



## **METRO NORTH REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD MEETING NOTES**

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

**Present:** Charlene Bauer, Reed Brockman, Philip Bronder-Giroux, Joanna Dowling, Karen Sampson Johnson, Robert Jones, Danny LeBlanc, Rose Lydon, Kambiz Maali, Cheryl Scott, Claire Murray (representing Susan Jepson), Lisa Amaya Price, Mina Reddy, Paul Richard, Larisa Schelkin, Sandra Smith, Steven Sullivan, Mark Tardiff, Tricia Tyler

**Absent:** Lisa Anderson, Andrea Donahue, James Donovan, John Drinkwater, William Hart, Madeline Hoffman, John Kendzior, Mary Tighe, Juan Vega, Susan Walsh, Kerry Wollner

**REB Staff:** Linda Bass, Peter Farkas, Michael Hatfield, Kimberly Napier, Holly Vogel, Meelynn Wong

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

### **Review of June Meeting Notes: Joanna Dowling**

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

### **Review of Joint Committee Report: Peter Farkas**

The Joint Committee met in June to discuss two primary agenda items. The first was to review and approve the Executive Summary of the Annual Plan. The committee approved the Executive Summary and submitted it on July 10. The Committee also met with the Career Center Directors Chris Brennan (The Career Place) and Linda Rohrer (Career Source) as well as and Jay Linnehan (Middlesex Community College) to discuss questions and concerns regarding recent changes in the funding formula. The committee will meet next on September 25; the focus will be on rechartering the career centers.

### **Youth Council: Reed Brockman**

Reed reviewed recent youth events, including the Annual Biogen Idec Metro North Lab Day for WIA youth and a panel on careers in healthcare held at Career Source. The last Youth Council meeting was held at AECOM, and plans are underway to take youth on a bridge tour. Last week's meeting, which included youth, was a lively and engaging one.

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

In a meeting held this past quarter, members identified the following six goals for the committee: 1) More ABE program graduates will be prepared to enter college-level courses; 2) Students will gain the study skills and soft skills to succeed in postsecondary education or training and work; 3) Increase access to technology and technology skills of adult students; 4) Provide information and exposure to jobs; 5) Map out pathways from ABE to college and careers and identify gaps; 6) Highlight the value of adult students and what they need to go further in life.

**Update on Advanced Manufacturing: Linda Bass**

(As a side note, Linda mentioned that she will be giving this update, as Andy Diamond is no longer working with the REB).

Two marketing managers representing the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) have been visiting companies to identify their needs and also to involve them in the NAMC. As this is a four-region grant, one marketing manager works through the Metro North REB and North Shore WIB, and other works through the Merrimack Valley and Greater Lowell WIBs. There are approximately 2,000 manufacturers in northeastern MA. So far, one hundred unique companies have successfully been contacted. Thirty-six companies were visited face-to-face, with a good percentage expressing interest in participating in the consortium. Through these discussions, we are learning about the best ways to get into companies.

A statewide group, in which we will be involved, is now forming – it is being called a Community of Practice for Advanced Manufacturing. We also have a round table event scheduled for about 10 manufacturers in Northeast Massachusetts to talk about becoming employer champions for NAMC on October 9. In addition, Advanced Manufacturing Day is on October 3, with various events scheduled throughout the region, including a Middlesex 3 Advanced Manufacturing Forum.

**Update on REB Activities: Linda Bass**

Casinos

The casino for Everett was approved yesterday. At a minimum, this should help clean up the contaminated area and help make positive changes to Sullivan Square.

Economic Development Bill

At the last meeting the Economic Development Bill was mentioned; this has since been passed by the state legislature. The bill includes \$12.3M for advanced manufacturing, technology (which includes IT and other technology), as well as hospitality. This will be primarily for training efforts. The legislation also includes some Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund money (\$2.5M). There is an RFP upcoming for Advanced Manufacturing – which will allow the expansion of some existing training programs (from the first RFP). The NAMC partnership is one of the allowable bidders. A welfare reform bill was also passed – we are waiting to see how that is going to play out. It includes funds for placement and training components. It also appears that the Department of Transitional Assistance will be expected to develop something akin to career center services in their own local offices.

## Upcoming Events

On October 14, there will be a quarterly MA Workforce Board Association meeting at Devens Common Center; all REB members are invited to attend. There is also a Job Summit at Devens on the following day.

## **Strategic Plan Benchmarking Chart Update: Linda Bass**

In most cases, we should ideally be at the 50% mark. In other cases our goal is further out, and we are behind schedule in a few areas. This year we are going to conduct the career center reviews and focus on the career pathways charts. We knew that life sciences and information technology would come somewhat later in the four-year plan, because we are still working on the partnerships. One area that we have not addressed are the goals for assisting companies with developing Workforce Training Fund grant applications; we do review and comment on applications, and occasionally provide technical assistance; it is unclear whether it would be appropriate to do more. We have to figure out what the board should be doing in relation to that. Chris Brennan of The Career Place said that it would be helpful for the REB to work with the career centers (and perhaps include community colleges) on conducting information sessions for businesses. Another member said that it might be helpful to look at providing technical assistance, because companies perceive that the process is more difficult than it really is.

## **REB Member Spotlight**



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

### Member #1: Rose Lydon

Rose Lydon is Vice President of Corporate Human Resources at CDM Smith in Cambridge.

