



**NIAGARA COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

Joel Feuerman, Chairperson
Bonnie Rice, Executive Director

Trott Career Center
1001 Eleventh Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14301-1201
Phone: (716) 278-8251
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Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2021
ZOOM Conference: Video and Audio Conference

Members Present: Paul Brown, William Carroll, Michael Casale, Lindsay Collins, Joel Feuerman, Kathleen Granchelli, Tom Grzebinski, Jennifer Jackson, John Lang, Michael Martin, Dennis Martinez, David Miller, Bob Palka, John Scherrer, Tom Seaman, Suzanne Shears, Todd Zyra

Members Excused: Katie Bongiovanni, John Hartwell, Cathy Lattanzio, Kory Schuler, Jerald Wolfgang

Members Absent: Tim Lederhaus, Kevin McCabe

WDB Staff: Helen Dennis, Joanne Klemer, Bonnie Rice

Guests/Staff Present: Donald Jablonski – Niagara County Employment & Training

I. Call to Order

Due to the nature of Zoom and recorded meetings, Executive Director Bonnie Rice conducted the meeting with Chair Joel Feuerman's permission. The meeting was called to order by B. Rice at 8:04 a.m. through video and audio-conferencing using ZOOM. The meeting was recorded, and notes were taken to later be available on the Niagara WDB website. B. Rice noted that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Sunshine Laws for New York State had been waived. Advertisements for the meeting were placed in local newspapers and online so that the public would be able to attend. B. Rice noted that no requests were made by the public to attend today. H. Dennis took attendance. Attendance is listed above. Quorum was present. The agenda and informational materials were distributed to members through email prior to the meeting.

- A.** J. Feuerman took a moment to welcome the following **newly appointed Board members:** Katie Bongiovanni of Orleans Niagara BOCES (replacing Joe Steinmetz who recently retired), David Miller of Gothic Hill Golf Course, and Tom Grzebinski of Gantry, Inc. J. Feuerman also thanked all members for their regular attendance and participation in meetings.

II. Old Business

B. Rice reviewed the agenda items section by section:

- B.** Meeting minutes for March 9, 2021: Board Members received the meeting minutes in the informational materials emailed prior to the meeting. B. Rice asked the Board for a motion to approve the March minutes as presented. Motion made by W. Carroll. Second by D. Martinez. Abstained by D. Miller and T. Grzebinski as they are new members. **Unanimous vote in favor of approval of the March 9, 2021 meeting minutes.**
- C.** March 15, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting were presented as a matter of record to the Board. No vote was necessary.



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III. Old Business – Previously Approved by WDB Executive Committee

Information regarding each item was distributed to the Board members through email prior to the meeting. The following items needed to be reviewed and voted on by the Board.

- A. B. Rice informed the Board that the Executive Committee had voted unanimously on March 15, 2021, to award Purplegator for a Youth Advertising Contract based on the recommendation of the Youth Advertising RFP Review Committee. The Executive Committee approved a recommendation based on the Youth Advertising RFP Review Committee and after discussing Purplegators proposal. B. Rice explained that Purplegator is currently under contract in an amount of \$149,796. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. No questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the Executive Committees approval of fully funding the award for the Youth Advertising proposal to Purplegator in the amount of up to \$150,000. Motion made by B. Carroll. Second by D. Martinez. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote for the approval of the Executive Committee vote for the award for the Youth Advertising proposal to Purplegator in the amount of up to \$150,000.**

