



**METRO NORTH REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD
QUARTERLY REB MEETING NOTES**

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

Present: Reed Brockman, Danny LeBlanc, Mina Reddy, Lisa Amaya Price, Paul Richard, Steven Sullivan, Tricia Tyler, Juan Vega, Susan Walsh

Absent: Charlene Bauer, James Donovan, Joanna Dowling, John Drinkwater, Susan Jepson, Madeline Hoffman, Karen Sampson Johnson, Robert Jones, John Kendzior, Rose Lydon, Kambiz Maali, Larisa Schelkin, Cheryl Scott, Sandra Smith, Mark Tardiff, Mary Tighe, Kerry Wollner

REB Staff: Linda Bass, Robin Dion, Peter Farkas, Priscilla Golding, Michael Hatfield, Meelynn Wong, Kimberly Napier, Holly Vogel

Guests: Linda Rohrer, Career Source; Christopher Brennan, The Career Place; and Jay Linnehan, Middlesex Community College

Review of March 2015 Meeting Notes: Paul Richard

Paul requested a motion to approve the notes of the March 2015 REB meeting. The motion was moved and seconded, and the notes of the March 2015 REB meeting were approved as presented.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) Transitions to College and Careers: Mina Reddy

At the ABE meeting held this past quarter, members reviewed progress on short-term goals and activities. The committee will continue to work on existing initiatives, as well as plan new ABE activities in accordance with the REB's local plan.

Youth Council: Reed Brockman

At the last meeting of the Youth Council, Steve Sullivan, Director of Grants and Workforce at the Massachusetts Community College Executive Office, gave a presentation on the history of the Massachusetts Community College system and current statewide activities. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 9, 2015 at the office of Reed Brockman, AECOM, 66 Long Wharf, 2nd Floor, Boston. If you are interested in attending, please inform Reed.

Update on REB Activities: Linda Bass

As Priscilla will soon be retiring, Linda thanked her for all of her work on behalf of youth over the last nine years. All members are invited to her retirement party; more information to follow.

The REB has recently hired Priscilla's successor, Jonathan Hasak, who will be starting in mid-July.

The REB will be moving on Saturday, June 27, to the Fresh Pond Mall in Cambridge. Address and directions are available on the REB website, at: <http://mnreb.org/directions.php>.

Juan Vega is leaving Centro Latino after 17 years; this will be a big loss for the agency. We hope he will be able to continue as a board member in his next position!

Joint Committee Report: Sue Walsh

At the last meeting of the Joint Committee, held on May 11, the committee approved allocations of WIOA funds to training providers, career centers, and the REB. The committee also discussed and approved several policy changes (see Joint Committee Report for details).

Sue then requested a motion to grant permission to the Joint Committee to approve the Annual Plan. The motion was seconded, and the Joint Committee was granted permission to approve the Annual Plan.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair: Sue Walsh

Sue requested a motion to elect the nominated candidates for the positions of Chair (Paul Richard) and Vice Chair (Joanna Dowling). The motion was moved and seconded, and the election of Paul Richard as Chair, and Joanna Dowling as Vice Chair, was approved.

Workforce Development Board (WIOA) Discussion: Linda Bass

City Manager Richard Rossi had to request that Metro North be designated as a Workforce Development Area under WIOA. This designation will be good for two years, and after that, pending a performance review, we will automatically be redesignated. All 16 regions are expected to be initially designated.

In addition, the REB will be part of a larger "planning region," which will probably include Boston and possibly Metro South/West. Both the local and regional planning efforts will entail working more closely with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, as well as the Department of Transitional Assistance

Moving forward, the REB will be called a "Workforce Development Board"; at this point, the REB is to be called: "The Metro North Regional Employment Board – the Workforce Development Board for the Metro North Region."

Linda then gave a presentation of board size, membership, and committees under WIOA ([see PowerPoint Presentation](#)).

