

**MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting**

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting (via WebEx)

**Meeting Minutes**

***(Draft)***

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

*Rosalin Acosta, Anne Broholm, James Cassetta, Pam Eddinger, Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano, Rainer Gawlick, Axel Grippo, Robert LePage, Randall Lyons, Juliette Mayers (left early), Jennifer Morales, Radhames Nova, Warren Pepicelli, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Juan Vega, R Janice Weekes, Maicharia Weir Lytle,*

***Members Absent:***

*Joanne Berwald, Jesse Brown, Sherry Dong, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Eric Lesser, John Mann, Jerald Parisella, Sherri Pitcher, Marylou Sudders, Ray Wrobel*

***Guests and Staff***

*John Afonso, Lorraine Albert, Patrick Beaulieu, Michele Campbell, Elizabeth Denniston, Migdalia Diaz, Patrica Garcia, Jordan Harris, Paige Hasebe, Jennifer Hansen, Amy Kershaw, Natasha Lawrence, Angela McCabe, Tonja Mettlach, Cheryl Scott, Gayatri Shenai, Navjot Singh, Sacha Stadhard, Stephanie Swanson, Jacqueline Sylvia, Stephanie Viola, Olga Yulikova, Andrea Zelano*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order and then reviewed the meeting agenda. Cheryl Scott announced that the next Board meeting will take place on Thursday, December 9th. The 2022 Board meeting dates are in the process of being scheduled; Board members will receive meeting invitations for the meeting dates. Due to the Governor’s extension of [remote attendance allowance for public bodies through April 1, 2022](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures), the next two Board meetings (December 2021 and March 2022) will be held virtually.

**Meeting Minutes**

Joanne Pokaski asked if there were any changes to the meeting minutes from the June 10, 2021 meeting. Ms. Pokaski called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes James Cassetta made the motion to approve the minutes, Pam Everhart seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously through voice and chat vote.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Acosta recognized Board member Pam Eddinger who was appointed as Chairperson of the [U.S. Department of Labor Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship](https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20210920). Pam Eddinger described the committee’s role in promoting greater awareness of apprenticeship, and increase alignment between workforce and education systems, as well as expand apprenticeship into new industries and occupations. The Board and guests congratulated Dr. Eddinger on her appointment via chat.

Secretary Acosta shared an overview of the economic landscape. She noted trends in the unemployment rate statewide and regionally, noting that Massachusetts is below the national unemployment rate, while unemployment is higher among Latino and Black individuals, compared to White individuals. Pandemic-related unemployment benefits ended in September. With these benefits expiring, the number of UI claimants in Massachusetts is close to pre-pandemic numbers. Those receiving pandemic-related benefits tends to skew more female, partially due to childcare issues. Many of these people collecting pandemic-related benefits were new to the UI system, including gig workers; fortunately, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) has a way to communicate with these individuals now that they have been part of the system. In March 2021, EOLWD engaged in a campaign to let people know that UI work search requirements were being reinstated June 2021, and that MassHire Career Centers were a great resource for job search assistance. EOLWD also led webinars with helpful information for claimants and job seekers. The first statewide virtual job fair was held in August; it was a two-day event that was attended by over 17,000 Job Seekers and over 1600 employers, during which over 20,000 resumes were exchanged in the virtual job fair portal. EOLWD is currently surveying job seekers and employers to see what outcomes of the job fair were. More job fairs like this are planned in the future, including 1-2 industry-specific job fairs in the next few months. Promoting the job fair was also a great opportunity to promote the MassHire system.

MassHire has redesigned [JobQuest](https://jobquest.dcs.eol.mass.gov/jobquest/LandingPage.aspx), the main online portal for Job Seekers and employers. The redesign includes user-friendly features, such as dashboards to track job search work and progress. EOLWD has also opened a new Re-Employment Center (REC Center) in Boston’s Government Center. This is a place where anyone applying for UI can get their issues resolved, and it connected people to MassHire for re-employment services. They have been working on enhancing accessibility for the REC Center and have been working with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH). They have recently contracted to provide ASL and CART services at the REC Center. Currently, the Center is open on an appointment-only basis with walk-ins served on availability. This is a pilot that might be deployed to all MassHire Career Centers if successful.

Secretary Acosta reviewed the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Workforce Skills Cabinet budget. The budget is at a historic high given the importance of workforce investments from the education, workforce development and economic development systems. There were increases for YouthWorks, Apprenticeship, the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, and the Career and Technical Initiative (CTI). In addition, the Governor appropriated $50 million for workforce development from CARES Act funds.

Joanne Pokaski asked how volume at career centers compare to pre-pandemic levels. Secretary Acosta responded that the volume is a little less now, but every month they see more and more engagement. A lot of people were on the sidelines for various reasons, such as receiving UI benefits, concerns the delta variant, childcare needs, etc. A lot of people are hesitant to jump into labor force engagement, but those numbers are reversing now that that benefits are going away, the COVID infections are going down, and kids back to school.