**Paul:** Tell us a little about your company.

**Rose:** CDM Smith began in 1947 as a partnership between Mr. Camp, Mr. McKee, and Mr. Dresser. Several years ago the company merged with a transportation company named Smith, thus CDM Smith. CDM is headquartered in its Cambridge location (which has 700 employees), and currently has approximately 5,000 employees worldwide. The company is a consulting, engineering, construction and operations firm. Its key clients are in the water, environment, transportation, energy and facilities industries. CDM Smith serves public and private industry, providing full-service integrated solutions.

**Paul:** How did you choose to be in this area?

**Rose:** I was originally planning to be a teacher, but I shifted gears due to funding cuts to schools. I started at CDM as a junior mail clerk, and was able to move through a few different opportunities – including recruitment and benefits. Today I am the Vice President of Human Resources and I work in the capacity as Senior Manager of the Global centers of Expertise, where I have oversight for about 35 HR professions that are responsible for HIS technology, benefits, compensation, employer relations, and policy programs. I report to the chief human resources officer.

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

**Rose:** We were contacted by the mayor of Cambridge – my interests aligned with the mission of the REB, and I gravitated to the opportunity.

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

**Rose:** A couple of ideas: 1) As a supplement to one-on-one discussions with employers, the REB could send a quarterly newsletter to the head of human resources of the companies in key industries in the region. The publication could address the REB's work, what we can do for them, and how they might support our initiatives. 2) There seems to be a decrease of available spots at voc-tech schools. This might be a good opportunity for the REB to connect not only with people who want to pursue a college degree, but to also reach out to vocational schools and unions to see if they can make connections to help address potential workforce shortages down the road.

**Paul:** Can you tell us something that we would be surprised to learn about you?

**Rose:** I have my motorcycle license. I don't (at least yet) have a motorcycle of my own.

#### Member #2: Danny LeBlanc

Danny LeBlanc is Executive Director of Somerville Community Corporation, and long-time REB member.

**Paul:** Tell us a little about your company.

**Danny:** We are a non-profit version of the Community Development Corporation. We essentially look out for the development of the economy locally – with, and on behalf of, low- and moderate-income individuals. Working in Greater Boston, and Somerville specifically, for the last 30 years, the development and preservation of affordable housing is probably the single biggest thing that we've done. I've been there as CEO for 14 years.

**Paul:** How did you choose this profession?

**Danny:** I had been involved in anti-war demonstrations, and I happened upon a community organizing job in 1978 (though I thought I was going to be a teacher).

**Paul:** What led you to become involved with the REB?

**Danny:** I was asked by a member of the Economic Development staff of the city. I knew a little about WIBs at that point but had never served on one, and I agreed to become a member.

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

**Danny:** There are organizations like mine that have very close connections to low- and moderate-income individuals – so perhaps the REB can work with these organizations to better understand how to work with unemployed individuals and to help get them through the pipeline – e.g., learn about how to work with people, how to identify their needs, etc.

**Paul:** Can you tell us something that we would be surprised to learn about you?

**Danny:** When I got that community organizing job in 1977, and I had to choose between that, and going to the Berklee School of Music – my other potential career was a jazz pianist.

### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Highlights: Linda Bass**

Linda gave a brief presentation on how WIOA might impact Metro North (see PowerPoint presentation). Draft regulations will be out on January 22, 2015. Currently the REB is trying to influence regulations before they are issued, however once they are issued (in January), the REB will have an opportunity to comment, and influence that. This will be important for us to do. Partial implementation will begin on July 1, 2015.

### **Business Engagement Discussion: Facilitated by Joanna Dowling**

WIOA emphasizes a business-driven approach to addressing workforce needs, and there is also a current trend of grantors requiring intensive participation by business in new initiatives, e.g., work experience, OJT, internships, commitment to interview, etc. Yet, almost all workforce development organizations struggle with gaining business participation – why? What can we do to change the relationship between business and workforce development and the education system? The primary question is: How can we convincingly frame what we do as a joint effort of business and workforce development/education?

### Member Comments and Suggestions:

- Employer incentives – what’s in it for the employer? Use a marketing approach
- Give employers funded projects and have someone work with them (it can be difficult for staff to work with interns while getting their own work done)
- Model for internships: project-based and interface with company objectives
- Interns should have a basic competency level before they start to work for a company
- Give options to employers – job shadows, tours, etc.
- Involve “younger” staff at companies
- Targeted business-led roundtable discussions
- Take a business-led approach
- Tailor message to employers so it meets each specific employer’s objective
- Diversity – although not necessarily a driver for participation, it is a component
- Success story examples: “business champion” – “this is how it worked for us”
- Internships can be competitive – maybe co-ops (e.g., Northeastern)
- Businesses need talent pipelines – “biggest issue”
- Who are the customers? Youth, grad students, career changers, unemployed, etc.

- Reach Higher Program: Women reentering the workforce
- Temp to perm: Partner with quality temp agencies
- Small business community (share experiences, successes, failure) – what’s the value added? Small HR department.
- Keep legislators informed; this can affect policy.

Linda mentioned that time will be set aside at the December meeting to continue this discussion.

**REB Survey: Linda Bass**

Most members indicated they would like meetings to continue to be held on Wednesdays, although this is a difficult day for other members. After a brief discussion, it was decided that this subject will be discussed further at the December REB meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

**The next REB meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 10, 2014, 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM.**