Under WIOA, Workforce Development Boards must have a minimum of 19 members, and a majority of private sector members (at least 10). The REB bylaws allow for a maximum of 55 board members. In addition to the requirements that we have a majority private sector, there's a requirement that 20% of REB membership represent the workforce. There needs to be at least two labor union reps (one joint labor-management registered apprenticeship program). We think we are covered if the AFL-CIO, represented by John Drinkwater, represents that requirement.

The REB is also required to have board representation in the following areas:

- Post-secondary Education (Steve Sullivan)
- Adult Basic Education (Mina Reddy)
- Economic or Community Development Organization (Danny LeBlanc)
- State Employment Services, Wagner-Peyser (Cheryl Scott)
- Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Karen Sampson-Johnson)
- One or more community-based organizations serving employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment (identified as: veterans, individuals with disabilities, and people with expertise in serving WIOA-eligible youth)

Linda then asked members for input on the question of whether the REB should increase or decrease in size (currently there are about 27 official members).

- One member commented that it is best to have a larger group (30-40 people) to ensure meeting participation. As a rule of thumb, expect two-thirds of the board to participate in meetings.
- Another member commented that the focus should be on involving people who are associated with our target sectors, and who are willing and able to bring energy and expertise to the meetings.
- A guest said that there should be more representation from CEO-level representatives, who have the capacity to make high-level decisions. Linda responded by saying that all Workforce Development Boards are asked to have members who have decision-making capacity. Yet, individuals who are in human resources tend to be most attracted to board membership – and do make significant contributions in this capacity.
- Another member suggested adding more community-based organizations. Linda's response: Our board composition seems to fall in line with WIOA expectations – but we could consider adding one or more representatives from community-based organizations, particularly in light of recent board attrition in this area.
- One member asked if we were connected with Massachusetts Office of Business Development. He suggested it might make sense to bring in someone from that office to the board, as this office works closely with start-ups.

- A guest said that in WIOA, there is an emphasis on people with disabilities. It might therefore make sense to bring in someone from a non-profit that serves people with disabilities. Linda responded by mentioning that since WIOA requires non-REB members to participate in standing committees, we might consider identifying people with expertise in specific areas from the community, including those with expertise in disability issues.

Linda said that we need to revive the core standing committees, since many of our members are more interested in participating in the industry-focused groups. She also noted that the Career Center Committee and Policy, Funding and Oversight Committee had to combine due to decreasing membership on both committees. Linda also explained that the REB is required to have a standing committee for career center oversight, a youth committee (the Youth Council could morph into this), and one focused on individuals with disabilities. A general planning committee is not cited.

Linda then posed the questions:

1. *Should the REB have a separate Policy, Funding, and Oversight committee, or just one committee that does career center oversight and planning?* The planning committee primarily makes funding decisions that drive the plan, reviews the plan materials, review skills development courses, etc. The Career Center Committee is responsible for annual reviews of the Career Center, making sure the career centers are on track. In addition, a year from now we will need to do a procurement for the operator of the career centers, and may want a separate committee during that period. Most of the committees hold about three meetings each year. One member commented that it makes sense to her that the Planning Committee includes career center members – but she is not so sure that the opposite should be true as well.
2. *Should we have a separate committee for people with disabilities?* We already have four standing committees, plus industry groups). It could logically fit within a committee – but would there be enough content to have a regular committee on that?
 - One guest said she would prefer a separate committee. The expertise that individuals representing CBOs could bring would be helpful and could reduce the need for more REB members to join another committee. We could also reach out to the Business Engagement Task Force for this. Linda mentioned that Triangle, Inc. might be a logical place to start.
 - A member suggested that would be helpful to have focus groups to identify the needs.
 - Another member suggested starting out by including community members on committees, and then making a decision to ask them to participate on the board based on their level of participation.

