

Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board

Minutes of May 12, 2021

Members Present: Ananda Sweet, Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Patricia Andrews for Ethan Brown, Erin Carlson, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier

Absent: Judy Coffey, Michael Pickens, John McEntagart, and Pedro Toledo

Other Attendees: Tracey Feick, Jennifer Harte, Yensi Jacobo, and Karissa White

Staff: Katie Greaves, Cheryl Beeson, Max Brownlee, Shaydra Ennis, Sharona Elfus-Schatzkin, Amanda Gayda, Lonje Deschamps, Fabiola Garcia Almonaci, Tiffany Hill, Sarah Lewis-Crow, John Paul, Michelle Revecho, Eric Rittenhouse, Katie Stohlmann, Antonio Vigil, and Judy Oates

***Attendees with asterisks arrived late or departed early.**

I. Introductions and Public Comment

No comments.

II. Approve Minutes of March 12, 2021

Reviewed the minutes and action items of March 12, 2021.

Motion to approve the March 11, 2021 minutes: Keith Dias /s/ Brandy Evans. (Ananda Sweet, Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Patricia Andrews for Ethan Brown, Erin Carlson, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes and no abstentions. The motion carried.

III. Announcements

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

The WIB's Spirit of Sonoma nominee for 2021 is George Steffensen. He was nominated for his work with the North Bay TIP program as an educator and his work as the Apprenticeship Coordinator with the Operating Engineers. He also served as an active member of the school board for Rohnert Park / Cotati, and has been a committed WIB member for over 11 years. The ceremony will be held on May 20 at Spring Lake with limited attendees due to COVID restrictions. Members of the WIB including the Director and the Chair congratulated George on his nomination.

IV. Workforce Development Survey Report

Max Brownlee, WIB fellow working with us through the Economic Development Board, presented the survey and findings. The survey was created as a collaborative effort by the EDB and WIB staff. Highlights included the following items.

- 74% of businesses changed to virtual or a hybrid of virtual and in person office work in 2020.
- 81% of business have not reduced their office workspace.
- The majority of companies did not reduce employment during 2020.
- 75% of businesses had no reduction in expenses in 2020, but a lack of revenue and additional expenses were a common theme for 2020.
- Over half of Sonoma County employers applied for and received some sort of pandemic relief loan or grant.
- Customer service had the most reduced positions in 2020.
- The jobs requiring analytical skills had the highest recruitment from outside the county.
- The top three specific skills lacking in the workforce for recruitment are motivation, knowledge, and analytical.
- The majority of companies do their training internally. Most companies are not requiring training assistance at this time.
- Majority of business said they had not used Job Link services to date but 20 of them said they would be interesting in having a representative reach out to them.

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

The top three findings from the report were the following.

- 1) 53% of businesses reported their employees have had to adopt a wider range of skills, and 47% reported employees having to adopt more responsibilities.
- 2) 42% of businesses experienced hiring difficulties last year.
- 3) 78% of participants are very concerned about housing and living costs for their employees.

Recommendations & Resources

- The WIB and EDB are working to create an equity framework that defines “quality job” and identified workforce strategies to implement.
- The WIB and EDB are leading coordinated and sustained initiatives that support industry partnerships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and construction.
- Job Link’s Team Workforce, a multi-agency business-serving group, takes a coordinated approach to raise the visibility of employers’ recruitment opportunities and to match job seekers with compatible employers.

Further information about this report can be found on the EDB website at

<http://sonomaedb.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147592705>.

Small Group Discussion

Members broke into groups to discuss solution-oriented search for new talent. Is now a good opportunity for harder-to-employ individuals to find jobs? How can the WIB help employers in their talent search? Discussion highlights are listed below.

Issues For Attracting Staff

- Difficult to retain staff due to cost of living and benefits.
- Childcare challenges have been hard on those returning to work. Especially on the women.
- Hiring for entry level and clerical positions has been difficult.
- There is a lot of turning down of employment offers.

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

- Talent is leaving the area due to high cost of living, childcare issues due to schools partially in session, issues with unemployment benefits, and a desire not be a front line worker face to face with people every day, and housing affordability.
- Restaurants are not at full capacity yet so are working with reduced staff.
- People have been hired, trained, but then do not show on the first day of real work.
- There have been issues with applicants being able to pass background checks for jobs in the education and senior health services.

Successful Strategies

- Companies are creating their own recruiting and training process to develop their own workforce.
- Leaning on former employees and current employees to recruit talent from their contacts.
- Doing more targeted recruitment. Targeted job fairs have been more successful than general job fairs.
- There has been more opportunities for some of the harder to place individuals with disabilities. There has been more receptivity to hire motivated individuals and allow for internships and on the job training. There is some concern about retention of these positions if the labor market changes. May need to look at longer term supports for these individuals to ensure they are secure in employment.

Suggestions for Ways the WIB Can Help

- The WIB intensive English training cohorts hosted at the Petaluma Adult School that included paid class time were very successful and would like to see more of those.
- Maybe there is a model the WIB could look at to help with childcare.
- Support advocacy to solve housing and childcare issues to help the workforce continue working.
- Provide more job fairs to share more potential and opportunities.
- Provide more On The Job (OJT) training strategies. Collaboration is more important than ever on housing and other support issues to maintain employment.

