

**MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting**

Thursday, June 9, 2022

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting (via WebEx)

**Meeting Minutes**

***(Draft)***

***Members Present (logged in):***

*Rosalin Acosta, Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano, Rainer Gawlick, Axel Grippo, Robert LePage, Eric Lesser, Randall Lyons, Juliette Mayers, Jennifer Morales, Radhames Nova, Warren Pepicelli, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Marylou Sudders (proxy: Elizabeth Denniston), Maicharia Weir Lytle*

***Members Absent:***

*Joanne Berwald, Anne Broholm, Jesse Brown, James Cassetta, Sherry Dong, Dr. Pam Eddinger, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, John Mann, Jerald Parisella, Sherri Pitcher, Juan Vega, Toni Wolf, Ray Wrobel*

***Guests and Staff***

*Christine Abrams, John Afonso, Lorraine Albert, Andrea Bresnahan, Michele Campbell, Inez Canada, Connie Carter, Marisa de la Paz, Patricia Garcia, Lauren Godding, Cathy Gutierrez, Jennifer Hansen, Lisa Hemmerle, Jason Hunter, Kristen McKenna, Bruce Mendelson, Tonja Mettlach, Joan Phillips, Dr. Mahesh Ramachandran, Cheryl Scott, Nathan Skrocki, Sacha Stadhard, Alice Sweeney, Molly Trowbridge, Jeffrey Turgeon, Krizia Valentino, Andrea Zelano*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order and called for a moment of silence for the victims of the tragedies in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas.

Ms. Pokaski reviewed the meeting agenda and made announcements. The Board’s next meeting will be in-person as part of the two-day WIOA Partner Convening on September 14th and September 15th at the DCU Center in Worcester. The Board meeting will be held during the second day of the Convening on Thursday, September 15th. The MassHire State Workforce Board has officially expanded. There is a new seat representing Vocational Rehabilitation. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Commissioner, Toni Wolf, has been appointed to this seat. Unfortunately, Commissioner Wolf was not able to attend the meeting, but plans to attend at the next meeting in September. There is also a new business and industry seat to maintain the business majority. This seat has not yet been filled.

Cheryl Scott announced that the Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions is still working on re-appointments for those members whose terms have expired, and encourages Board members to complete required paperwork if they would like to be reappointed. And, there will be a call for nominations for the MassHire Champion Award as part of the annual MassHire Awards; Board members are encouraged to submit a nomination. Members are also encouraged to attend the MassHire Awards which along with the Board meeting, will take place on Thursday, September 15th as part of the WIOA Partner Convening.

Ms. Scott also updated the Board on the MassHire DEI Project which is in the midst of the DEI Climate Assessment phase of project. The Climate Assessment consists of focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and a systemwide online survey.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Acosta announced the launch of *FutureSkills*, an initiative to connect employers to training funds and a pipeline of newly trained workers with in-demand skills. The FutureSkills package contains many resources from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and state funding to support immediate hiring, talent pipeline programs, and training the incumbent workforce. FutureSkills programs include: HireNow, Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF), Replenishing Employer Investment in Education & Workforce Training (RENEW), SCALE planning grants, Career Technical Initiative (CTI), and Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP). Board members are encouraged to get organizations involved in applying for funding; technical support and assistance is available. To help market FutureSkills, Road Shows were launched to pitch employers on new and existing workforce supports, including the new Market Maker role in each of the seven regions. FutureSkills road shows were attended by over 450 employers; more are planned to take place virtually.

Secretary Acosta provided a status update on the Workforce Skills Cabinet FY23 budget. All line items are expected to be funded at, or above, the Governor’s budget.

Secretary Acosta reviewed proposed changes to the apprenticeship statute. These changes include eliminating the journeyman-apprentice ratio to provide flexibility in hiring apprentices, expanding the apprenticeship tax credit to allow for inclusion of other high-demand industries, and adopt a flexible apprenticeship model to provide different approaches to completing apprenticeship training.

