

**Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 19, 2023
8:00AM - 9:30AM
United Way Building – Conference Room #1
Board members also attended via Zoom**

Attendees: Dana Abramson, Marco Altieri, Zachary Arnold, Mary Beth Artuso, Bert Brinkerhoff, Bob Coyne, Melissa James-Geska, Janelle Harris, Glen Jeter, Tyrone Reaves, Maggie Rivera, Gary Rogers, Alma Vieru, Joe Wesley, Randy Andre, Rick Donovan, John Brach (Proxy for Mayor Malik Evans), Lia Festenstein, Shawn Futch, Shirley Green, Ana Liss, Grant Malone, Danielle Maloy, Joseph Morelle, Tiffany Owens, David Scott

Absent: Rachel Baranello, Thomas Battley, Kaitlyn Bond, Sergio Esteban, Michael Weed, Robin Cole, Rodric Cox-Cooper, Roosevelt Mareus, Angelica Perez-Delgado, Patricia Stovall-Lane

Staff: Viatta Carter, Jeanine Frenz, Lee Koslow, Behiye Mansour, Mary McKeown, Dave Seeley, Laura Seelman, Marisol Young, Antwan Williams, Tricia Campbell, Nathan Maeske

Guests: Joe Peplin; Bonadio & Co., LLP, Kurt Meichtry; NYSDOL

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Glen Jeter at 8:01AM.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the September 19, 2023 meeting minutes was made by Joseph Morelle and seconded by Joe Wesley. The motion was passed unanimously.

Finance Committee:

Presentation of Annual Audit - Bonadio Group

Dave Seeley welcomed Joe Peplin with Bonadio & Co., LLP. Joe is new to our engagement this year, replacing Craig Stevens, who has transitioned into retirement. Craig helped Joe with the transition, noting that everything went very smoothly. Joe also thanked Jeanine Frenz, Behiye Mansour, and Nathan Maeske for their help during the audit. Bonadio received everything that was requested and had full cooperation with management.

Joe Peplin provided a brief presentation highlighting the results of the annual audit. He also reviewed the financial statements and provided a high-level overview of those as well. Joe noted the following reasons why the audit is required:

- 1) New York State requires that you have an audit if you have a certain amount of revenue, which we exceed.
- 2) We also have a single audit, which is an audit of our Federal funds, and since we exceed a certain dollar threshold of Federal funding, the Federal Government also requires that we have an audit over those specific funds, and that Bonadio does an audit of our entire organization.

Executive Summary

Key events and transactions during the year:

- Transition from Mike DeBole to Jeanine Frenz as Director of Finance.
- There were no changes in the organization's accounting policies and all policies are considered appropriate.
- Adoption of ASC 842 Lease Standard. This will put all Operating Leases on the Balance Sheet. This resulted in approximately \$671K right-of-use assets and lease liabilities added to the balance sheet effective July 1, 2022.

Internal control findings:

- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control were identified.

Bonadio issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements. This means that the financial statements are fairly stated, and that there are no material errors in them. Additionally, for the single audit, they issued clean audit reports on our Federal funds, which means that there were no compliance findings noted during any of our grant testing.

Required Communications:

- There were no independence matters that occurred or were identified after November 6, 2023, the date of their most recent independent communication to the organization.
- There were no conditions or events identified indicating there is substantial doubt about the organization's ability to continue as a going concern.
- There were no disagreements with management.
- Bonadio is not aware of any consultations management has had with other accountants about significant accounting or auditing matters.
- There were no significant difficulties encountered during the audit.
- Bonadio obtained a management representation letter prior to issuance.
- There were no significant or unusual transactions.
- Bonadio did not identify any of the following:
 - potential or known fraud;
 - potential or known illegal acts;
 - instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
 - any alternative accounting treatments;
 - information inconsistent with the financial statements.
- The quality of the financial reporting was at a very high level. There were no audit adjustments, no issues noted during the audit.
- Bonadio noted no related parties or related-party relationships or transactions that were previously undisclosed to them or lack business purpose.
- There were no other matters that they are required to disclose.

At this time, Board Members only held a brief Executive Session.

Once the Executive Session ended, a motion to approve the Annual Audit as presented by Joe Peplin, Bonadio Group was made by Melissa James-Geska and seconded by Joseph Morelle. The motion was passed unanimously.

Dave Seeley extended his appreciation to the Bonadio Team and commended Jeanine Frenz, Behiye Mansour, and Nathan Maeske for their exceptional work in the audit process.