**Future of Work Presentation and Discussion**

Navjot Singh, Gayatri Shenai and Paige Hasebe of McKinsey & Company presented on the recent report, [*Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*](https://www.mass.gov/doc/future-of-work-in-massachusetts-report/download)*.* The report explores emerging trends across the Commonwealth’s regions, demographics, and economic sectors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation highlighted findings within the report most directly related to workforce development, including the need for flexible childcare, and the need to scale-up upskilling efforts to meet evolving skill demand. Massachusetts has the most expensive and highest quality childcare services in the nation; the high quality makes childcare unaffordable for many. Childcare is a growing concern for both workers and employers alike. McKinsey surveyed employers and asked them to rank their biggest business impediments and 60% ranked childcare among their top 4 impediments, with 39% considering offering childcare services post-pandemic (up from 22% pre-pandemic.) An additional 25,000 – 30,000 childcare workers are needed to fill the gap in demand, which presents a unique opportunity for the state to consider. Meanwhile, parents surveyed indicate a need for sporadic, flexible childcare that is sometimes near work and sometimes near home to accommodate the growing number of workers who are working remotely.

According to McKinsey’s analysis, 339,000 occupational changes are needed between now and 2030 to fill evolving skill demand There is greater need for social and emotional skills, adaptability, creative thinking as automation continues to grow. COVID is changing the skill sets required of existing jobs, and some jobs will decrease or no longer exist which will mean workers will need to leave their jobs/field and get a different type of job. Multiple job transitions will take place between now and 2030. To fulfill skill demand, the state will need to reskill 30,000 – 40,000 people a year, especially if the state would like to build a talent pipeline into middle-class/middle-skills jobs.

Pam Eddinger asked if there was an analysis of what type of upskilling in required for a move from the 4th quintile in earning to 2nd quintile of earnings. She expressed concern about the equity issues here if we don't focus tightly on it, and making sure opportunities are available to all. Paige Hasebe responded that disparity seems to be getting worse, especially among those who were at-risk pre-pandemic. It is really important to make sure we can get those people higher wage jobs. Dr. Eddinger added that those who have the knowledge to look for opportunities for these higher paying jobs will get ahead. We must get that knowledge into communities of color.

Olga Yulikova via chat asked: “It appears from your report that eldercare is an important barrier to employment. How do you think employers can address the eldercare needs as a barrier to employment, and how state government can be of help to them?” Nav Sing responded that elder care is very important.

Jim Cassetta commented via chat “…you indicated that health care and social assistance will be a "growing" demand for employees. In our sector (Human Services) we have a workforce in excess of 180,000 employees. Many providers (including WORK, Inc) have vacancy rates anywhere between 20-40% today. How do you think this should be addressed to meet the current and future labor needs?”.

Secretary Acosta shared that after the McKinsey report was released, the Baker-Polito administration worked on addressing major tenets of the report. A $2.9 billion investment package was set to the legislature and it is still there. There is speculation that we will know more about the proposal in November. Some major elements of the funding packate include funds to address inequities such as $1 billion for home ownership and housing, $240 million for workforce development, $100 million for tourism and $100 million for broadband access. Within the $240 million for workforce, there is a goal to train 52,000 workers over the next 3 years. Pre-pandemic, the system was training about 1500 to 3000 people a year, so this funding represents a significant increase in volume, which has never been done before. $100 million will start this year through RFPs that are being issued for upskilling and training programs. In addition, investments will be made in Apprenticeship, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), work readiness skills, capacity building – all of which will require employers to be engaged and at the table. These ARPA funds also require a need to build up data accountability and teacher recruitment. Economic recovery for Black, Latino, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) the will take longer.

Pam Eddinger also noted the issue is not that students do not want to go into a new field, but there are impediments with credentialing. There are a lot of hoops for what is required to earn a credential. There are many bi-lingual people who are waiting to get credentialed. Secretary Acosta responded that this issue is being discussed. Pam Eddinger added, via chat: “two of the roles that we found missing in this workforce development work are: 1) navigators to help clients, and 2) help from the highest level to take down barriers for those of us building programs. The amount of time we spend trying to remove barriers to quicker credentialling is immense.”

Janice Weekes asked via chat “in interacting with formal training providers, career centers involve hiring managers in developing/reviewing training curriculums with grant driven specific trainings. Do employers feel that job seekers graduating from trainings are adequately trained and ready to go? Or are their gaps in operational needs?”