IV. New Business

- A. B. Rice informed the Board that after Purplegator was awarded the contract based on the Executive Committee vote, contract negotiations and specific details of the contract took some time away from Purplegator's awarded contract time. Original contract end date is June 30, 2021. Based on the above, B. Rice asked the Board to approve a contract extension for Purplegator. The extension will include July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the contract extension for Purplegator to include July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. Motion made by K. Granchelli. Second by J. Lang. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote for the approval of the contract extension for Purplegator to include July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.**
- B. J. Klemer reviewed the PY20 Budget for WIOA Youth. J. Klemer informed the Board that \$7,000 would be moved from Operational to Staff and \$10,000 would be moved from Youth Training to Supportive /Other, which includes the budget for Youth work experience, incentives/supplies/support and transportation costs. These moves will ensure funding is available for the remainder of Program Year 2020 which ends June 30, 2021. J. Klemer asked if there were any questions. M. Casale asked if funding would still be available for youth training if the need arose. J. Klemer stated that these specific funds were dedicated for Youth Training. We have not used these specific funds this program year, but if the need arises before June 30th we can move funds back into this category. Moving these funds will keep funding for the youth but rededicate it to categories that the youth are needing/receiving the funds. T. Grzebinski asked if the money coming out of operational is because money is below the budget amount. J. Klemer responded that yes, among those categories we're moving \$7,000 but can still ensure that the remaining funds will cover those categories. The move to staff time is due to staff dedicating more time to Youth based on the number of youth being served. No further questions were brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve to amend the PY20 Budget for WIOA Youth as presented. Motion made by M. Casale. Second by B. Carroll. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote to approve to amend the PY20 Budget for WIOA Youth as presented.**



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- C. B. Rice reviewed with the Board the amendment to extend the One-Stop System Operator contract for one (1) year in the amount of \$12,000. B. Rice stated that per the One-Stop System Operator Contract the Board has the option for two (2) one-year extensions; this would be the first one-year extension. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the Amendment #1 to extend Don Jablonski, of Niagara County Employment and Training, as the One-Stop System Operator for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$12,000. Motion made by T. Zyra. Second by T. Grzebinski. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote to approve Amendment #1 to extend the One-Stop System Operator for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.**
- D. B. Rice reviewed with the Board that Pharmacy Technician can be added to the Demand Occupation List for Classroom Training (CRT) for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funding. B. Rice informed the Board that there are currently two training providers willing to sponsor this training. B. Rice opened the floor for further questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to add Pharmacy Technician to the Demand Occupation List for CRT. Motion made by S. Shears. Second by W. Carroll. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote to approve Pharmacy Technician to the Demand Occupation List for CRT.**
- E. B. Rice reviewed with the Board that updates had been made to the WIOA Youth Program Incentives Policy. The policy updates give Youth Providers better guidelines for the documentation needed to award incentives to Youth. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the updates to the WIOA Youth Program Incentives Policy. Motion made by D. Miller. Second by J. Lang. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote to approve the updates to the WIOA Youth Program Incentives Policy.**
- F. B. Rice reviewed with the Board the update to the On-the-Job (OJT) training policy. Adding ride sharing gift cards to the policy adds another option for transportation assistance for a participant who is receiving OJT funding. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the updates to the On-the-Job training policy. Motion made by K. Granchelli. Second by S. Shears. All in favor. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote to approve the updates to the On-the-Job training policy.**
- G. *Note: Section G will contain two votes. B. Rice informed the Board that the discussion of item G on the agenda required any representatives for the current Young Adult and Youth Services to exit the meeting. Members J. Wolfgang from Niagara County Community College (NCCC) and K. Bongiovanni from Orleans Niagara BOCES (ONBOCES) were not in attendance during the meeting. D. Jablonski representing Niagara County Employment and Training (NCET) was asked to exit the meeting. B. Rice will allow his call to be placed back into the meeting, after the discussion. B. Rice informed the Board that she would be presenting information regarding the RFP for Young Adult and Youth Services and would be asking the Board to consider not funding any WIOA Youth proposals for the coming year. B. Rice informed the Board that she would also ask for the continued support for Niagara County Employment and Training to operate their successful in-house WIOA Youth program. B. Rice provided the Board with some background information regarding the WIOA Youth funding and outcomes.