Review of Program Year 2023, Quarter 1 Financials, July 1st - September 30th

Jeanine Frenz began the discussion with the following:

Revenue

- Total WIOA funds for the first quarter were \$1.4M (about 18% of what we budgeted for the year): 51% Adult, 11% Dislocated Worker, and 28% Youth.
- SCION: It is a \$100K per calendar year program and we are on target to spend all the funds by December 31st.
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): This is the Summer Youth Employment Program. The State advances the money to us. As of today, we have spent all the funds.
- Gun Violence Prevention Program: Movement has been slow on this. Our intention was to hire four navigators; we were only able to hire two. Our subrecipients have taken some time to get their programs back up and running.
- Monroe County - Employability Assessments & STEP Program: We are where we should be at this point in the year.
- There was no Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) funding or Grant Revenue for this period.
- ROC Seeds: This new program is billed every 6 months, so we are still in the first 6 months of the program.

Program Expenses

Direct Expenses:

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs): These are a bit low for the first quarter, but that has to do primarily with the timing of the payments to the programs. For the quarter we are currently in, we paid out more than \$148K in ITAs and we have accrued and obligated more than \$233K.
- OJTs: These are also under budget for this quarter. We have another staff member starting after the first of the year and our current staff is working hard to bring in OJTs. For November, we have approximately \$70K in accruals and obligations for OJTs.
- Wage Subsidies: Most of these expenditures were for the Summer Youth Employment.

Service Provider Payments:

- WIOA Youth payments are close to where they should be after the first quarter.
- SYEP payments are where they should be at the end of the quarter.

RWI Operational Expenses

- All operational expenses are on budget except for travel and meetings. This variance is due to the timing of the Summer Youth Employment Partner Appreciation Breakfast. Overall, we are doing well for this quarter.

Dave Seeley added the GVP is always something we focus on. We will be making some policy revisions that allow us some additional flexibility to free up the funding. We are relying on community partners to execute the program and they are doing work, it is just not chipping away at that budget as much as we think we wanted it to. Many of the navigator agencies we are working with also have WIOA Youth programs as well. Finding participants to utilize the funds on the Youth side continues to be the challenge of this. We are continuing to try and get that money out in the community.

Lee Koslow added to the discussion, as far as the question, What could Board members do? For this grant, it might be a little bit too late, but for future funding, what could we do to more effectively allocate workforce development dollars? We have learned that programs that limit our cost per participant are less effective. That was initially why this was not as attractive to community partners. NYS gave us a lot of money, but they asked us to serve too many participants for the

budget. The other thing is, you get nine months of funding, you have to start immediately, and then there is uncertainty as to whether you are going to continue past March 31st. Then on April 1st, you get another year of funding. One of the things that would have been more useful is multi-year funding.

The question was raised to describe the participant we are looking for. Dave Seeley responded it is very similar to the Youth that we are serving with our WIOA Youth. It is Youth with barriers and in this instance, 18–24-year-olds, out of school, and initially for people living in neighborhoods impacted by gun violence, which is all but one or two zip codes in the City of Rochester. If you have an eligible participant, you can introduce them to our staff or one of our navigator partners that are utilizing the funds.

Antwan Williams added the biggest detriment to the program was that it initially was a yearlong program. Also keep in mind that we were just coming out of the pandemic and easing back into the office, so a lot of the programs across the board really struggled with finding staff. It took approximately six months for them to find staff to run the program, but then once they hire them, they have to learn the program, OSOS, and sometimes even the case management piece. It was a challenge to find quality individuals to run the program, in addition to, other agencies in the community receiving similar funding, so we were kind of competing with one another in finding young individuals to join the program. Just when we were starting to hit that stride, the program ended and programs across the board had to let staff go, only for us to learn a month or so later that the GVP program was starting up again, so now programs had to start all over again to find staff to learn and run the program. And now we are back at that same predicament where we do not know whether this program is going to end March 2024. Antwan noted the major issue was the fact that the program had to stop, and we lost that, and now we are starting all over again. Moving forward, as we advocate to the State, when we talk about new initiatives, they have to do more than just one year if we really want to see the outcomes they set.

A motion to approve the Review of Program Year 2023, Quarter 1 Financials as presented was made by Melissa James-Geska and seconded by Lia Festenstein. The motion was passed unanimously.

Workforce Innovation and Performance Committee:

Amendments to Priority of Service Policy

Lee Koslow began the discussion by noting there was a change in State policy that has impacted us locally on our Priority of Service Policy. It is required that we make some adjustments. We brought this to the Workforce Innovation & Performance Committee for discussion earlier in the month and got a really good recommendation from them.

