



METRO NORTH REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Present: Charlene Bauer, Reed Brockman, Philip Bronder-Giroux, James Donovan, Joanna Dowling, Susan Jepson, Karen Sampson Johnson, Robert Jones, Lisa Amaya Price, Mina Reddy, Paul Richard, Steven Sullivan, Susan Walsh

Absent: Lisa Anderson, Kitty Bowman, Andrea Donahue, John Drinkwater, Danny LeBlanc, William Hart, Madeline Hoffman, John Kendzior, Rose Lydon, Kambiz Maali, Larisa Schelkin, Cheryl Scott, Sandra Smith, Mark Tardiff, Mary Tighe, Tricia Tyler, Juan Vega, Kerry Wollner

REB Staff: Linda Bass, Andrew Diamond, Priscilla Golding, Mike Hatfield, Kimberly Napier, Holly Vogel, Meelynn Wong

Guests: Jay Linnehan, Middlesex Community College; Ken Messina, Department of Career Services; Linda Rohrer, Career Source; and Christopher Brennan, The Career Place

Welcome New REB Member: Paul Richard

Paul welcomed new REB member James (Jim) Donovan, Director of Strategic Research and Government Affairs for Teamsters Local Union No. 25. Jim worked with longtime REB member Steve Sullivan, who is now serving as Director of Grants and Workforce Development at the Executive Office of Community Colleges with REB member Bill Hart.

Welcome New REB Staff Member: Peter Farkas

Paul welcomed new REB Associate Director Peter Farkas. Pete has an MBA and nine years of workforce experience as youth manager for Career Source.

Review of March Meeting Notes: Paul Richard

Paul requested a motion to approve the notes of the March 2014 REB meeting. The motion was moved and seconded, and the notes of the March 2014 REB meeting were approved as presented.

Joint Committee (JC) Report: Sue Walsh

Sue explained that the Joint Committee is comprised of the Policy, Funding, and Oversight Committee and the Career Center Committee (chaired by Susan Jepson). She then reviewed discussions from the one Joint Committee meeting held this past quarter, as follows:

- Although our WIA allocations have increased for FY15, the overall funding picture is challenging, due to the recent cuts and the impact of sequestration. Although we received \$168k more in FY14 compared to where we were 2 years ago, there is a significant decrease in our region of \$754k. In addition, a few grants will be ending.
- Regarding allocation funding (which goes to the REB, career centers, and training providers), there's a split between out-of-school youth and in-school youth. Although we have not made significant changes to the way that we've allocated funds in the past, we plan to reassess the split between in-school youth and out-of-school youth (particularly since we currently far surpass the requirement for out-of-school youth).
- In light of funding losses, funding to training providers has decreased in order to provide enough resources to the career centers. The career centers will take a hit of about \$373k this year.
- A major topic at the last meeting was the career center funding formula. Traditionally there was a competitive model, where funding was allocated based on various performance measures. Since there is now one parent organization for both centers (Middlesex Community College), we decided that funding will be split between the centers, with the exception of youth services – which will only be offered through The Career Place (which has more staff, and more expertise in this area) – the funding will follow that, and more of the WIA Dislocated Worker and Adult funding will go to Career Source. We think this is the right move, but we still have some questions. Now that the competitive funding arrangement will no longer be effective, we want to ensure there is still motivation and incentive to meet performance goals. In addition, with the change of the adult serving dollars moving more toward Career Source, we plan to further explore how that will impact service (e.g., if there will be a possible increased need for customers to travel). The next meeting will focus on this, and the rechartering process, which will be designed around some of these new changes.

Susan Jepson mentioned that the next Joint Committee meeting will be Monday, June 23. She also added that regardless of where specific services will be based (such as youth services), all services will be provided throughout the region.

Announcement: Jay Linnehan

Jay Linnehan announced that the president of Middlesex Community College, Carole Cowan, will be retiring as of December 2014, following her highly successful 23-year tenure.

Vote to Give Authority to the Joint Committee to Approve Annual Plan: Paul Richard

Paul requested a motion to give the Joint Committee (JC) the authority to approve the Annual Plan on behalf of the REB. The motion was moved and seconded, and the Joint Committee was given the authority to approve the Annual Plan on behalf of the REB as presented.

Youth Council Report: Priscilla Golding

Priscilla referenced the Youth Council Report that was distributed to all members, and highlighted the following: On May 2, Career Source hosted a panel on Careers in Healthcare, and on May 20, Biogen Idec held their annual Metro North Biogen Idec Community Lab Day. Both programs serve youth who are enrolled in Metro North WIA-funded programs. In addition, youth from Metro North programs (as well as any interested REB members!) are invited to participate in the summer Metro North Youth Council meeting, to be held at AECOM on July 17.

Adult Basic Education Transition to College and Careers Committee (ABETCC): Mina Reddy

Mina announced that the ABETCC Committee, which will focus on the transition for adults who are studying adult basic education to college and careers, held its first meeting in May. There will be another meeting on July 31 at the REB, from 1-3, where the committee will focus on setting goals moving forward. New members are welcome.

