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Atlantic County Workforce Development Full Board Meeting 9am March 18, 2021

**Attendance**

Alan Beatty Neil Bellinger Jim Drew Torrie Garvin Forrest Gilmore

Dr. Guenther Dan Kelly Terrie Lutz Paul McClellan Marian Woodson

Linda Novelli Dan Koncyzk Geoffrey Dorsey Natalie Devonish Greg Freelon

Joe Ingemi James Waters

**Minutes**

Riaz Rajput: I welcome you for the regular Workforce Development Board meeting. Today is the March 18, 2021. I hope everyone had a chance to review the minutes from December. If so, may I have a motion to approve those minutes. Alan Beatty made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 10th meeting. Terri Lutz seconded the motion. All in favor signal by raising your hand. Minutes are accepted.

**Financial Report**

John Fata: We'll begin with our expenditure report; with our basic $7 million budget as of eight months, we're approximately 44% through our target. Realistically, we should be at 66%. But considering the obvious, that's not a bad 22% carry over. Looking into the numbers, page four will give a little idea of our contracted services, which are at a minimum. Basically this year we contracted out with our youth dollars. We're spending almost at 30% with our youth dollars overall. There are several other contracts as well however will discuss that with the ITA report. Alan Beatty inquired about the OJT, John Fata responded that this past week initiated our first two OJTs; Fran Kuhn will decide how we will go forward and that will reflect as another component of this report in the OJT section which will show you where we are with that portion of our budget. By the next meeting you'll see a report that will show you how the program is laid out. Fran Kuhn added that he will discuss this further during his presentation as well.

John Fata: Aside from contracts, our other area of service is the training contracts. The 2020 analysis, we stand at one 140 enrollments with 46 completions off of those enrollments. Seven customers were employed with 6 employed in the areas that they were trained in. Program Year 19, shows the enrollments from last year and training's that occurred up to and including June of 2020. 197 customers were enrolled up to and including June of 2020 with 146 completions, 82 employed and 76 of the 82 were employed in the areas that they were trained in. Alan Beatty: Again, looking at PY2020 program year 2019 doesn't reflect the same numbers; why is that.

John Fata: responds that PY2019 shows where is was that at that point of the year in the report. So in February of 2020, it gives you an idea of where those trainees were. John Fata: if you look at the 2020- Program, year 19 it shows you that 197 were still trained, 130 completed. That was as of February of 2020. February 2021 tells you of those same.

John Fata: This shows that many more came through the system and became gainfully employed. In another two or three months, depending on our reports in our database that number should be increasing.

Fran Kuhn: There's been a lot of questions raised about that in relation to performance, so we'll get into performance a little bit in my report. The State does not seem to be as concerned about that level of expenditure. There were a lot of counties that were expressing concern about having to spend 80 % of total. But the issue for the State is that they need to spend as an aggregate. They need to spend 80% of total for the state. So there may be further discussion and they may be negotiating with the feds.

John Fata: The whole premise of showing you this second report every June, is to show the culmination of that particular year's budget that stops. So the enrollment cease, we continue to show you this report because from month to month, the report shows how those enrollments make their way through some type of employment stats. So what you're seeing again, in PY 20 is a snapshot as of February 2020 of that time.

Fran Kuhn: The Training unit is obligated to follow those customers for a full year after they exit the program, therefore they're capturing progress well beyond the end of that program year. Dan Kelly: Is the state going to give any leeway, based on all that's been going on this year due to the pandemic?

Dan Koncyzk: inquired as to why Youth Corp was not on this financial report. John Fata responded that New Jersey Youth Corps, is on the cover page; this is the second part of their budget. The first part of their budget, obviously, is staff, which is included under personnel. Dan Kelly made a motion to approve the financial report and seconded by Jim Drew. Motion passed by show of hands.

Riaz Rajput: Board Chair report. After meeting with the Commissioner it was brought to his attention that due to the abundance of people claiming unemployment, they will be continuing through the tax year. Customers may have a challenge in getting their report 1099-G. I’m happy to say that due to the Commissioner's serious notice of the issue along with the new software they added, makes it very easy. Customers can possibly link their emails, used for unemployment then, go to the website and access it using a Social Security number. This is an easy process when filing taxes; this is a big achievement from the commissioner's office.

