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**MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting**

Monday, March 9, 2020

9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Fidelity Investments

245 Summer Street

Boston, MA 02210

**Meeting Minutes**

***Members Present:***

*Rosalin Acosta, Donna Cupelo, Sherry Dong, Pam Eddinger (remote), Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano (remote), Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Maria Ferreira-Bedard (remote), Rainer Gawlick, Axel Grippo, Robert LePage, Eric Lesser, Juliette Mayers, Catherine Mick , Jennifer Morales (remote), Radhames Nova, Sherri Pitcher (remote), Joanne, Pokaski, , Juan Vega, Janice Weekes, Maicharia Weir Lytle (remote)*

***Members Absent:***

*Zamawa Arenas, Joanne Berwald, Anne Broholm, Jesse Brown, James Cassetta, John Mann, Warren Pepicelli, Dan Rivera, Elizabeth Skidmore, Beth Williams, Ray Wrobel*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order. Board members and guests introduced themselves. Pam Everhart welcomed the Board and guests to Fidelity Investments and shared Fidelity’s efforts to provide the unbanked with financial services, including banking and retirement accounts.

New Board members, Radhames Nova and Catherine Mick (on behalf of Secretary of Health and Human Services, Marylou Sudders), introduced themselves. Ms. Mick mentioned that COVID-19 updates are on the [Department of Public Health](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information) (DHP) website. Pam Everhart asked if there was a certain threshold that DPH was looking for the state to reach in order to escalate pandemic mitigation efforts. Ms. Mick responded that at the moment it is believed the risk is low, but if that changes, the agency will respond accordingly. Representative Ferrante noted the need for public health information from the DPH on coronavirus. She also suggested that employees should be able to collect UI if they have to stay home because they are sick with or taking care of someone who has coronavirus, noting that WorkShare might be a useful tool to help both the employee and company. She also noted the need to issue guidance for Career Centers on maintaining hygiene to protect staff and customers from the virus.

Cheryl Scott announced that the 2020 MassHire Awards will be held June 16, and the Board will be notified of the time and location when it is announced. Ms. Scott also mentioned that the Board committee updates can be found in the meeting packets.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Acosta briefed the Board on the workforce development related initiatives in the Governor’s fiscal year 2021 budget, including the Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC) priorities. Secretary Acosta shared the Governor’s proposed Career Technical Initiative (CTI) to create 20,000 new skilled workers in building trades and technical skills over the next four years. The $14.9M investment proposes the development of approximately 15 CTI sites throughout the Commonwealth where vocational schools will provide training to non-voc tech students after school (2 – 5pm), and training to adults in the evening (5 – 9pm).

The FY21 budget has continued funding for YouthWorks ($16.4M), Demonstration Re-entry programming ($1.25), Registered Apprenticeship ($500k), the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund ($7M), Learn to Earn ($950k), as well as funding to support EOLWD Core Operations such as the MassHire Career Centers and the workforce system technological infrastructure.

Secretary Acosta also provided an update on Paid Family Medical Leave. The benefits side including vendors will be in place January 1st.

Joanne Pokaski asked if the Registered Apprenticeship funding will also be used to fund related training and instruction for apprenticeships. Secretary Acosta responded that it can be used for this purpose. Donna Cupelo asked about biggest challenge in apprenticeships. Secretary Acosta responded that the biggest need is for employers; there needs to be enough demand from businesses to build a cohort of apprentices. Rainer Gawlick added that one of the biggest challenges is that apprenticeship is different than employers’ normal hiring processes. Ms. Cupelo stressed that while employers have many processes, employers need to be open to this new way of bringing in talent. Mr. Gawlick mentioned that of the employers Apprenti has partnered with for tech apprenticeships, all of them have come back and joined additional cohorts, incorporating apprentices in their talent pipeline planning. Apprenti is recruit banking companies to fulfill demand for cybersecurity.

Senator Lesser asked how the Boston Fed’s Working Cities is integrated with the Learn to Earn initiative. Jennifer James responded that as they fund pilots, they are coordinating with working cities collaborations.

**2020 WIOA State Plan Briefing and Discussion**

Jennifer James presented an update on the 2020 WIOA State Plan, reviewing the purpose, structure, partners, and key priorities of the Plan. She noted that the Board was asked to review the [draft plan](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/download-the-wioa-combined-state-plan-draft) prior to meeting to prepare for the vote what was to have taken place in the meeting.

Janice Weekes observed that writing the State Plan every four years is a lot, and asked if there is any thought to extending the time between submitting plans. Ms. James responded that Massachusetts and other states have made the same observation with the federal Department of Labor, as well as asked to streamline and shorten the requirements of the plan.