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

- Provide more soft skills training as it is a good time to get people hired that might not normally have the same opportunities.
- Make more people aware of the services provided by the WIB and how Job Link can teach people how to put their best foot forward when applying.
- Engage more employers to utilize Job Link and the funding WIB has around job training.
- Most laid off workers were in the low income bracket. Now their positions are available and hard to fill due to the higher UI benefits. The labor supply will come back all at the same time for these jobs. Is there a way to look at tiers for retraining and skill improvement opportunities based on age and need?

Lonje shared a reminder of what Job Link offers to employers.

- Rapid Response which is lay off aversion and assistance. This includes resources for displaced workers and businesses. They will come to their place of employment after notification of a lay-off to share information about available services.

- Job Link Business Services Team
 - Connects employers with people to hire.
 - Posts job leads to the Job Link Facebook page, Hot Job list, Cal Jobs, and to partners.
 - Plans and hosts Job fairs and informational sessions.
 - Matches businesses with appropriate county programs.
 - Customized Training, On The Job Transitional Training, and Incumbent Training are six month programs with supportive services of up to \$10K per individual.
 - On The Job Training has up to 50% wage reimbursement.
 - Customized Training is available for in demand training to train or upscale current workforce.
 - Transitional Work Program has up to 100% wage reimbursement.
 - Incumbent Training can help staff and employers through additional training

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

for current employees.

- Meets with ER to discuss needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Stephen Jackson asked if it would be possible to bring employers in on the training to give those in WIB trainings more insight into the jobs that can be available to them after the training. Lonje responded that could be added if businesses reach out to her.

IX. Local Plan Presentation and Discussion

Katie presented on the seven goals of the Local Plan.

- 1) Focus on the needs of Business.
- 2) Spearhead System Alignment, Integration and Coordination.
- 3) Expand Earn & Learn.
- 4) Focus on WIOA Priority Populations.
- 5) Increase and improve services to the Limited English Proficient.
- 6) Focus on Equity.
- 7) Continuous System Improvement.

Small Group Discussion

Which Local Plan goals should the WIB take an active role in?

What would WIB engagement in Local Plan goals look like?

Feedback is listed below.

- 1 and 4. When employers get more involved in cohorts with clients there are good outcomes.
- 4 and 6. Good time to focus our efforts with the opportunities now. And Equity and the Priority Populations are related to each other. This could include Job Link staff building more on what we are doing. This could include opportunities to give tasks to the WIB members from outcomes of discussions.
- 1, 5, and 6. Continue the ELL Work. Address equity challenges in some of the industries where it is hard to find employees. Present more information about these issues at WIB meetings and to assign tasks to members. Work more with training institutions.

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

- 5 and 7. Leverage our current and updated goals to show we are a high performing board. The schools are already working reading and math education services.
- 4 and 6. Let's focus our efforts and give people a chance to shine. Seem to go together and both have urgency and meaning. Quality rather than quantity, a few select individuals, really make a difference. Build upon what we're already doing, come up with the plan and give tasks to the WIB members.

X. Job Link Operations

- Cheryl Beeson introduced herself at the One Stop Operator of Job Link. She shared that Job Link is adding satellite locations in Sonoma County that can provide what we do in the Santa Rosa location including registering people in Cal Jobs, resume assistance, and interviewing techniques, soft skill training and more to enhance the customer service experience. These additional locations include the following.

- Petaluma at COTS
- West County Community Services
- La Luz Center
- Working on a location in Cloverdale

- Homeless Referral Project

This is a new program where Human Services Employment & Training work with community partners to help the homeless find employment. Department of Rehabilitation is a part of this group. Karissa White from Community Development Commission, Jennifer Hart from the YWCA, and Jaclyn Ramirez of Reach for Home introduced themselves and their roles helping the homeless with their organizations. Barriers that these clients face include, injuries, substance abuse, housing, and discrimination.

Our project goals include:

- Develop referral process from homeless service providers to the Business Services Team (BST).
- Utilize our OJT, TWEX and Supportive Services to get participants employed.

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.

- Implement in two phases: 1) focus on those with shelter and 2) open the program to those without shelter.
- Collaborate with partner agencies to bring expertise and resources to the table.
- Learn and adjust our service delivery model as needed.

Accomplishments so far include the following:

- Service providers presented training to Job Link staff.
- Developed a list of resources from various agencies to support pilot participants.
- Shared the challenges homeless face to prepare staff for these clients.
- Created and received surveys from the population we will serve.

Ways the WIB can support this effort include the following:

- Come to trainings to present on subjects and types of jobs available in your industry when invited.
- Funding for gift certificates and supportive services including right to work paperwork. Antonio will send out a request for donations with a goal of raising \$500 for this.

- **Dashboard**

Please be sure to review the information on the dashboard report included in your agenda packet. There is a new feature that shows the average wage by race and ethnicity.

XI. Other

- **Newsletter**

Please check your email for the quarterly WIB newsletter that will allow us to stay current with board members and the community.

- **Passing of the Baton**

Ananda's two year term as WIB chair comes to an end in July. Please welcome Stephen Jackson as the new chair at the July WIB meeting.

XII. Adjourn 5:02 pm

Next meeting: **July 14, 2021 via Zoom**

Auxiliary aids, services, and versions are available to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling (707) 565-8500.