Fran Kuhn Executive Director Report- I want to address the unemployment issue; real concern is the requests for assistance along with the fraudulent claims. 25% percent of the problematic claims are related to fraud. The staff that are trying to address those issues are about a month to six weeks behind in processing. The unemployment rate is 15.4%, the Office of Research and Information states that the number of customers receiving unemployment benefits right now is 23,000. The average labor force in Atlantic County, is approximately 125,000. The concern is that at some point there's going to be a significant surge in activity within workforce development, training and assistance. I do anticipate that we are going to see some significant surges towards the end of this summer, the beginning of the fall, either because of the season or just the nature of the fact that unemployment is not being received anymore. I'm receiving emails from customers who are indicating they haven't received their unemployment for months; hopefully the unemployment system will improve its ability to service that piece of the population. Our current outreach plan: Jim Waters of Family Community Development has been essential in giving us updated lists of customers that have recently applied for public assistance and food stamp benefits. Those lists are being received, and are forwarded to the Work First New Jersey unit. Work First unit case managers are contacting customers and informing them of the opportunities that we're providing relative to job readiness, training and potential job placements.

 Covid-19 service delivery update: Foundations for Success is one of our newest programs; it is a cooperative arrangement with the Atlantic Cape Community College for job development. There are approximately 75 referrals, and of that number, 40 have signed up. Sherwood Taylor (ACCC) has a program navigator providing support and encouragement to those that are participating.

We decided to use a local agreement rather than a competitive RFP due to the requirements i.e. level of service which requires that we make referrals on a regular basis and WorkFirst New Jersey with mandated work activities. It is a challenging dilemma with no indication that there is any plan in the future for a return to mandated services framework. Forrest Gilmore: This is correct, at this particular time there is no plan to return to mandated services; it is all on a volunteer basis.

Fran Kuhn: What we may do, is if that returns to a mandated level, we may try to put something together quickly and try to run a 9-month program with an extension for a year or two.

Fran Kuhn: We wish to thank Paul McClellan for all of the referrals through a program called RESEA which offers the opportunity for participants to obtain training as part of that reemployment process. We're probably averaging about 20 referrals a week through that process.

Paul McClellan: all the customers are receiving unemployment benefits and are required to participate in a work search program; normally, everything is done online right now, but mostly by email or a telephone calls. The numbers vary from week to week, but I think we've been averaging maybe about 15 to 20 week. Unemployment claims are beginning to come down a little bit, which is definitely a positive direction. Employers are more willing to hire. And that's actually that's actually encouraging as well.

Fran Kuhn: We've been in recent conversations with the ACUA and they are looking to hire truck drivers and riders; this is an opportunity for participants to take CDL licensing courses with the hope that those people will be hired. We have begun recruiting for the Atlantic City Electric program for the third cohort; one of the requirements for qualifying for that program as it is currently structured is that they must score a ninth grade level on the math test. Approximately 120 people have participated virtually in the presentation for the course. About 5 participants out of 45 testes scored a 9th grade level or above on math. These candidates require to have academic remediation in order to qualify for this training, or provide an alternate training opportunity.

As indicated, a couple of the inter-local agreements with Atlantic Cape Community College are under construction. We are in the process of preparing for the in school youth contract as well; the out of school youth contract will be complete at the end of this program year, which is June 30th. Efforts are in place in developing the RFP with the expectation of releasing it by beginning of April for bid opportunities. The focus will be to incorporate performance requirements of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board into the expectations of this particular proposal. The other opportunity that is coming due is the One Stop Operator which has to be competitively bid. It was a two-year contract initially with the opportunity for two, one-year extensions. This is the fourth year, therefore additional discussions will be had. A small committee from the board will be formed to formulate what this competitive bid should look like.

Registered Apprenticeship: We provide the training, which gives employers incentive and or motivation to hire those that were trained. When you work with OJT, registered apprenticeship, and incumbent worker training, you're working directly with the employer. This gives the ability to make a direct connection to the employer, provide added incentives and benefits to the employer while you are offering the customer the opportunity to get trained and become employed. In industries other than hospitality, retail, and tourism, we are offering up to a 70 percent wage reimbursement depending on the technical skills associated with the training. Training programs could take up to six months. The training is capped at $6000.

Tropicana has 140 positions that they need to fill: 30 security positions, 70 housekeeping positions, some specialized security positions, event managers. Paul McClellan did a quick search of the Southwest database and found over 400 people that had listed security as an area or a skill set that they exhibit. Similarly, even with housekeeping, he found over 400. The challenge now is reaching out to all of those people and finding out if they have any interest in the employment opportunity.

The WDB must search for those individuals that are qualified and are eligible under WIOA for OJT and Registered Apprenticeship.

We are in the process of posting for a hire of a Job Developer within the agency, this is a critical need to make that connection with the employers. SalesForce is a program which documents the efforts of the interaction between employment services, One Stop services and employers. We want to make sure that they have a single source of contact for all of their staffing needs and we're responsive to them.