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- a. Last year (PY19) the WDB was about \$400,000 behind in WIOA Youth funding due to many years of underspent Youth contracts. NYSDOL put the WDB on notice because we had two prior years of WIOA Youth funding that was past due to be spent. We are supposed to spend or obligate at least 80% of the funds during the year they are awarded.
- b. For the duration of the current year (PY20) the Board ensured the past-due funds were spent appropriately by approving two WIOA Youth advertising campaigns and one outreach event to attract Youth into the available Youth Programs offered by NCET, NCCC, and ONBOCES. This has brought us to the point where we are spending in the proper year, with the appropriate amount of carry-in funds.
- c. For PY21 an RFP for Young Adult and Youth Services was issued in April 2021. An RFP Review Committee was formed to review the proposals. At the time of the Review Committee, the best estimate for funding was “up to” \$150,000. The amount was an estimate without seeing invoices for Quarter 3 for the current Youth Subrecipients or expenditures for NCET’s in-house Youth Program. Once the invoices were received and reviewed, it became evident that we do not have enough money or Youth Subrecipients.
- d. New York State also sent a preliminary budget for PY21, showing a cut in youth funding. Our allocation will be a \$57,578 decrease in funding from the prior year – down 8% from last year. This allocation is based on adjusted unemployment rates relative to other areas within NYS.
- e. During the RFP Review Committee meeting, the Review Committee members wanted to recommend NOT funding any of the proposals. The recommendation was based on past performance and the quality of the three reviewed proposals. Review Committee members felt there were no innovative or creative ideas in the proposals. They also felt the programs had not achieved the goals they had established for their programs, including poor training, spending, work experience and enrollment outcomes.

The floor was opened for questions. B. Rice asked K. Granchelli and D. Martinez if they wanted to add anything to the discussion as they were both Review Committee Members. K. Granchelli commented that she had been a part of the Review Committee and participated in previous reviews for Youth Subrecipients over the past 20 years. She noted that for this review it was challenging to find a standout as all three proposals felt “phoned-in”. The outcomes regarding past performance from the applicants was low and the biggest concern was that funding was not spent on Youth. She also noted that one of the Review Committee members works in the Youth serving industry and they had commented that none of the proposals were for programs she had heard of. She stated that the Committee members wanted to focus on a proposal that had outcomes. D. Martinez added that the proposals were lackluster with no innovation. B. Rice reviewed with the Board the PY20 outcomes and performance of the current Youth Subrecipients from June 30, 2020 to March 31, 2021. One Youth Subrecipient contracted to provide services to 60 youth, had provided services to 32 youth, with 6 of those youth obtaining training outcomes, 2 youth receiving a work experience and a total of 38 incentives being paid. One Youth Subrecipient contracted to provide



