

Town of Hempstead/City of Long Beach Local Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes

Zoom Video Conferencing

October 6, 2021

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by the Town of Hempstead/City of Long Beach Local Workforce Development (LWDB) Chairperson Sara Griffith at 9:33 A.M. She asked each of the attendees to introduce themselves.

II. Career Center Re-Opening Updates

Ms. Griffith indicated that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HempsteadWorks Career Center closed to the public in March 2020. She invited Kurt Rockensies, Deputy Commissioner, to provide updates on HempsteadWorks' reopening. He explained that customer visits to the center are mostly by appointment, but walk-ins are acceptable. To improve the safety conditions of staff and customers, we have procured additional office space and waiting area; plexiglass has been installed at every intake and career counselor's desk; air filters have been placed in every room; hand sanitizer is accessible; and all staff and visitors must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status. If customers do not want to physically come into the office, they can still drop off their documents and other paperwork and use DocuSign. Workshops and employer's presentation are still being held virtually.

Mr. Rockensies thanked staff for adjusting to changes and the dedication to continuing to assist customers at this time.

III. Review of Minutes

Ms. Griffith asked the members to review the minutes from the meeting of May 19, 2021. A motion to approve the minutes were moved by Theresa Regnante, seconded by Veronica Rose-Craig, and approved by the Board.

IV. On-the-Job Training Policy

Ms. Griffith explained that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that the Board have a policy for On-the-Job Training (OJT). The policy was revised, and she then invited Elizabeth Ajasin to explain some updates to the policies. Ms. Ajasin informed that in OJT the employer trains the employees in the specific knowledge and skills essential to fulfill an adequate performance of the job for which individuals have been trained. She also, explained that while employees are in training, the program can reimburse the employer

up to 50% of his/her wages. She continues to explain that the duration of the OJT mostly depends on the occupation the employee is training for, however, an OJT cannot exceed 6 months. Ms. Ajasin explained that in the revised policy has various restrictions. They are as follows: First, we restricted how we will recruit and market OJTs we also have developed a better strategy for approaching both the employer and the jobseekers. Secondly, the emphasis and prioritization of these training services which would be given to individuals within priority populations. Thirdly, the maximum award amount was increased for each OJT contract from \$4,000 to \$5,000 per employee. Finally, although under WIOA, employers could be reimbursed up to 50% of their wages, there is still a clause that was added this clause states that this rate will be determined based on the reimbursement requirements of the funding source (e.g., with Gun Violence Prevention Initiative funding, we may reimburse employers up to 90% of employer wages).

Theresa Regnante asked how much funding is available to support OJT initiatives and how much of the funding is normally spent in a program year. Ms. Ajasin responded that majority of the training services funding goes towards occupational skills training, and OJT funding has been underspent. Ms. Regnante suggested developing materials for employers that summarize the OJT programs and instructs them on how to participate. Veronica Rose-Craig asked if employers find the OJT application process difficult, and Ms. Ajasin responded that the paperwork may be a challenge, as the Department of Labor must first vet each employer.

Deirdre Duke asked if there is a way to streamline the OJT application process.

Diane Bachor added that it would be beneficial for employers to contact someone on the workforce level who can walk them through the process. Mr. Rockensies responded that the Business Services team at HempsteadWorks does this work, but due to the pandemic, there was a lull in interested employers. Jeffrey Johnson added that he can envision a successful OJT program at HempsteadWorks, given the large employer turnout at the recent job fair.

Ms. Griffith asked for a motion to approve the revisions to the OJT policy. A motion to approve was offered by Ms. Regnante, seconded by Ms. Duke, and approved by the Board.

V. Sector-Based Business Services

Ms. Griffith said that in April 2021, HempsteadWorks published a request for proposals (RFP) for Sector-Based Business Services and has contracted with Career and Employment Options, Inc. (CEO) to provide these services. She asked Ms. Ajasin to speak more on the project before handing it over to CEO's guest speaker, Ms. Rolande Toussaint.

Ms. Ajasin explained that in 2016, the United States Department of Labor made \$150 million

available through the Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant program whose goal was to help states develop innovative employment and training services that focused on enhancing regional and industry-specific collaborations. NYSDOL awarded us the grant on behalf of the Long Island Region. The purpose of the grant was to engage regional stakeholders in the development of career mapping templates and asset maps, and conduct research about the training and education needed to address occupational skills gaps and identify the specific needs of Long Island industries.

