

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board  
April 21, 2022; 8:30 AM  
Via Webex – phone & online

Meeting Minutes

The following members/proxies were present: Paul Gilbody (Chair); Janice Ryan Weekes; Robin Hooper; Jose Perez; Joshua Froimson; Peter Dunn (proxy for Ethan Brown); Kevin Gaugush; Kevin Kuros; Kathy Rentsch (proxy for L. Pedraja); Edward Bartkiewicz; Alex Guardiola; Kathy Rentsch; Derek Morrison (proxy for Ryan Foley)

Guests/Staff: J. Turgeon (MCRWB); Jibrael Younis (MassHire Central Career Centers); Anne Calef (Boston Indicators); Raija Vaisanen (MA Workforce Association); Karen Pelletier (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce)

Call to Order, Announcement of Quorum & Note of Conflict of Interest: P. Gilbody called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM, and asked the members if anyone wished to note any conflicts of interest on the agenda. No conflicts were noted. P. Gilbody then welcomed all the attendees and thanked them for their attendance. J. Turgeon then reviewed the attendance log.

Approval of the January 20, 2022 MCRWB Meeting Minutes: Upon a motion and second from the attendees, the minutes were unanimously approved.

R. Hooper then outlined the competitive procurement process used for the identification of WIOA Youth services for the next two-year program cycle, and brought forth the recommendation from the MCRWB Youth Workforce Investment Council to allow the Board to enter into procurement negotiations with the three selected vendors for WIOA Youth services (Worcester Community Action Council, Fieldstone School, YOU, Inc.) to provide WIOA Youth programming for Fiscal Year 2023 (with an additional option year for the Board to extend it for one additional year). A motion was made by J. Froimson and seconded by K. Gaugush, and approved unanimously by the Board.

P. Gilbody and J. Turgeon then welcomed and introduced the guest presenters: Anne Calef from the Boston Indicators organization, and Raija Vaisanen from the MA Workforce Association. They presented information regarding the status of the labor market in MA and Central Region, including information regarding how the pandemic affected employment by industry, and the labor force participation rate. They discussed several additional data points that may be a factor in the region's available worker candidate pool, including the trends in immigration to Massachusetts and the rate at which people have quit their jobs. Following the discussion, the MassHire Central Career Centers' Business Services Manager, Jibrael Younis, facilitated a discussion with Karen Pelletier from the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Kevin Kuros from the MA Office of Business Development, and Peter Dunn, the City of Worcester's Chief Development Officer. They noted data that stood out to them, such as the significant decrease in the number of international immigrants coming to MA, which has impacted directly on the supply of available workers and job candidates. K. Kuros highlighted that inter-state immigration and the retention of young people that come to the area from outside MA for college should be strategies to help keep our local workforce strong. P. Dunn noted that the decline in Government sector positions has been felt in his department and seemed to have started before the pandemic hit. He also noted the success that job training programs have had and that more will be needed to support industries such as life-sciences that are poised for large growth but needs to have

available labor or else the employers may need to relocate to other locations. K. Pelletier emphasized the importance of creative partnerships between business and the public sector, such as Innovation Pathways (which affords students at traditional high schools the chance to also take a vocational training program), and noted one challenge for families, especially female led households is the lack of affordable and available childcare.

J. Turgeon gave meeting attendees an update on Board programs and activities, including current training projects, such as grants to train Commercial Drivers (and school bus driver training in partnership with the Worcester Public Schools and the Worcester Jobs Fund), and the Federally-funded Asbestos removal worker training. He also noted the board's work on the implementation on the regional blueprint, including the three industry consortia (Healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation/logistics/warehousing), along with the work being done with our region's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners. He also highlighted the planning being done for YouthWorks summer youth jobs program, anticipated to serve 415 youth this summer in partnership with the Worcester Community Action Council, the Center of Hope, and the Milford Youth Center. He also noted the Board is working on potential new projects to support warehouse worker preparation, commercial drivers, and the life-sciences.

J. Weekes then discussed career center programming and operations, including updates filing staff vacancies, as well as three upcoming in-person job fairs in April, May, and June (the June fair being done at the DCU Center). She then updated the Board regarding the status of the new leases for the Board and Worcester Career Center, and the new move date in Worcester to 554 Main Street now anticipated to be in the winter, 2023. The move into the Southbridge Conference Center for the MassHire Southbridge Career Center should be happening this summer.

J. Turgeon also let the Board know about several training opportunities and the need for training candidates – such as the school bus driver training and the Asbestos Removal worker training, and invited meeting attendees to check the MassHire website training list regularly to stay informed of current projects ([https://masshirecentral.com/resources/#\\_training](https://masshirecentral.com/resources/#_training)).

J. Turgeon then reminded the members that there is substantial Federal and State workforce funding available via across multiple state program lines, including the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund, the Career Technical Initiative, and the RENEW grant programs. He suggested employers contact him if they have questions or potential project ideas. He also discussed the state's HireNow program (K. Kuros informed the members the program is now closed for new applicants), and invited members and their networks to attend the upcoming MA STEM Summit happening April 28<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 1:30pm at the Amazon Westborough facility.

P. Gilbody then invited to make announcements and no member announcements were made, and upon a motion, second, and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:43am.

P. Gilbody thanked all for their attendance and reminded members that the next MCRWB full board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 8:30 – possibly held in-person or both in-person or via Webex virtual (details to be announced).

*Respectfully drafted by, J. Turgeon; MCRWB*