Revision to Policy 101 Priority of Service includes:

Background: NYS TA #23-06 removes the requirement to determine a participant as in need of either Job Search Ready or Career Development Services (CDS). The CDS designation was an element of our local priority for individualized career services, On-the-Job Training (OJT), customized training, and transitional jobs.

Recommendation: Remove the CDS designation as a local priority category. Allow participants who do not belong to any priority category to receive the services listed above after participants in federal and state priority categories receive them.

A motion to approve the Revision to Policy 101 Priority of Service as presented was made by Melissa James-Geska and seconded by Joe Wesley. The motion was passed unanimously.

Director's Report:

Amendments to Gun Violence Prevention Program Policy

Lee Koslow began the discussion noting all the recommendations below will help us to make the best possible use of this funding.

Purpose: To provide greater flexibility while meeting program goals.

Recommendations:

- Allow for situations where a paid work experience is a development opportunity that could lead to unsubsidized employment at a different employer worksite.
- Allow navigator agencies to use GVP funds for paid work experiences, incentives, and supportive services.
- Allow navigator agency participants to make use of GVP funds for standalone occupational skills training without being co-enrolled in WIOA.

Navigators for the program include Center for Youth, Community Place of Greater Rochester, Starbridge, Community Resource Collaborative, and Hope Initiatives.

A motion to approve the Amendments to the Gun Violence Prevention Program Policy as presented was made by Joseph Morelle and seconded by Melissa James-Geska. The motion was passed unanimously.

Director's Update

Dave Seeley took a moment to remember Melinda Mack, who served as the Executive Director of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) for over a decade.

NYATEP serves as a convenor, educator, and advocate for workforce and training organizations throughout New York State. It is the gold standard of such organizations, and that is largely because it had Melinda at its helm for the past decade. Furthermore, it serves as an organizing entity for the 33 workforce development boards across New York.

Under Melinda's leadership, New York stayed ahead of the curve in ensuring that workforce development programs better serve those communities who are historically marginalized and underrepresented in the workforce.

Above all, Melinda was a wonderful person and will be missed in communities around New York.

WIOA Performance Indicators - Program Year 2022

Dave Seeley reported that last month, we received our Program Year 2022 WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance covering the full program year and noted the following:

- Overall, a very good performance report.
- Exceeded NYSDOL goal on 13 of 15 indicators.
- Improved performance from last year's program year report on 11 of 15 indicators.
- Did not meet goal for Youth Measurable Skills Gain. We are in the process of submitting a corrective plan of action to NYSDOL.

Lee Koslow outlined some of the items included in the Measurable Skills Gain, such as: Any training program, whether it is an occupational skills training, an On-the-Job Training program, or an individual who does not have a high school diploma, whether or not they are enrolled in a High

School Equivalency or Adult Basic Ed Program, they count in the denominator. To hit the measure, every program year, July to June, we have to record a gain in measurable skills for each of those participants who are in the denominator, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. The Measurable Skill Gain can be some type of a training milestone, for example, a progress report from an On-the-Job Training Grant. It could be some type of skills progression, for example, a grade report in a college program or an increase in the educational functioning level of someone who is either basic skills deficient or an English language learner. You would want to see them move up from one level to the next. It is measured every single year, and the standard is just a little over 50% for that one. Lee applauded the tremendous work on the part of the Career Centers to get those Adult and Dislocated Worker measures comfortably above the standard. For this program year, we need to work on getting the Youth measure up there.

Lee added that we have done a comprehensive analysis of all of the factors behind why we missed on the Youth Measurable Skills Gain, including by training provider, by reason, and with some recommendations, this is all going to be included in our Corrective Action Plan to NYSDOL, which is due by the end of this month.

ROC Your Job - After School Teen Employment Program

Dave Seeley shared that we have received some good news regarding a program the State is funding to provide "Summer Youth Employment" during the school year. This will allow us, starting in January, to provide paid work experience, similar in structure to how the Summer Youth Employment Program works.

Program details include:

- Supplemental money awarded from NYS was awarded to Monroe County.
- \$1.7 Million program will provide wage subsidies for 260 teens.
- Program will run from January - June, 2024.
- Program will mirror Summer Youth Employment (eligibility and enrollment).
- ROCYOURJOB.COM

Employers are lined up to participate and we are currently connecting with all of our previous Summer Youth Employment participants. We are also working with the school district and will be making a public announcement with the County Executive in the first week of the new year. Our goal is to get Youth enrolled in this program as soon as possible, late January or early February.

