



MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 27th, 2024
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Members Present (logged in):

Nicole Obi, Megan Driscoll, Pam Eddinger, Tonja Mettlach, Liz Skidmore, Jim Cassetta, Jim Chilton, Joanne Marqusee, Juan Vega, Juliette Mayers, Lauren Jones, Maria Ferreira Bedard, Rad Nova, Rainer Garlick, Randall Lyons, Bob LePage, Joanne Pokaski, Maddrey Goode, Toni Wolf.

Members Absent:

John Mann, Jennifer Almeida, Jessyca Feliciano, Warren Pepicelli, Pamela Everhart, Sherry Dong, Anne Broholm, Senator Pat Jehlen, Sherri Pitcher.

Guests and Staff

Tovah Miller Sweezey, Molly Jacobson, Sacha Stadhard.

Welcome & Introductions

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. Joanne announced the new board members Nicole Obi, Megan Driscoll, and Tonja Mettlach, followed by introductions from the remaining board members and speakers present. Darien Johnson gave a recap to the board on recent speaking engagements where he discussed the MassHire State Workforce Board, and spoke about the subcommittees for the State Workforce Board that he is in the process of creating. More information to come.

Meeting Minutes

Joanne Pokaski asked for any changes to the meeting minutes from the November 30, 2023 meeting; none were raised. Ms. Pokaski called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. A roll call vote took place and all Board members voted to approve.

The Role of AI in the Workforce Presentation, Jim Chilton

Joe Chilton, Executive Vice President at Cengage, provided an overview of AI and the impact it will have on our workforce system.

Jim discussed the four types of AI; **reactive machines**, which responds to specific inputs in real time, **limited machines**, which can use past experiences to make decisions, **theory of mind**,

which can understand and predict human behavior by attributing mental states such as emotions, intentions, beliefs, and desires, **and self-aware AI**, where machines have a conscious and sense of their own emotions, similar to humans.

Jim explained the AI usages across the industries. He first discussed how the health care industry is using AI to predict and analyze disease outbreaks and patient admissions. He also discussed that health care leaders are beginning to use chat-bots and virtual health assistants to improve patient engagement.

He also discussed how industries such as agriculture are using AI to aid in precision farming, crop health monitoring, as well as clean energy and maintaining and operating the wind turbines.

Jim highlights that Massachusetts has a tremendous opportunity to strengthen and scale up effective strategies, programming, and resources to develop untapped talent to aid the state workforce. He believes that AI can expand the reach of the workforce development programs which would ensure a broader audience.

Secretary Lauren Jones applauded Jim's presentation and believes that it aligns with the strategies we call out in our Workforce Agenda. She mentioned that the Governor has created an AI taskforce which Josh Cutler, Undersecretary for the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, will be leading for our office (EOLWD).

W.I.O.A State Plan Overview, Secretary Lauren Jones:

The Secretary thanked the State Workforce Board for their commitment and contributions to the State Workforce Plan. The Secretary gave an overview of the State Workforce agenda and where we are currently in the process. She notes that we are submitting the plan once the board votes.

The Secretary gave a quick overview of the key components of the State Workforce Agenda and applauded the vision and mission statement that the State Workforce Board created.

Next, Secretary Jones transitioned to Darien who moderated the discussion on the State Workforce Plan. The questions that were asked of board members are:

Question #1: What are you most excited about as reflected in the State Plan?

Question #2: What are the most important sections of the State Plan that you are looking forward to seeing implemented?

Responses:

James Cassetta was happy to see equity and inclusivity at the forefront of the Workforce Agenda, especially as it pertains to individuals with disabilities.

Rainer Garlick enjoyed reading the strategies focused on improving the workforce system infrastructure issues.

Tonja Mettlach appreciated how clear and concise the State Workforce Agenda was, even though the agenda was dense. She really liked how comprehensive the untapped potential section of the agenda was, as the Massachusetts Business Roundtable is leading initiatives on this front.

Randall Lyons was very excited about the Mass Reconnect program and how it will influence the boating community. From a housing and transportation perspective, he is happy that the Workforce Agenda included that issue, as it is a topic his members consistently flag to him.