Randall Lyons shared that he promoted HireNow to his members which are primarily small businesses. Secretary Acosta commented that the program has been very popular, noting that the administration is trying to ensure small businesses access these resources, not just large companies.

Liz Skidmore commented that the CTI programs are great and showing positive outcomes, including allowing the carpenters union to work more closely with MassHire. She made two suggestions: (1) add a requirement or incentivize partnership with unions, if applicable; (2) focus on racial, ethnic and gender diversity within the apprenticeship pool by adding a diversity requirement in the CTI application. Ms. Skidmore also expressed concern about how changing the apprenticeship ratios would impact safety, particularly for the non-union apprenticeships.

Joanne Pokaski noted that the WCTF grants are great, but since costs are rising, the grant limits are not going as far. Do they need to raise the grant amounts, or think differently about the programs if there is trouble generating applications and spending the money? When considering overhead costs, $500,000 does not go that far since it can’t fund staff to support the grant and cover training costs. Secretary Acosta responded that they are trying to ensure the funds can be spread across as many projects as possible.

**Meeting Minutes**

Joanne Pokaski asked for any changes to the meeting minutes from the March 10, 2022 meeting; none were raised. Ms. Pokaski called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Radhames Nova made the motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Warren Pepicelli, and minutes were approved unanimously through voice and chat vote.

**Board Committees Update**

Chairs of the Board Committees provided an update on the committee’s work and progress.

* **Youth Pathways Committee** (Jessyca Feliciano, Chair): this committee plans to resume meeting again after a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* **Adult Pathways Committee** (Rainer Gawlick, Chair): this committee plans to resume meeting again in the fall.
* **Modernization Committee** (Rainer Gawlick, Chair): this committee plans to develop an advocacy plan to the new administration for a new re-employment system.
* **MassHire Performance Committee** (Cheryl Scott, committee staff): this committee will continue to play a key role in the WIOA State Plan development and MassHire Awards.

Joanne Pokaski encouraged Board members to join a committee and mentioned that Cheryl Scott will be following up with Board members on their committee interest.

**Labor Market Presentation & Discussion**

Dr. Mahesh Ramachandran presented on the state of the COVID-19 recovery in the healthcare and social assistance sector (see attached powerpoint presentation.) Key takeaways are that job creation and the labor force has been increasing at a decreasing pace over the last 4 months; unemployment among Hispanics and Blacks is higher than their whites; and an examination of the healthcare and social assistance sector show that while there is demand for nurses, Massachusetts has competitive advantage in that there is a higher concentration of nurses in the Commonwealth, compared to other states. Demand for nurses, however, is expected to increase along with demographic shifts, thus Massachusetts must focus on nurturing, retaining and attracting people into healthcare occupations. That said, Massachusetts has many assets working in its favor to address these workforce challenges. The workforce is resilient with a labor force participation rate above the national average, fewer women left the workforce during the pandemic than other states, migration on the rise, and job creation outpacing the national rate. These conditions create opportunity for a strong workforce and economy.

**Future of Work Report**

Senator Lesser provided an overview of the legislation’s Future of Work report. Key insights of the report include analysis that Massachusetts is not fully appreciating the accelerating and rapidly changing workforce. Every type of worker across all sectors is integrating technology into their work. To address this, worker training needs to be iterative and ongoing to build worker skills. A combination of rapidly changing technology and new models are bifurcating workforce into those who can work remotely or in a hybrid model, and those who cannot. These two separating workforces are highly correlated along racial and gender lines where technologies are not being integrated and adopted in the same way. Thus, there needs to be an intentional strategy around DEI to ensure equitable access to good jobs and economic mobility. Increasing worker-adjacent issues is key, including childcare, transportation and housing. Mental health and digital equity are also increasing in importance. Massachusetts has a lot of resources and know-how to address these workforce challenges as we face the future of work. Senator Lesser encouraged the Board to read the full report for specific recommendations to address the findings.

Joanne Pokaski adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.