Linda asked all board members who are currently not participating on a committee to please join one. One REB member said he hasn't been asked to get back on a committee, but he

would like to do so. He suggests that all members who are not currently on a committee be personally asked to join one.

A guest commented that Business Engagement Task Force should continue to meet, and possibly become a committee in the future.

Linda mentioned that in addition to the committees mentioned, the ABETCC Committee, as well as industry partnerships (STEM Network, Healthcare Partnership, Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium, Information Technology and Life Sciences Consortia), will continue to operate.

Creating a Demand-Driven Workforce Development System: Facilitated by Paul Richard

Paul then led an open discussion about some of the expectations arising from the new WIOA legislation. One of those expectations is that our workforce system will become “demand-driven.” Questions for discussion included the following:

1. What does it mean to be “demand-driven”? What does this mean from the business perspective? From the job seeker perspective?
2. Putting Federal and State policies, rules and regulations aside for a moment, if we could design a workforce system from scratch, what would it look like? How would it differ from our current system?
3. Our region has been operating One-Stop Career Centers for over 18 years. Many thousands of people—employers and jobseekers—have come through the doors. What has worked well? What should be improved?
4. The REB incorporated strategies that emphasized developing industry partnerships and career pathways in its FY’13-16 Strategic Plan. In thinking about our region’s key competitive advantages and industries, in what ways should we consider enhancing these strategies for responding to these industries?
5. Youth in our region will become college or career ready, or they will be disconnected from the labor market. What strategies should we consider implementing in order to enhance services to youth in our region?
6. Our REB and workforce system would be more successful if only...

Discussion Notes

Conduct focus groups with employers:

- What are their needs?
- What skills are lacking in various sectors?
- Supply chains for labor – employer perspective? How can we help simplify their access to employees?

- Temp agencies / staffing agencies/government-sponsored programs
- Different channels to find employers
- Channels for entry and mid-level workforce?

Conduct focus groups with temp/placement agencies:

- Top 5 agencies in each industry?
- Training needs?
- Retention/conversion rate for temps?
- Percentage of permanent employees who start at temp agencies?
- What are the demographics of the populations that utilize temp agencies? (e.g. older workers)?
- What are the workforce trends?
- Which industries use temps and how often?
 - All skill, education levels
 - Small/Large employers
 - IT, big industry
- Headhunters
- What resources are needed for an organization like the REB to get data and respond? Human, financial? (lack of funds)
- Use of vacancy reports/LMI data to identify workforce gaps/justify training
- Barriers to employment for different sectors? E.g. Entry level, non-English speakers, PhD, Veterans, etc.

Job Seeker – Demand-Driven

- Job seeker pathways need to align with employer needs
- Use of LMI to justify training/job search
- Job seeker – wage, quality of life/happiness
- Some industries seeking specific skills
- Bias against unemployed – how to overcome?
- ABE students – years away from “dream job” - labor market fluctuates - how accurate will LMI be?
- Businesses locate where the labor force is
- Development of soft skills necessary
- Mental health aspects of being unemployed
- Employers using “big data”
- Look at temp agency model for ideas on how they match/find the right people
- MOSES – offers incomplete information – e.g., inconsistently completed data on education or previous employment
- DOL: Community Colleges – Career Centers - Jobs
- Positive: preparing customers to job search

- Job matching: Customer/groups of customers to employers
 - Larger in scope
 - Newer software needed/ currently time intensive
- Networking is key

Next Steps

- Business Engagement Task Force to identify/recommend agencies
- Establish focus group with temp/staffing agencies (5-6)
- Continue conversation at next REB meeting (Stats from agencies in the meantime)

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

The next REB meeting will be held from **8:00– 9:30 AM on Tuesday, September 15, 2015**, at the REB's new location at the Fresh Pond Mall. Address: 186 Alewife Brook Parkway, Suite 216, Fresh Pond Mall, Cambridge, MA. For directions, please visit the REB's website: <http://mnreb.org/directions.php>.