To implement the grant, the Long Island Sector Partnership was formed and was composed of Long Island stakeholders in the workforce system, such as businesses, educational institutions, organized labor, and community-based organizations. In addition, the Board procured the services of Humanities 2.0 to facilitate the project. Steve Bennett was the facilitator, and he focused on the industry sector of Healthcare and Social Assistance. At the conclusion of the grant period, he presented the Long Island Sector Partnership with a closing report of his findings. This new project was designed to build on the progress of the sector partnerships grant. The project will engage key stakeholders and align their needs with those of the available workforce, and it will expand beyond only the healthcare sector. In Spring 2021, we published an RFP for a project facilitator and have contracted with Career and Employment Options. Ms. Ajasin invited Rolande Toussaint, the project's coordinator at CEO, to provide more insight on the project's planned implementation. Ms. Toussaint provided an overview of the Business Linkages Program. The program was designed to foster connections and build a bridge between employers and their future employees, to identify industries in need, and to reinvigorate various industries by increasing work placements and employment opportunities. The industries of focus are healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and information technology. CEO is creating marketing materials with basic information about the project and is developing a virtual channel for businesses to connect and share their ideas. She will meet with industry associations and target business to increase employment opportunities, promote business engagement, and build partnerships.

Paul Cavanaugh added that part of the overall communication with businesses and industries is to make them aware of HempsteadWorks services, such as OJTs. Ms. Duke asked how success of the program would be measure. Mr. Cavanaugh responded that although it will be difficult to ascribe every hire as a direct correlation between fostering relationships with businesses, CEO will track the number of jobs obtained and retained, as well as improvements to the timeliness of businesses' recruitment and hiring process.

VI. Gun Violence Prevention Initiative Grants

Ms. Griffith indicated that in July 2021, former Governor Cuomo declared a new state of emergency around gun violence and committed \$139 million to reverse the trend of rising shootings and murders across the state. The Town of Hempstead Department of Occupational Resources (DOOR) was nominated to participate in the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI) and invited Ms. Ajasin to describe the project.

Ms. Ajasin explained that DOOR will participate in GVPI in two ways. First, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has provided funds to extend the traditionally 6-week summer youth employment program so that our youths can work until December 31, 2021. Eligible youth are 16-24, are Hempstead Village residents; have been involved with the criminal justice system, are at risk of been impact by gun violence, and/or have been impacted by gun violence. In addition to Career Zone, leadership and financial literacy training, youth will participate in additional workshops, including those conducted by the New York State Department of Labor's (NYSDOL) Future of Work team; for youth with criminal justice backgrounds, we will have them attend a Breaking Barriers workshop, which is conducted pro bono by an attorney, Elizabeth Justesen. She will educate them on how to enter or re-enter the workforce with criminal convictions, clean up their RAP sheets and apply for certificates that can assist them in finding employment.

Second, under the GVP Local Initiative project, NYSDOL will provide us funding to employ 205 youth in subsidized and unsubsidized employment. Eligible youth are 18-24; not in high school but may be in college (only part-time); are residents of Baldwin, Uniondale, Hempstead, West Hempstead, Floral Park, and Valley Stream; and have been involved with the criminal justice system, are at risk of been impact by gun violence, and/or has been impacted by gun violence. Funding for GVPI will be used for project coordination, occupational skills training, on-the-job training, and supportive services and will be implemented in two ways. First, the project will adopt a modular approach. In the first module, youth will meet with staff to establish eligibility, identify employment goals, and complete a needs assessment. In the second module, youth will develop technical and non-technical skills. According to the results of a business survey conducted by NYSDOL, the top three technical skills lacking among job applicants are basic computer literacy, and proficiency in Word and Excel. The top three non-technical skills they find lacking in job applicants are communication, self-motivation, and problem-solving/critical thinking skills. Under this module, depending on the needs of the participants, youth attend workshops that build on these skills. We have contractors that provide workshops to both these classes of skills. In the third module, also depending on the needs of the participant, fifty youth will be enrolled into occupational skills training for in-demand jobs that lead to industry-recognized credentials. In the fourth module, youth will participate in job search, resume building and interview preparation workshops. The fifth and final module will be actual placement in employment, internships, or OJTs. With funding under this grant, we will be able to

reimburse employers up to 90% of trainees' wages. Results of the business survey revealed that OJT is the number one type of training businesses offer to new and existing employees or wish they can offer but are unable to due to lack of funding. With successful completion of modules 2 and 4, youth will receive a \$25 gift card.

For the second part of the GVP Local Initiative Project, youth participants will be offered specific supportive services. Because these participants are a vulnerable population, we published an RFP that sought providers with an established record of providing supportive services to youth in the priority areas of criminal justice/legal advisement, access to essential needs (e.g., food and housing), mental health and substance abuse assistance, economic empowerment, and youth mentoring. We are in the process of contracting with the following vendors:

1. Women's Opportunity and Rehabilitation Center (WORC) – Criminal Justice/Legal Advisement: will help participants obtain Certificate of Relief and Good Conduct and provide information regarding their legal rights and their rights related to parole/probation
2. Family and Children's Association – Access to Essential Needs: will offer youth emergency housing, food, clothing, toiletries, "survival packs" and will provide education workshops on health, nutrition, and hygiene
3. EAC Network – Mental Health and Substance Abuse Assistance: will provide substance use and mental health counseling
4. EAC Network – Economic Empowerment: will conduct screening for youth and educate them about money, savings, banking and investing

Ms. Regnante asked if in their contracts, GVP vendors are required to meet with HempsteadWorks to go through the progression of participants' outcome.