Nicole Obi was very supportive of the plan and really liked the register apprenticeship model that is highlighted in the agenda.

Juliette Mayers congratulated everyone who contributed to the plan and appreciated the collaboration of different agencies and organizations within each strategy.

Pam Eddinger really appreciated how thorough the State Agenda was. She believes this will serve as a guide for community colleges when it comes to creating workforce development programming.

Elizabeth Skidmore believes this State Workforce Agenda has the strongest equity component.

Megan Driscoll really appreciated the equity and inclusion language of the State Workforce Agenda. Wants to focus on how we can we make pay/wage equity a focal point as well.

Roll Call to Vote for the Plan:

Mrs. Pokaski called for a motion to vote on the State Workforce Board. A roll call vote took place led by Darien and **all Board members voted in favor of the State Workforce Plan (!!!)**

Workforce Development Update, Secretary Jones:

The Secretary started with personnel updates. She announced that **Josh Cutler** joined the team as the Undersecretary for Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning, and Policy. She also announced that Ken Brown has joined EOLWD as Assistant Secretary for Employer Engagement and Employment Outcomes, and Sarah Joseph as Director of Community Engagement. Both Ken and Sarah will be spearheading the hiring, job placement, and regional and local stakeholder partnerships when it comes to Migrants.

The Secretary announced Tovah Miller Sweezey, Assistant Secretary for Program and Performance Management, and Rob Cohen, Policy Director, as members of our team.

She also mentioned that both Kate Kelly and Paul Franzese have been promoted to Chief of Staff and Undersecretary, COO, respectively.

EA Shelter Crisis:

The Secretary discussed how we have seen an uptick in new arrivals, primarily individuals that speak Haitian creole, in shelters. The Secretary mentioned the cross-Secretary collaboration between Health and Human Services (HHS), Executive Office of Education (EOE), and EOLWD to improve migrants/ immigrants front door experience.

The Secretary emphasized work readiness and wants to make sure anyone who is of working age has access to work opportunities, which includes immediate job placement, career coaching, resume building, and connections to their local MassHire.

Secretary Jones gave an example of 88 Acres in Dorchester, which relocated to Canton, Massachusetts. She stated that 88 Acres was looking to hire, and the Secretary and Sarah Joseph connected them to a local shelter in Dedham. It was because of this connection and the work readiness programs provided that 88 Acres was able to hire 13 individuals from that shelter. The Secretary mentioned that she is currently working on building more capacity for ESOL training and insists that board members reach out if they want to assist in this effort. The Secretary asked Joanne Marqusee to elaborate on the work HHS is doing.

Joanne Marqusee mentioned that HHS has training programs for migrants/ immigrants which are centered around learning English for the workplace. They currently have 100 migrants enrolled, and the goal is to place individuals in internships that would eventually lead to permanent job placement.

Reactions:

Pam Eddinger: Bunker Hill has been running a welcome back center for foreign trained nurses so they can be re-credentialed. She mentioned that Bunker Hill has trained over 500 foreign trained nurses and has placed them in the State's workforce. Pam mentioned that we could expand the capacity of this so it not only for nurses, but also for other industries. She asked for a point of contact from the Secretary.

Secretary Jones would like to have a joint conversation with Pam alongside HHS on how we can scale the work being done at BHCC.

Open Meeting, Wrap Up & Adjourn:

Before **Joanne Pokaski** ended the meeting, she asked if any board members had any last-minute comments based on each presentation:

Juliette Mayers suggested that the Secretary reach out to AIM to get buy in on creating job pipelines for migrant workers.

Commissioner Toni Wolf is doing a project around the cliff effect alongside the Social Security Administration. She asked the Secretary who she could connect with from her team.

Secretary Jones connected the Commissioner with Tovah from our team.

Liz Skidmore noted that with all the infrastructure money that is coming to Massachusetts, there are diversity/ hiring goals that need to be met. An opportunity that needs to be addressed is the Career Technical Initiative. This is a program that has around \$15- 16 million a year in the budget for our vocational high schools to use in after-hours programs to train individuals ages 18 and above in trades with an end goal of entering the union workforce. She believes that we need to be more intentional when recruiting applicants and ensure women, black and brown individuals have equal access to these programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.