in terms of the weekly unemployment benefits, we can get our local Department of Labor staff, who've been borrowed to help with Unemployment, back to help. We can also get the folks in Albany who are helping with our data systems back as well, so that we can get our data systems back, because that's one of the big barriers that we've had.

A question was raised if we have any sense of how many individuals that are looking to get access to it, have an issue with technology, whether it's broadband or even a computer at home? Lee responded that we have no way of measuring how many would like services but can't get them either because they don't have broadband access or don't have the computer equipment or the digital literacy or maybe comfort level with that type of service. Lee included that we know that it's a big issue and know that the issue is hitting people who have barriers to employment, who are living in poverty disproportionately. We're looking forward to being able to re-open our Career Centers so that we can take our 1-on-1 appointments by appointment or individuals coming into the Resource Room or small group workshops by appointment. We haven't gotten there yet but hopefully we'll be there at some point soon.

Lee next reviewed our Dislocated Worker participants, a similar trend, but because Dislocated Workers typically are more likely to come in because they have to, and because they're more likely to be receiving a letter from Unemployment stating they're required to come in. The percentage since last year has dropped, even more so than the previous year. It's still between a third and a fourth of what we had previously.

Peter Pecor added there is the same problem with the Department of Social Services/Human Services because those recipients are also not mandated, but we need to find a way to get these individuals to more voluntarily want to participate. We'll probably see this for a while until there are some mandates put in place. This is a little discouraging from our standpoint also. Lee added we don't have the tools to easily find these individuals or reach out to them at this point, at least from the WIOA side. Some of the Unemployment appointments have restarted and the individuals who are most likely to exhaust their Unemployment have started to be invited in for virtual appointments. Lee added one other thing that we did try which resulted in some engagement of individuals that could really benefit from virtual services. We took a group of individuals who had filed Unemployment Claims and were still receiving Unemployment in March, April, May, June and possibly July as well, and reached out to them by email and invited them to subscribe to the RochesterWorks! Newsletter. The percentage of those who actually subscribed to the email was very low, which is what we'd expected. There was only 1 contact that we made and they may not really know who we are before they got that contact, but the number we reached out to was fairly large. We got 40-50 new subscribers to the newsletter who now have access to our services virtually that didn't before, so this was a creative idea that we've tried to get individuals in and we just need to scale that.

An additional question raised was if we've tried to do a text blast with some of the job seekers and invite them to come in? Lee responded that we'd love to be able to do that, that it's an excellent idea, but unfortunately the data that we have access to on phone numbers doesn't tell us whether it's a landline or a cell phone and we don't know whether individuals have data plans where they either have a limited number or pay for text messages. We'd have to have them opt into something like this.

Group Discussion: Serving WIOA job seeker participants during a pandemic - how can we engage them when not required to report and how can we help businesses fill their job openings?

Antwan Williams commented that individuals probably just need to be reminded that we're still here, possibly through a postcard, newspaper or media, something different, so as to reach them and remind them, because we are opening back up and while it wasn't required on the front end, we should come up with some language to show them the benefits of getting connected prior to their benefits running out.

Viatta Carter gave an update on what they've been doing and continue to do at the Career Center. The Career Services Advisors continue to work with customers remotely. They're doing Zoom meetings, in addition to Microsoft Teams meetings, for those who are able to do that. A lot of what they're doing is job search assistance and resume help. As of August 31st, they've launched their assessments again and they're now utilizing SHL Assessments, which are more skill-based assessments. They'll be promoting this a lot more through our Social Media networks that we have. We started our Zoom workshops on March 29th and have 42 workshops that we've done so far, which have included 865 attendees in these workshops. We also have 30 E-Learning courses that we have on our RochesterWorks! website, which include 1,000+ customers who've completed these and we have over 840 Certificates that have been obtained from these E-Learning courses. We're looking to do more of the internet-based type of workshops and courses for our participants. A survey was sent out to customers asking them what other topics they may like to see and learn about. We're awaiting responses from the survey in hopes to develop and customize some additional workshops. Viatta added that we have 2 soft skills workshops that are currently included in our E-Learning. These are offered every other month via live Zoom and are available for customers to utilize. When an individual wants to take an E-Learning course, they will have to sign up. All of the instructions are right there on the website for them to go ahead and sign up and put in their information, then all of the courses will be available to them to take. In addition to this, we have the Disability & Disclosure Zoom workshops and E-Learning workshops available. It's a little bit different with the E-Learning, as we are asking some questions but they're not at the length that we do with some of our other courses. Viatta also included that staff are still continuing to do our Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and we are receiving a lot of calls. Every Tuesday they hold a Training Grant Workshop Q&A, where they invite in customers who've taken the Training Grant Workshop E-Learning online to participate. They're trying to come up with some additional ideas on how to reach back out those individuals who've taken the Training Grant Workshop E-Learning course, as they're averaging only 3-4 participants that are coming back to the Q&A, while there have been over 90 individuals who've taken the Training Grant Workshop E-Learning course. They're also continuing to do 599s on a daily basis.