REB Update Highlights: Linda Bass

Linda will be working more actively on REB membership this summer. She would like to add members from the areas of: Life Sciences, Information Technology, and Healthcare. Employer members must work in the Metro North region. Please contact Linda if you know of anyone who might be interested in pursuing an initial meeting/call to explore the possibility further.

Ready to Work H1-B Grant

We submitted a Ready to Work H1-B grant (as part of a multi-regional partnership). This grant is focused on training and placing the long-term unemployed in IT/computer science occupations, the field with the most H-1B Visa activity statewide. Many thanks to the businesses who agreed to partner on what is now named the Eastern Massachusetts Tech-Ready grant: Microsoft; Google; NSK Inc; and Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike (all in our region alone). We should hear soon about the Job-Driven National Emergency Grant.

National Emergency Grant (NEG)

We were awarded the NEG grant, thanks in large part to Kimberly Napier's efforts. This \$800k + grant will help people laid off from four companies from Metro North. Since the funding took so long to receive, some of the companies may no longer have a need; if necessary, other companies will be substituted.

Healthcare Partnership

The upcoming Healthcare Partnership meeting will focus on the results of the Healthcare Workforce Transformation Planning Grant, in which the REB was awarded \$32.5k in late March.

REB STEM Event

The REB sponsored a STEM event at the end of May at the Microsoft New England Research and Development Center (NERD). Many thanks to Paul Richard and Cheryl Scott, who both spoke at the event, as well as to Sandra Smith and Microsoft for the use of the conference center.

Casinos Likely in Metro North

Linda Bass and Linda Rohrer recently attended a meeting at the MA Gaming Commission offices to discuss the potential impact of casinos on workforce needs in the region. A casino will likely be developed in Everett or Revere, unless the law is repealed this fall via referendum.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The house and senate committees agreed on what will be called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It will likely be enacted. It is similar to WIA, with some exceptions (Note: The most recent Update provides an overview of changes and additions to the Workforce Investment Act).

REB Member Spotlight!



Paul Richard conducted brief interviews with two REB members. This is the first of a series of discussions during quarterly meetings designed to help REB members to learn more about each other.

Member #1: Charlene Bauer

Charlene is the senior vice president of community relations and business development of Metro Credit Union in Chelsea, and has made significant contributions to the City of Chelsea. She is also on the REB Executive Committee, and Metro Credit Union is one of the six CONNECT Partners.

Paul: Tell us a little about what you do at Metro Credit Union.

Charlene: I have been at Metro for 14 years, and banking since 1985. I have always been in marketing and retail, and eight years ago my role transitioned to strategic initiatives, community relations and business development. Metro Credit Union was founded on a “people helping people” philosophy. We continue to perpetuate that philosophy today. I now oversee the community relations division of the organization. We have 15 branches, many of which are in gateway cities with diverse populations. Part of what I do is forge relationships with our community non-profit partners to educate individuals who are under- or unbanked to assist individuals with asset development. I have been very involved in a summer employment program, where we employ over 250 youth. We conduct interviews, identify businesses where they can work, train them on how to manage their money, etc. It’s really about making connections and helping people develop assets.

Paul: What led you to get involved with the REB?

Charlene: I was asked to be a part of the board by two community partners in Chelsea. I now see what valuable connections I have as a result of the Metro North Regional Employment Board. Because of this relationship, I better understand work skill development and am better able to help our members and employees develop their skills. It’s about connections for me, and understanding what’s happening in our marketplace.

Paul: What would you like to see the REB do more of?

Charlene: Although I’m still learning about the REB, I know that I want to support the youth and adult learners who are trying to get to that next level -- to develop skills and move out of poverty.

Paul: What would we all be surprised to know about you?

Charlene: I love sailing, kayaking, hiking, antiques and have 2 grandchildren.

Paul: Thank you very much Charlene!

Member #2: Philip Bronder-Giroux

Philip is the Executive Director of Tri-City Community Action Program (Tri-CAP) in Malden and has been a longtime REB member. He is a member of the REB's Policy, Funding and Oversight (PFO) Committee, and an advocate for low-income residents in Everett, Malden, and Medford.

Paul: Tell us a little about what you do at Tri-CAP.

Philip: I have been the Executive Director for 20 years. We are an anti-poverty organization. Our mission is to work with the community to alleviate the effects of poverty in order to alleviate the conditions of poverty. We have about 85 employees – the services we provide help people to manage their lives as they seek to move ahead. We have a childcare program and a fuel assistance program, and we provide homeless services to the chronically homeless. We often hear that there would be much more homelessness in our community if it were not for Tri-CAP. We also own and manage 25 units of affordable housing and are developing others. We are involved in some environmental justice programs. With regard to our work with the REB, we have worked closely with The Career Place to open a cyber café with the goal of addressing the digital divide. We started 15 years ago with dial-up service at the café, and now we have DSL. We still get about 30 people in every day to use the computers. Now we are particularly interested in trying to figure out – in this economy – how begin to change the income inequity issues. More training and education is not enough. We know that 40% of college grads earn less than \$40k, so it's not only about education – “if you fix yourself and you'll be okay” – if we don't address the structural issues related to the economy, people won't be able to move up.