Ms. Ajasin responded that we will be hosting a monthly or bimonthly meeting with the vendors to discuss project updates, challenges, and recommendations for helping youth. They will each also submit monthly reports.

VII. Gun Violence Prevention Local Initiative Grant Policy

Ms. Griffith said that under the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative grant, youth will participate in job readiness activities. Ms. Ajasin stated that first, unlike the approved policy for WIOA funded on-the-job-training, OJT funded under GVP enables employers to be reimbursed at 90% of the OJT participants' wage, rather than at 50% of their wages. Second, this policy establishes the use of incentives, which will be given to youth when they complete certain modules during their participation. In each youth's case file, there will be supporting documentation to justify distribution of the incentive.

Commissioner Mallette added that GVPI is a terrific opportunity, and we look forward to

implementing the project. Ms. Bachor agreed that the project is impressive and stated that school-based health clinics can be a medium to identify youth participants.

Afterwards, Ms. Griffith asked for a motion to approve the GVPI policy. A motion to approve the policy was offered by Ms. Duke, seconded by Ms. Bachor, and approved by the Board.

VIII. In-School and Out-of-School Youth Programs Report

Ms. Griffith invited Myesha Arvon, Youth Services Coordinator at HempsteadWorks, to report on the in-school and out-of-school youth programs. Ms. Arvon explained that in the In-School Youth Program, coordinators are responsible for recruiting youth who meet eligibility and find worksites for them. Individuals was paid \$16 an hour, they also participated in CareerZone, leadership training, and financial literacy. Additional screening and requirements are that they first get a physical and pass a drug test. Seventy-two (72) participants worked this year. With GVP funding, most of the youths will continue to work until the end of the year. Throughout the school year, participants engage in services under the WIOA 14 elements. Ms. Rose-Craig asked if employers required youth to take COVID tests. Ms. Arvon responded that COVID safety protocols are in place for each worksite, but there were no requirements for testing or vaccination. Commissioner Mallette commend Ms. Arvon on her challenging work and contributions to the youth programs.

Afterwards, Ms. Arvon reported on the out-of-school youth program. Eligible youth are 18-24 years old, not in school, and have a barrier to employment. The two HempsteadWorks out-of-school youth vendors are EAC Network and Nassau BOCES. The vendors first identify and address the youth's barriers before placing them directly into school or employment. In addition to vocational training, youth also have access to the 14 WIOA elements, which include internships, entrepreneurship skills training, financial literacy, and mentoring.

IX. Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Updates

Ms. Griffith said NYSDOL's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Round 8 grant was ending, she then invited Maria Lombardi, Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC), to share the projects updates. Ms. Lombardi explained that we are wrapping up the project and have the following updates are as follows:

- In PY' 2021, the Hempstead/Long Beach LWDB was chosen for the DEI federal review because of the success of the regional sector partnership grant and the DEI sustainability plan.
- Hempstead was elected to maintain and coordinate the quarterly project council meetings that commenced during the DEI grant.

- During the DEI project, we have facilitated reverse career fairs and a family engagement series with CEO, as well as coordinated Breaking Barriers workshops.
- Each of the three DEI DRCs worked to develop the “Your Team Your Dream” website, a valuable resource for individuals with disabilities. The DRCs has been highlighted at several conferences to promote the tool and its website: www.yourteamyourdream.com.
- To create a more inclusive career center, HempsteadWorks partnered with JenTex Consulting to provide LGBTQ+ staff training.
- When DEI concludes, Ms. Lombardi will support the WIOA youth program and the GVP project, and she will continue to offer benefits planning to adult and youth participants.

Ms. Arvon added that Ms. Lombardi has served as DRC for DEI projects for 11 years and commended her on her outstanding contributions in serving this special population.

X. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

XI. New Business

The following new business was discussed:

- Mr. Rockensies commended Mary Drangel for stepping into the role of business services representative in 2020. He introduced David Swinson, who has been hired to assume the role full-time.
- Ms. Drangel reported on the Job Fair that took place at the Freeport Recreation Center on Tuesday, September 21, 2021. Seven hundred jobseekers and sixty employers attended the event. In a survey, most jobseekers reported that the job fair met their expectations and are highly likely to attend future events. Survey results also indicated that 100% of all employers were satisfied with the job fair and would attend another. 90.9% said they expect to hire the jobseekers they have met. Ms. Drangel added that so far, five (5) individuals was hired.

Ms. Murciano added that the job fair was phenomenal, and New York Community Bank (NYCB) hired three jobseekers.

- Commissioner Mallette thanked Ms. Murciano for NYCB’s \$2,500 donation to support the summer youth employment program. Commissioner Mallette said that her recognition would be highlighted in the next upcoming NYATEP’s newsletter in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month for demonstrating commitment and continuous support to the workforce system. Ms. Murciano thanked him for the acknowledgement and stated that it is pleasure serving on the Board. Ms. Griffith congratulated her as well.

XII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was offered by Ms. Murciano, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and approved by the board. The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 A.M.