Representative Ferrante asked if the “Modernizing the System” goal is connected with the IT Bond Bill. Ms. James responded that yes it is part of the integrated system to manage the customer experience. Secretary Acosta mentioned that the focus is on enhancing the system’s re-employment capacity. In a recession it would be difficult to handle the increased volume of demand on the system. Ms. Cupelo added that many will remember that in the last recession the biggest issue businesses had was the ability to seamlessly interact with the workforce system. Nova Radhames asked if there is a budget tied to this work. Ms. James responded that part of the work will be to secure resources to fund these goals.

Representative Ferrante asked where mentorship fits within the plan; mentorship is valuable for people with barriers to employment. Ms. James responded that mentoring is part of the coaching that participants receive at MassHire and with partner agencies, as well as the training and wrap-around services. This was a point brought up by one of the partners, EmPath, whose [Bridge to Self-Sufficiency](https://www.empathways.org/approach/bridge-to-self-sufficiency) indicator model assesses whether people feel they are being supported. Senator Lesser mentioned that the plan looks concrete and it his helpful for advocacy on these strategies. Ms. Cupelo expressed excitement about the plan, mentioning that it gives the whole picture of the system.

Regarding the “Performance Metrics” proposed in the plan, Senator Lesser asked for clarification on the target versus performance. Ms. James explained that the WIOA/Federal performance measures were targets that had been negotiated with federal DOL; the state-driven metrics will need to be further defined and measured. Mr. Grippo asked how easy it was to get the data for metrics, and if the metrics were well-defined. Ms. James responded that the federal metrics were well-defined, but part of the state plan implementation work will be to further define the state-driven metrics. Mr. Grippo asked if there is baseline data available; Ms. James responded that there is baseline data for some of the federal metrics.

Joanne Pokaski expressed disappointment that the plan did not include information about foreign born residents which was part of feedback from the Workforce Intelligence Committee on earlier drafts of the Economic and Workforce Analysis section; she offered resources to consult to add this information. Janice Weekes supported the goal to modernize the system; the system needs technology and resources especially if we are looking for outcomes. Liz Skidmore asked if there will be increased career and technical education (CTE) funding and pre-apprenticeship. Ms. James responded that for the Career Technical Initiative, if there a voc-tech is running a pre-apprenticeship program, then apprenticeship will be incorporated.

Mr. Radhames noted that there has been a big drop in unemployment, and asked if this is a result of the system’s efforts. Secretary Acosta responded that this is hard to say. The Governor’s Black and Latino Advisory Commission really focused on the needs of those communities, including the need for employment; their recommendations have been incorporated into the workforce systems policy priorities. Yvonne Stevens-Carter mentioned that the State Plan focuses on building capacity to serve underserved populations. The Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) Adult Education program conducts a needs assessment and then looks at the results to understand the needs of communities. Bob LePage added that the WIOA State Plan is aligned with the other partners. The 2016 WIOA State Plan led to many discussions about alignment, including with capital investments. The WIOA partnership, even though it is federally-driven, has impacted state dollars.

Mr. Grippo asked how the plan could work in different economic environments, like a recession. Ms. James responded that an economic recession could delay implementation and make some part of the plan more challenging, but the plan helps the system to be more focused and streamlined which would be even more important in an economic recession. Juan Vega added that the partnership and integration is key; the Governor recently filed an economic development bill with key workforce development pillars that align with the WIOA State Plan.

Ms. Cupelo noted that there was not a quorum present in the room, as required of Open Meeting Law, so a formal vote of the plan could not take place that day. Ms. Scott noted that the plan is due to the federal agencies by March 27, so while the Board cannot to take a formal vote to ratify the plan prior to submission, a straw poll of the membership to have a better understanding of Board support of the plan would be helpful. Cheryl Scott conducted a roll call preliminary vote. All members, except three, indicated support for the plan. Joanne Pokaski voted present on the principle that the plan did not include information about immigrants, Liz Skidmore voted present based on concerns about the presence of apprenticeship in the plan; Representative Ferrante abstained.

Ms. James noted these comments will be taken into consideration when submitting the plan to the federal agencies. Ms. Cupelo noted that the Board will take a formal vote to ratify the plan at the June 4 Board meeting.

**Reinventing Work Initiative Briefing**

Sara Chaganti of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and Cheryl Scott presented the Reinventing Work Initiative (RWI), partnership of the Boston Fed, Commonwealth Corporation, and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to focus on job quality for entry-level workers along the lower wage band. Ms. Chaganti presented data on the importance of focusing on job quality, including the costs and benefits to society. Ms. Scott presented on the RWI’s efforts thus far which involved engaging directly with businesses on their viewpoints, challenges and successes with job quality. The Board’s Adult Pathways Committee will engage in this work on behalf of the Board, with an objective of identify policy proposals that can be incorporated into the Board’s work.

Ms. Cupelo adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.