Paul: You have a huge amount of responsibility. What led you to do this work?

Philip: I've always had a passion for social justice issues -- trying to work with communities to help give them a leg up. It was initially faith-based but now driven by the belief that “we're all community and we all deserve opportunity.”

Paul: What sort of workforce needs do you have?

Philip: The Commonwealth has come a long way in making sure that daycare programs are good places for the children of workers. We have increased the standards, but not funding. There is still a significant need to develop skills of day care providers and pre-school teachers. We also have a difficult time attracting bus drivers.

Paul: Why are you a REB member?

Philip: I was proactive in getting on the board 15 years ago (this is my 2nd term, as there is a 12-year cap). I felt that the low income community has a seat at the table. My work with the PFO committee has brought perspective to it. A lot of decisions we make affect the lives of low-income people.

Paul: What would you like to see the REB do more often?

Philip: We might look more at issues that relate to employment, such as housing and transportation. For example, we might consider focusing more on the work of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). (Note: Linda Bass and Linda Rohrer recently met with the MBTA to talk about working together on the MassWIN program).

Paul: Is there something you can share that's on the personal side?

Philip: I used to ride motorcycles, mostly on dirt roads – I learned on a World War II BMW in Haiti. It was “a real clunker.”

Paul: Thank you very much!

Presentation on Expanding Business Engagement Initiative and Mass BizWorks: Kimberly Napier, Metro North REB, and Ken Messina, Department of Career Services

REB Associate Director Kimberly Napier explained that the concept of the “bottom line” must be integral to any strategy that is designed to engage businesses in workforce efforts. Even so, it can still be a challenge to convince employers to participate in workforce development programs. Engaging business requires participation from numerous organizations, including workforce investment boards, career centers, service providers, government entities, employers and businesses.

Ken Messina, Rapid Response Director, Dept. of Career Services

Massachusetts is one of 13 states to take part in a federal initiative entitled Expanding Business Engagement (EBE). On a national level, the goal is to “improve program performance through the delivery of enhanced business-focused services stemming from a statewide business engagement strategic plan.”

The goal of the EBE initiative as it pertains to Massachusetts is “to enhance and align the services offered to MA businesses through State Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Education entities in order to help MA business grow and thrive.” To achieve this goal, the state will: build strong relationships across agencies and with businesses; develop standard staff business service knowledge and competencies across relevant state agencies; and coordinate and link resources and information. Massachusetts BizWorks is the umbrella name for the programs and services offered by the state to MA employers. It is a state and federal collaboration that is funded by USDOL.

Working closely with Ken and the Department of Career Services, REB Associate Director Kimberly Napier has played a key role in developing a comprehensive guide (“toolkit”) to help businesses become aware of the wide range of services and programs available to them as employers in Massachusetts. The toolkit provides information on all of the services that the state can provide through workforce development, economic development, education, federal, and other programs.

The majority of MA-based companies are unaware that the state offers business-related services. At the beginning of this program, we discovered that we are only serving 8% of MA-based companies (which is higher than many states at the start of this effort), so MA is now

working on new strategies to engage businesses. The DOL has awarded 13 grants to support business engagement initiatives throughout the state.

At the beginning of this effort, we held a series of meetings with representatives from the Rapid Response Program, Workforce Investment Boards, Economic Development, Mass MEP, and others, to better pinpoint what we needed to do to meet our objectives. After identifying marketing as a top priority, we convened a marketing committee, which ultimately drove the development of the Mass BizWorks toolkit. The toolkit has been used for training purposes, so that anyone who visits a company to discuss business engagement is aware of all of the programs and services the state has to offer. There is also a companion handout for businesses to use as a type of desk guide. In our training we emphasize the importance of understanding business cycles, and the different types of business. It is also very important to establish strong business relationships.

We also established a systems development group, which works with other organizations (including WIBs) to train individuals to talk to businesses about the programs and services we offer.

In addition, MA has an aggressive layoff program – working with companies, we can sometimes we can avert a layoff (through, for example, pay subsidy programs), or lessen the impact of one (through, for example, helping to place people in jobs before a layoff becomes effective). An example of this in Metro North is NECCO in Revere – which not might still be in business if it were not for support from the state. The Rapid Response Set-Aside grant funded over \$220k in programs for companies in the Metro North area. MA employs a process they developed a while back to get money out quickly to prevent/alleviate the impact of layoffs.

(Note: Due to time constraints, a discussion regarding strategies to engage employers will be postponed to a future meeting. Linda Bass mentioned that the discussion will focus on how the REB can engage businesses with what we are doing in workforce, economic development, and education, to help them understand that workforce issues are in both of our interests, and therefore are a joint responsibility.)

Other Business: Linda

Linda then asked the board if other REB meeting days/times might work better for members. It was agreed that the REB would send out a survey.

Reed Brockman then announced that on July 17 there will be an informal dinner get-together for educators and anyone interested in STEM. If you would like to attend, please contact Reed Brockman, reed.brockman@aecom.com.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

The next REB meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 17, 2014.