

Worcester Jobs Fund Oversight Committee

May 27, 2021

10:00 a.m.

Via WebEx

Meeting Minutes

WJF Oversight Committee Attendance: Karen Pelletier, Fred Taylor, Adrianna Buduski, Jeffrey Turgeon, Maritza Cruz, Janice Ryan Weekes, Isabel Gonzalez-Webster, and Ruth Seward

WJF Staff: Kelsey Lamoureux and Theodora Appiah.

Guest: Ethan Brown

- The meeting was called to order after a quorum was established.
- All attendees introduced themselves, their positions and their organizations.

Approval of April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

- The meeting minutes from the April 22, 2021 virtual meeting were reviewed and J. Turgeon made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by A. Buduski and unanimously approved.

Economic Development Updates:

- E. Brown informed the committee that there are no updates on TIF applications at this time.
- E. Brown provided updates on the new WuXi project design, including their additional square footage and increased production lines that have been added. E. Brown shared that diversity goals are being included in the subcontractor bid documents by the WuXi team.
- E. Brown reviewed changes that have been implemented to increase diverse business involvement on construction projects, including revised reporting forms, additional projects being added to the compliance review, identification of barriers that prevent diverse businesses from applying for bids, as well as the exploration of a disparity study to analyze need for diverse business ownership goals.
- I. Gonzalez-Webster expressed support for the City to hire a compliance officer to monitor the diverse owned businesses hired as subcontractors on contracts. M. Cruz also offered support for an additional staff person to assist with this work. E. Brown stated that funding for this position has been requested with the FY22 annual budget. I. Gonzalez-Webster suggested adding this topic to the next Construction Diversity Monitoring Committee agenda.

WJF Financial Update:

- K. Lamoureux presented an overview of the financial reports for the Worcester Jobs Fund, Washington Square, and Department of Transportation accounts through April 2021. K. Lamoureux provided updated participant numbers for current and future FY 2021 programming.

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WJF Director Report:

- K. Lamoureux provided updates on current programs, completed programs, programs in recruitment and SNAP updates. Current programs include IT Support Specialist, Clinical Medical Assistant, School Bus Driver, CDL A and CDL B training provided through the Worcester Job Fund, Donnelly Grant, and Veteran's Grant. Programs currently in recruitment include Building Pathways, CDL B, HireMee's Medical Office Training, and QCC's Medical Administrative Assistant Training. Graduates from completed programs are currently seeking employment or are in the retention phase of employment.
- K. Lamoureux shared that SNAP application assistance will continue in FY2021 and has a goal to support at least 50 households with their applications by September 2022.
- E. Brown inquired about whether the EPA grant needs funding from the Jobs Fund. J. Turgeon stated that the only funding needed from the Jobs Fund, is staff time to support Bounce training for participants.
- I. Gonzalez-Webster expressed support for the creation of a one page report to highlight the successes of the Worcester Jobs Fund over the past year. K. Lamoureux shared that a video interview was recently completed with a CDL B graduate who is employed at Worcester DPW&P.
- F. Taylor inquired about revisions to training plans due to COVID-19 restrictions being lifted. K. Lamoureux provided details about how each program is being adjusted to increase in-person learning, where safe to do so.

Worcester Night Life Diesel Tech Grant:

- R. Seward provided a summary of MDESE Career and Technical Education (CTE) partnership Implementation Grant that has been awarded to Worcester Night Life to create a 10-month Diesel Technician Pre-apprenticeship training program at the new South Community High School. The program will consist of 900-hour curriculum, including CDL training, and is estimated to start September 13, 2021. R. Seward requested support to recruit for the program.
- R. Seward shared information about additional grants and programs through Worcester Night Life, including the ESOL Welding grant to begin in November 2021. K. Pelletier inquired about the cost of the Diesel Technician program and R. Seward stated that the goal is to offer scholarships to applicants and only charge modest tuition to students. A. Buduski shared tuition reimbursement strategies that are used by other programs in the area. J. Turgeon suggested involving employer partners in the recruitment process to gain applicants. K. Lamoureux suggested embedding the CDL training at the end of the program prevent students from leaving program during training.

WANTO Grant:

- K. Lamoureux provided a summary of the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Technical Assistance Grant Program estimated to start FY2022. The proposed project would allow five pre-apprentice building trades programs across the state to increase outreach and enrollment of women, especially those of color, in their programs. The deadline for the WANTO grant is June 4, 2021.

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Coding Dojo:

- K. Lamoureux provided a detailed summary of Coding Dojo, a 16-week or 28-week part-time web-developing program. Coding Dojo teaches Web Fundamentals (HTML, CSS, basic JavaScript) and the full Python programming stack through remote learning. J. Turgeon noted that employer partners could be connected to a pilot of 5 students to build the program. K. Pelletier and J. Ryan Weekes acknowledged the benefits of the program opening another avenue to connect job seekers with the digital industry. I. Gonzalez-Webster made a motion to fund five seats in the Coding Dojo program. The motion was seconded by F. Taylor and was unanimously approved.

Other Items/Announcements:

- K. Pelletier shared that the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Game Charger Expo on June 14, 2021-June 17, 2021.
- F. Taylor announced that the Juneteenth Flag Raising ceremony will be on June 12, 2021 at City Hall at 11:45 a.m. and the Black Heritage Juneteenth Festival will be held virtually on Saturday June 12, 2020 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- F. Taylor shared information about the DA Accountability meeting on May 27, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.

Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by F. Taylor, was seconded M. Cruz, and was unanimously approved.

The next monthly meeting will be Thursday June 24, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.