New Business:

Resolution #1-31821: The PII policy, personally identifiable information is something that was actually passed via a TEGL. Training and employment guidance letter- a federal regulation that was established in 2014, then the state picked that up and put local regulations around it in 2016. The purpose of this policy is to protect information within the agency and the information electronically transmitted. So we need it to have the policy in place. Riaz Rajput: All have the copy and read that policy resolution, Alan Beatty made a motion to approve and Forrest Gilmore seconded; all those in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #2-31821: This is regarding eligibility; In September of 2018, we had a discussion about reducing the level of eligibility or constricting the level of eligibility to the lower living standard income level which has changed significantly. The policy refers to the eligibility standards for the adult populations and is established in the WIN WD-19-6.1. There are no income standards on new eligibility definitions. The standard is someone who is 18 or older- citizen or non-citizen authorized to work in the United States and meet Selective Service registration requirements. Income is no longer a standard nor qualifier under the new adult guidelines. What this does for us on the administrative side is if we run out of money, we can use dislocated worker money to fill that hole because dislocated workers can also be adults. The standard for adult is so broad that it can fit any dislocated worker. Paul McClellan made a motion to approve the adult eligibility and seconded by Dan Kelly; All those in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #3-31821: Finally, in our most recent internal audit there was an actual finding that created some consternation internally. The Christmas party that was held in December of 2000 under normal circumstances the cost per plate can be no more than $17.00, but in this particular event, once they added all the additional costs, taxes, gratuity, those kind of things, there was an excess of $140.50 of which the internal auditors found and took exception to. In conversations with the Treasurer's office, initially the agreement was to use accounting dollars to offset the $140.50 rather than use taxpayer dollars, we talked about other funding sources. The proposed funding source is the GED fund. This fund is used for those that are interested in taking the GED from us; the way that works is that $54 pays specifically for that exam. The administrative cost of $50 is the remaining cost associated with the test. This money goes to the Treasurer in an ear-marked account. We have approximately $40000 in this account. Alan Beatty asked what safeguards were in place to assure that it did not happen again. John Fata responds that there is now policy for that. It was an unfortunate oversight because normally, because that would have been checked and approved just at the end of that event. We have the approval of the Treasurer's office to take this action. Alan Beatty made a motion to accept these terms and Jim Drew seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**Committee Reports**: Committee Reports: Everyone was afforded the opportunity to participate in the Literacy, Disability Committee and the Youth Committee.

***Literacy Committee-*** Funding dropped 40% @$52,000 therefore we cannot service as many customers as before.

***Youth Committee***- The Summer Youth Employment program is out. This could result in 80 summer youth opportunities in Atlantic County. The total amount of the grant is $2 million for the entire State. It is a competitive process that concerns me a little bit because if we go with 80 people, that's $200,000 which translates into 10 grants for the state with 17 areas competing. We are definitely going to pursue this and we're trying to work with employers to see if they're interested in the youth. If the grant is received, the expectation would be that those youths that are identified could receive $12 an hour for eight weeks at 25 hours a week. There is a $100 additional piece for education with 35 hours of job related education i.e. job readiness, soft skills, digital literacy, will be provided with in the 35 hours. The proposal needs to be in by March 30th; our monitoring unit is beginning to contact employers to see if they would be interested.

***Health Care Committee***- Alan Beatty reports that he was not in attendance at the last committee meeting however, I want to discuss Respiratory therapists; the issue is in regards to the finding of respiratory therapists in the South Jersey area. There are no schools locally for respiratory therapy with the closest being in Central Jersey or Philadelphia. In talking to my counterparts in the South Jersey hospital area, we have made a request of Rowan University to look at developing a program for this position. Joe Ingemi asks if there's a possibility that the school could be erected in Atlantic County; if so the Economic Alliance could possibly help Rowan build in our county.

***Oversight Committee***- The oversight committee discussed the current lack of contracted services, everything is focused on In-School Youth.

***Disabilities Committee***- There was a lot of conversation about the challenges that the people with disabilities have in relation to taking on employment because of the requirements of SSI and the income that they are receiving. There are limitations to what they can do in the way of work and the number of hours that they can work and the amount of money they can earn.

***Membership Committee***- No Report Committee Chair absent.

**No Old Business**.

Board Chair Riaz Rajput- to all Board members we ask that you commit to joining a committee so that we can function and offer our services and your expertise to this community. We also have Chair vacancies, therefore if you are interested please contact Fran Kuhn or my self Riaz Rajput.

Motion to adjourn Riaz Rajput seconded by Neil Bellinger

Respectfully submitted,