

MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting

Thursday, September 15, 2022

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

DCU Center

3rd Floor, South Ballroom

50 Foster Street

Worcester, MA 01608

**Meeting Minutes**

***(Draft)***

***Members Present:***

*Rosalin Acosta, Anne Broholm, James Cassetta, Pam Eddinger, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Robert LePage, Eric Lesser, Randall Lyons, Juliette Mayers, Sherri Pitcher, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Toni Wolf*

***Members Absent:***

*Jesse Brown, Sherry Dong, Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano, Rainer Gawlick, Axel Grippo, John Mann, Radhames Nova, Jerald Parisella, Warren Pepicelli, Marylou Sudders, Juan Vega, Ray Wrobel*

***Guests and Staff***

*Susan Almono, Bob Bower, Bob Cerasoli, Harneen Chernow, Michael Cole, Barbora Hazukova, Anita Hrenko, Ron Iacobucci, John Lavoie, Tony Mazzucco, Tonja Mettlach, Louise Meyer, Erin Quinn, Charlie Pearce, Jonathan Pirro, Mary Sarris, Cheryl Scott, Marty Shanahan, Nathan Skrocki, Neil Sullivan, Molly Trowbridge, Nathan Skrocki, Raija Vaisanen, Janice Ryan Weekes, Andrea Zelano*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order and reviewed the meeting agenda. She recognized the work of the MassHire Performance Committee for their work in selecting the winners of this year’s MassHire Awards, and encouraged the Board to stay after the meeting for the awards ceremony. Board members and presenters then introduced themselves. Ms. Pokaski reminded the Board that the next meeting on December 8th will be held virtually.

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 encouraged Board members to complete required paperwork if they would like to be reappointed. Ms. Scott also updated the Board on the MassHire DEI Project. The first phase of the project, a DEI Climate Assessment, is complete, and there will be a briefing webinar sharing the results on September 30, 1 – 3pm; an email with more information will be sent to Board members.

Ms. Pokaski announced that a quorum of the board was not present, therefore a vote to approve meeting minutes could not take place.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Acosta shared highlights from the first day of the in-person [MassForward](http://www.massforward2022.com/) Convening, noting the rich information shared and robust discussions taking place at the conference. As an outgoing Secretary, she charged the Board with the task of continuing to address the Commonwealth’s workforce challenges through effective solutions, and with serving as an advocate for MassHire and the Massachusetts workforce system.

Labor market data suggest that employers are facing hiring difficulty in the job market with tighter labor supply and higher labor demand. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, fewer people are looking for work while job postings have increased by over 181,000 postings since 2019. There are 135,000 unemployed people, which reflects those who looked for work in the last four weeks, but does not reflect those who have dropped out of the labor force (i.e. not looking for work.) Secretary Acosta noted that the Hispanic and Black unemployment rate is twice that of white counterparts, and the number of discouraged workers is higher than pre-pandemic levels. Data points to workers wanting to work, but not having the skills for the jobs they want. Thus, the Baker Administration is investing heavily in job training opportunities (see infomation on [*Future Skills*](https://www.mass.gov/futureskills) *initiative below*.) The Massachusetts labor force participation rate has remained higher than the national rate, and in July, the Massachusetts unemployment rate was the same as the national rate, suggesting that the Commonwealth is faring as well as, if not better, than the nation as a whole.

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s (EOLWD) Employment Modernization and Transformation Project (EMT) is underway. A vendor to develop and implement an unemployment insurance management system has been selected and is now fully staffed, while the state team is staffing up and getting trained on the vendor’s tools and software. Implementation planning is underway. The plan is for the employer (UI contributions) side will go-live first, followed by the UI claimant side. There is an emphasis on accessibility for language and disability in this new UI system.

The Department of Economic Research (DER), formerly the Economic Research unit within the Department of Unemployment Assistance, will be launching [Equity Dashboards](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/department-of-economic-research-equity-dashboards). The pandemic highlighted the need for timely information on citizens and communities that were most affected by the pandemic, so in response Equity Dashboards were created to share an array of data and visualizations on employment, income, socioeconomic characteristics, and more. Currently, there are Equity Dashboards for Hispanics and/or Latinos, Black/African Americans, Asian American and women. These dashboards can be found at: [www.mass.gov/EquityDashboards](http://www.mass.gov/EquityDashboards). Future dashboards include those for disabilities and Native American/indigenous populations.

Secretary Acosta reminded the Board of the [*FutureSkills*](https://www.mass.gov/futureskills) 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.