Update - MCC Career Center Project

Dave Seeley shared that we are moving in the right direction and noted the following:

- Regional Revitalization Partnership Steering Committee recommended the project be funded (\$7.5 million). It is now being reviewed by the program funders (NYS and private foundations).
- Monroe County is taking initial steps to include the project into their Capital Improvement Plan (subject to the approval of the legislature).

Once funding is procured, our next steps will be to, hopefully in the first quarter of 2024, bring together all of the partners (NYSDOL, MCC, RochesterWorks Career Center, the County, as well as other potential smaller organizations that could use the space) to begin to finalize the programming that would lead to the final design.

New Initiatives at RWI

Dave Seeley touched base on the following new initiatives at RWI, which include:

SMS Text Messaging:

- We have procured a software program that will allow our career advisors to better communicate with our customers via text messaging. This will help execute our new process for providing follow-up services to customers, and also ensure that our existing customers are aware of opportunities that might suit their needs. The text message program will also allow us to better market our services to the broader population, as it has been demonstrated that the read-rates of text messages far surpass those of emails.

Financial Empowerment Counseling:

- RochesterWorks Career Center is partnering with the City of Rochester Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) and its funding partner, the Center for Financial Empowerment (CFE) to execute a study to determine if utilization of individualized financial counseling has an impact on employment outcomes. In doing so, our staff are solidifying a strategic partnership with a local resource that aims to help increase personal savings, reduce personal debt, access safe and affordable banking, and improve credit.

Opportunity Knocking

Dave Seeley reported that we are currently engaged with a handful of grant opportunities, all of which relate to our role as being a convenor of the local workforce system.

Recompete Pilot Program (US Economic Development Administration/Department of Commerce):

- This is a grant program that was funded as part of the US CHIPS Act in 2022. It seeks to provide workforce system enhancements to communities with prime-age employment gaps (ages 25-54). For our local area, this is exclusively the City of Rochester, where employment rates for this age group significantly trail the national average. On behalf of the City of Rochester and with the support of Rep. Joe Morelle, RochesterWorks brought together roughly a dozen stakeholders to develop a program that looks to better coordinate workforce development and training resources in the area and remove barriers to participation in the labor force. Applied for both strategy development grant and implementation grant.

Finger Lakes REDC:

- As part of this year's Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), regions were asked to submit a Challenge Grant - proposals that include creative and innovative solutions to address a specific regional challenge. From the ten included regions, three challenge proposals will be selected for implementation. The Finger Lakes REDC wisely chose workforce development as its strategic focus, and the featured program of its proposal to the State will be the Good Jobs Finger Lakes program, which, if funded by the State, would be spearheaded by RochesterWorks. Under the program, RWI would coordinate sectoral partnerships in the fields of Advanced Manufacturing, Skilled Construction Trades, and Health Care professions. It would work with key organizations to recruit workforce participants, provide necessary training and supportive services, and foster a link to employers within the industry sector.

This is modeled after a grant proposal that RochesterWorks developed in 2022 as part of the Federal Good Jobs Challenge. While that program was very competitive and we were unsuccessful in our submission, we welcome the opportunity to reignite this strategic concept for the Finger Lakes Region.

ESL Foundation - Post-Employment Outcomes:

- The ESL Foundation has released a request for proposals (RFP) for workforce strategies to help improve post-employment outcomes, particularly job retention and career pathway navigation. RochesterWorks was approached to submit a proposal, and we have been engaging with multiple system partners over the past several weeks to develop a comprehensive approach that encompasses three primary strategies:
 1. Pre-Employment interventions (job readiness training, soft skills development, transportation) that can help with post-employment outcomes.
 2. Employee Resources, both those which address basic needs (housing, childcare, transportation, food insecurity) that many entry-level workers confront, as well as resources to help facilitate a better relationship between the employer and employee. For instance, this could take the form of a “success coach” or mentorship program.
 3. Access to training for employers. We have found that there are many companies in the region that have been proactive in addressing job quality and strategies that lead to better retention. Our goal is to bring these best practices to other businesses through resources such as training and employer mentorship.

A motion to approve the Director’s Report as presented was made by Joseph Morelle and seconded by Gary Rogers. The motion was passed unanimously.

Member Sharing:

At this time, Glen Jeter welcomed Board Members to share what they have been thankful for this past year.

Adjournment 9:19AM


A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Melissa James-Geska and seconded by Joe Morelle. The motion was passed unanimously.

WDB Meeting Schedule:

March 19, 2024

June 18, 2024

Approved



 David Seeley

3/19/24

 Date

Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:

David Seeley: Approved 1/11/24

Jeanine Frenz: Approved 1/11/24

Lee Koslow: Approved 1/11/2024

Antwan Williams: Approved 1/11/24