Anne Broholm commented that the McKinsey report was spot on. She is seeing the same trends in her company. This is scary for someone running a business. Other employers don’t understand the magnitude of these trends. In her case, she has tried to find a training for her in-demand occupations, but she could not find a trainer that was a fit. This effort needs to be employer-driven. Housing is an issue they are running into as the biggest challenge. Luckily, she has not seen people fall out with the eviction moratorium. She added, via chat “To add a real life shout out - we did participate in the job fair and filled a very key position with a wonderful new hire - great experience from our perspective!”

Joanne Pokaski asked if pent up demand for leisure travel counteract the decline in business travel.

Liz Skidmore added that there is almost no licensed childcare available for a construction worker. She is part of a childcare pilot in the Greater Boston area that is going well, but so much more is needed. The childcare provider jobs are very low wage. The solution is to not approach childcare as a personal family problem, but as a greater good issue. As a society, we need to figure out how to make childcare more affordable and better paying.

Warren Pepicelli encouraged the Board to meet face-to-face to engage in this truly important topic. He represents people who are working through the pandemic, including the Delta variant. None of the people he works with have the option to work from home, so the report does not represent the people he works with. He understands that a lot of jobs will be lost over time, but we need to be realistic about training current workers into other jobs. We have been through this before – first when jobs went overseas, and the approach was the train workers for service jobs, and now those jobs are going away. He hopes that in this effort to focus on training that the people he comes in contact with are not forgotten. ESOL is also a big stumbling block. You can’t just snap your fingers and the problem is resolved. We have to move institutions accordingly. Beyond English, math skills and other skills are needed. Liz Skidmore agreed that not all workers are in offices – neither hotel workers nor construction workers are in offices.

Jim Cassetta agreed with Warren Pepecilli and Liz Skidmore that employees never stopped working throughout the pandemic. These are the same issues we have always dealt with. It’s not always about the salary, but the work environment. Social assistance jobs are going to grow in need. ESOL and addressing immigration are an important part of these issues, and we need to get Washington to do something about immigration. We need workers. Social assistance workers don’t have the option to work from home – they work in homes, centers, etc. How should we address this niche for social services?

Nav Singh clarified that the McKinsey report indicated that for 70% of the workforce, there will be almost no change in their work environment and they will go into work in person. But 30% of the remaining workforce is 1.2 million people, which is a lot of people.

Rainer Gawlick added that we may learn from the medical industry what is more organized around training and credentials.

Joanne Pokaski commented that we should think about the people who are losing their jobs. Often English is not their first language, and that is such a barrier to getting a new job. She applauds the new investments in ESOL which is needed to get people employed. Pam Eddinger added that ESOL is a solvable problem. We have never had ESOL for adults as a consistent resource. We need the consistency. It takes about a year for fluency, and that’s doable. If we made ESOL free that would help. Every time Bunker Hill Community College offered scholarships for training, space fills up.

Radhames Nova added that youth exposure to careers is also critical to developing talent pipelines.

Axel Grippo commented that this is a tough issue. If someone works 1 – 2 shifts a day at low wages to support themselves and their family, when do you train them? Perhaps subsidizing their income so that they can survive on one wage or one shift to free up time for them to train and practice their skills is needed. Pam Eddinger added via chat “We need to pay folks to learn the language, so they can buy the time and space to do the work. Learning language is work.” Warren Pepicelli added that ESOL is critical. UNITE HERE was one of the first places to develop workplace literacy and paid time lost to training.

**Open Meeting**

Radhames Nova introduced his organization, Junior Achievement, and their upcoming event JA Inspire, a conference on April 1, 2022 for 8th graders to learn about different career clusters. Int objective is to start educating young about careers early on, rather than wait until high school and beyond. JA Inspire will be an interactive career exploration day (both in-person and virtual) with the hope to building talent pipelines.

New Board member Randall Lyons introduced himself. His audio was not working, so his introduction and commentary on the discussion was via chat: “By way of introduction my name is Randall Lyons and I am the Executive Director of the Mass Marine Trades Association representing the recreational boating industry in Massachusetts. Our industry also predominantly is unable to work from home. I wanted to mention that sometimes our business owners/employers and schools see a disconnect from a training basis. I would love to see this addressed more if possible in terms of expectations of training programs from both the school and business side. How can businesses help schools more and how can schools help businesses more?” Pam Eddinger chatted that community colleges are wanting to be part of your [workforce development] conversations.”

Liz Skidmore added in the chat: “Where to put resources - making the childcare system work better for everyone - parents and providers - which means more investment in the system including better wages for providers, lower costs for families, and covering non-standard hours. 2. Keep equity in every conversation. Make sure efforts in apprenticeship are prioritizing women and people of color.” She shared that former EOLWD-employee, Marina Zhavoronkova, who is now working for the Center For American Progress, published an [article](https://americanprogress.org/article/infrastructure-bill-must-create-pathways-women-enter-construction-trades/) making the case for ensuring infrastructure funding creates pathways for women to enter into construction trades.

Joanne Pokaski adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.