Peter Pecor included that the rest of the State is also looking at doing things virtually and having more of the Zoom workshops, etc. and Peter believes that many of them have come to us, because we've been in the forefront of being the most aggressive, that he's aware of, in the area. This will become the norm down the road and many areas may not open up probably much until January. Peter is very proud of the work that Viatta and her staff have been doing and this has been recognized by the rest of the State as a model and hopefully we can build upon that. In addition, we are in the early stages of contacting Public Broadcasting System to see whether or not we can put some of our workshops and offerings on TV, which would make things more accessible for a number of people.

A question was raised at this time if RochesterWorks! has thought about possibly doing some Facebook Live events to reach people through Social Media or possibly having a drive-through Thursday where individuals are able to do a socially distant meeting and receive some services as well? Could this be kind of like a park and go, where Advisors could possibly service individuals by appointment only? Viatta responded that this is a good idea and that staff have already touched base with her regarding a possible drive-through Thursday and setting up a tent in our parking lot area. Viatta added that every Tuesday at 9:00am, they have what they call motivational moments on Facebook, which includes a 10-minute segment presented by Rosa Smith-Montanaro. They've received pretty good reviews both live and after the recording and these are on our Facebook page too. Peter Pecor added that Richard Turner and John Premo have been doing recruitments remotely on a regular basis and indicated these have been relatively successful. The volume hasn't decreased, so this is a real plus to it. Richard included they've done more than 30 virtual recruiting events since the start of Covid-19 and have had over 600 active applicants to companies. In addition, they've just started doing drive-through job fairs. They had one last week as a pilot and will be doing a couple more this month. They've also added some virtual information sessions for businesses.

John Premo added that in addition to the Facebook Live and some of the E-Learnings and workshops that we're doing, we have a new Marketing and Communications Coordinator on board who has a unique skillset and is

currently exploring ways in which we can record and capture the events that we do. We're looking at ways to share information through our platforms and networks that will hopefully catch and engage individuals to remind them of who we are and what we do. John added the other challenge we experience is that we have these events, in addition to the number of virtual events and drive-throughs the County has done, and we're seeing more companies doing that as well. The challenge that we have is how do we reach new people? We do well with reaching the individuals that we're currently engaged with, but for the most part, it's the same individuals cycling through, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but we're always challenged on our end and we're working to create unique and creative ways to expand our reach and reach more people. John added that some of the analytics and numbers we're seeing off of our social platforms, etc., the numbers are all going up, which is a good trend. This is encouraging, but John added that we need more Partners, community folks and organizations to help spread this reach and hopefully connect with more and new people.

A question was raised in regard to who RochesterWorks! sees as their main competition for success? Also, based on their success rate of helping individuals gain employment, how do we shout about that success rate? John responded that our direct competition would be the placement firms, staffing firms, etc. With a handful of our staff working with thousands of customers, this always is a challenge. We're more about connecting and engaging, more so than the staffing firms, which actually take people and do the matching, assessments and placement. We do this to a certain degree, but numbers are challenging in that respect. What's interesting is that as we talk with the businesses that we do, and because of Covid-19, we have engaged with quite a few new and different businesses, which is always encouraging. Again, the challenge that we have to overcome is the expectation of the business. All too often, especially with folks that aren't familiar with us, is they'll contact us today, give us the job posting, and then by tomorrow, they're questioning why they don't have 40 applicants or why we haven't referred over certain individuals. We're constantly fine tuning that process in trying to engage and do more where we can do a better job of awareness of our efforts. We have a project that we're working on and we have a Grant that will help us with our job posting, most notably being able to track individuals that apply through our site. Peter Pecor added that years ago when he was with the Department of Labor and before coming to RochesterWorks!, we really didn't do business with employment agencies and placement agencies, etc. That has changed a lot and we now look at anybody who offers those services as complementing what we do. So when asked who our competition is, we welcome competition and people who are doing similar things to what we're doing, because the ultimate result is that we want people to become employed. We look at our competition as being more partners that compliment what we're doing. Peter added if you look at during this Covid-19 crisis, on a weekly basis, we've been pretty successful in posting new job orders on a weekly basis.

Thomas Schulte added that from a Training perspective, between the work the County is doing with recruiting on the roads and drive-through job fairs, along with all the work RochesterWorks! does, there seems to be a gap in training programs to prepare people for some of the jobs that are available. It's one thing to have a bunch of job applicants, but if they don't have the skills to fill the jobs that companies are looking for, the companies aren't going to hire them because they lack the skill. Thomas asked if there's an opportunity to explore 'pop-up training', where we partner with industry sectors, not necessarily just companies, that say what skill sets they're looking for and from an HR perspective, begin to consider hiring from a cultural perspective more than from a skill perspective and then leverage the training program when you find what you think is a good cultural fit for your organization, leverage the training program to get that individual the skill they need to be successful in the job that they're applying for.

Peter Pecor added that what we've seen recently, for example MCC and BOCES, there's been more of those certifications and credential short term training programs that have been offered and there needs to be more of those offered. From a funding standpoint at RochesterWorks!, we are limited and what we need to do is to have some incentives on the part of Employers also, because if the Employer is given incentives to hire and train individuals, that would be a real plus.

Lee Koslow wrapped up the meeting by adding this has been a great discussion and with capturing the ideas from today's meeting, we'll see what we can do and if there are any suggestions that we can implement, connect with some of you individually. If there's anything that needs more of a group effort, we can revisit this at our December WI&PC Meeting.

Next Meeting Scheduled: December 1, 2020

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 AM
Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:
Lee Koslow 9/14/2020