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

Jim Cassetta noted that Human Services make up a big part of the 181,000 job postings. His organization, WORK, Inc, has seen a 40% increase in job openings.

Joanne Pokaski asked how the ARPA money is being used, and what types of occupations are people being trained for. Secretary Acosta responded that the funds can and are being used in a variety of ways, such as learn and earn models like Apprenticeships. Pam Eddinger added that she is seeing a national conversation about how Apprenticeship can be used for blue and green industries. The U.S. Department of Labor’s [Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/advisory-committee-apprenticeship) is working on establishing templates that adhere to national standards for key apprenticeable “non-traditional” occupations. The goal is to make it easier for businesses and intermediaries to start apprenticeships than starting from scratch. The draft templates are going to the Walsh Administration, then the Committee will think more strategically about emerging industries. The [Committee meetings](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/advisory-committee-apprenticeship/meetings) are open to the public and all are welcome to attend. Secretary Acosta recommended that Board members consider sponsoring apprentices.

Liz Skidmore announced that the city of Boston is allocating $1M to support non-standard care. Additionally, in the federal infrastructure bill has workforce-related goals. She suggests that Massachusetts keeps working on finding ways to use these resources to address workforce challenges. Secretary Acosta mentioned that EOLWD is in conversation with MassDOT about the infrastructure funding.

John LaVoie mentioned that for companies, the cost of training is prohibitive. At the Greater Lawrence Technical School, they have a training framework, but it often means that learners/workers will continue training to be fully trained to the employer’s needs. Training is not one and done, ongoing growth is needed. But some companies are scared of the costs to the company. Secretary Acosta added that training programs can be adjusted to reduce costs. Not all programs need to be long.

**FutureSkills Funding in Action**

Susan Almono and John Lavoie presented on the Greater Lawrence Technical School’s (GLTS) Career Technical Initiative-funded programs. The school received four rounds of CTI funding, as well as a planning grant, enrolling over 150 adult learners in evening training programs for multiple career pathways, such as plumbing, welding, automotive, HVAC, carpentry, electrical, biotech and groundskeeping. They anticipate enrolling about 220 learners in future classes. The program design involved utilizing multiple outreach strategies tailored to the community, followed by assessment and enrollment, technical training (hands-on and online), job coaching and connecting with employers for curriculum design, industry insight for learners, and hiring graduates. The programs are aligned with industry standards so that graduates can count work toward industry licensure and obtain industry licenses. Of the 158 graduates, all of them have received OSHA certification and credentials in their trade, approximately half have been employed in their field for 30 days or more, and 13 are in registered apprenticeship programs.

Barbora Hazukova, Program Manager of 1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds’ Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) grant presented on her organization’s Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. The program was developed to address the big shortage of CNA’s in Massachusetts, a long-existing and growing problem. The WCTG grant funds provide tuition assistance for people to be trained as CNA’s, and in addition the trainees and graduates access membership to and support of 1199 SEIU. The program had to be reconfigured during the pandemic, requiring a shift from an in-person to a virtual model, which was a challenge for many students. Also, the Red Cross, the certifying body for CNAs paused licensure, and their training provider had to delay training components as well. Some trainees had to wait for up to 9 months to get licensed. As a result, the program took longer than anticipated, and the outcomes took longer to accomplish. That said, a key aspect of their work was strong partnerships with MassHire and other workforce partners.

Through the program, 40 CNAs were enrolled, 35 completed training and 30 received their CNA licenses. Of the 30, 23 currently work as CNAs. The target pay for graduates was $13.50/hour but the actual average for graduates is $18/hour, exceeding expectations. They are currently expecting to apply for another round of WCTF funding.

Senator Lesser asked if the pause in licensure was at the national or state-level. Ms. Hzukova responded that the pause was at the state-level as it was a decision of the Massachusetts Red Cross. The pause was because licensure had to be done in person, but in-person operations were paused early on in the pandemic.

When asked about whether recruitment was a challenge, Susan Almono responded that recruitment was difficult during the pandemic. Now, recruitment is less of a challenge because MassHire has been such a strong partner with GLTS in finding people to refer to the program. They did have another program that struggled with recruitment, so they expanded their recruitment strategy by thinking outside the box, such as going to the RMV. They are looking forward to the region’s Upskilling Navigator who will provide additional support for recruitment. Babora Hazukova shared that they recruited from non-traditional places, such as nail salons and through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). They found that the biggest draw for people was the job opportunities, and promise of support from 1199 such as with continuing education and tuition assistance.

Joanne Pokaski thanked the speakers, and provided instruction to Board members on picture taking with the Governor and Secretary, and MassHire Awards, then adjourned the meeting.