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services to 105 youth, had provided services to 23 youth, with 0 (zero) obtaining training outcomes, 0 work experiences and no incentives being paid. B. Rice noted that per contract and per WIOA law, there is a 20% work experience requirement and both youth programs were routinely reminded of this. B. Rice also noted that the in-house Youth Program with NCET had served 68 youth, 37 of those youth obtained training outcomes, 28 youth received a work experience and 149 incentives were paid during the same time frame. B. Rice shared information from the recent quarterly New York State Monitoring report. The report illustrates the under-performance of both Subrecipients on services provided, spending, and not meeting the 20% work experience requirement. B. Rice opened the floor for further questions. No further questions. B. Rice asked the Board for a motion to approve enacting the clause in the Young Adult and Youth Services RFP for PY21 which allows the Board to reject any and all proposals, and to approve NOT funding any proposals for WIOA Youth Subrecipients for PY21, which covers July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. Motion made by J. Feuerman. Second by T. Zyra. All in favor. **Unanimous vote to approve enacting the clause in the Young Adult and Youth Services RFP for PY21 which allows the Board to reject any and all proposals, and to approve NOT funding any proposals for WIOA Youth Subrecipients for PY21 which covers July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021.** B. Rice informed the Board that based on advisement from NYS Department of Labor representatives, she is asking for a motion to determine that the WIOA grant recipient/fiscal agent, Niagara County Employment and Training (NCET), is capable of providing the WIOA Youth Services. Motion made by M. Casale. Second by J. Lang. B. Rice opened the floor for further questions. B. Carroll asked for clarification if the vote was for reallocating who the agent is. B. Rice confirmed this and went on to state that the Board had previously created a policy to transition any youth remaining on a program that became unfunded to NCET's in-house program. Current Youth in either subrecipient program will continue to receive services through NCET. B. Carroll asked if there was an opportunity to create a referral program. B. Rice stated that WIOA does not reward enrollees who refer others into the program, but it is encouraged and in many cases family members are referred. Occasionally, Youth do bring their friends into the program as well. T. Grzebinski asked how we would be able to reach potential Youth at NCCC or ONBOCES. B. Rice explained that while ONBOCES and NCCC operated as Youth Subrecipients, NCET limited its outreach to those specific areas. When the NCCC and ONBOCES contracts end and they are no longer Youth Subrecipients, NCET will be able to conduct outreach in those areas. NCET has long standing relationships with both NCCC and ONBOCES and will continue to provide services for Youth in these areas. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice reviewed that a motion had been made by M. Casale, and second by J. Lang. All in favor. None opposed. All in favor. **Unanimous vote to determine that the WIOA grant recipient/fiscals agent (Niagara County Employment and Training) is capable of providing the WIOA Youth Services.**

- H. J. Klemer provided the Board with an overview of the PY21 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) Budget. She reviewed the four funding streams under the WIOA program for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Administration. For each funding stream she reviewed the available



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amounts, the funds from the previous year, the current allocations, and the possible need to transfer money. She noted that these were the estimates to start out the year. J. Klemer reviewed the four budget categories for each funding stream of Staff Costs, Operational, Training and Support Services. The total budget is for Adult is \$800,000. The total budget is for Dislocated Worker is \$512,500. The total budget is for Youth is \$722,000. The total budget is for Administration is \$222,000. J. Klemer opened the floor for questions. T. Grzebinski asked where the training budget money is used for. B. Rice responded that WIOA supports Classroom Training, On-the-Job Training and Customized Training. B. Rice noted that for PY20 we have sponsored 82 Classroom Trainings and 42 On-the-Job Trainings (OJTs). The number of OJTs is a marked increase from last year. She stated that given the dearth of job seekers, employers are willing to take a chance on individuals that apply but don't have the training to perform their job duties. We are able to support those business with OJT training money. M. Martin noted the available amount does not match the budgeted amount, and questioned if the difference is going to the planned carry out. J. Klemer responded that we always want to carry-in some funds into the next year; the funds are to be spent over two years. The first year we need to spend or obligate approximately 80% and we can carry-in up to 20%. J. Klemer explained we don't try to max out the budget, we currently plan and anticipate to spend 94% of the current program year. We want to be sure to reach the 80% rate but still give ourselves some carry-in to reach PY22. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the PY21 Budget as presented. Motion made by D. Miller. Seconded by M. Martin. All in favor. **Unanimous vote to approve the PY21 Budget as presented.**

V. Other

- A. B. Rice played videos created by Purplegator for the WIOA Youth Advertising contract for the Board Members.
- B. For the record, NCET for PY21 plans to serve 75 WIOA enrolled Youth.

VI. Informational Items

- A. D. Jablonski gave his One-Stop System Operator update. He reviewed with the Board accomplishments since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. With One-Stop Centers being closed, currently some are still closed, Niagara County Employment and Training (NCET) was able to switch to remote work and provide services remotely to customers. After a few weeks, staff was able to return to the Career Center 2-3 days per week and continue to serve customers remotely and in person. By June 2020, staff was able to return 5 days per week with adjusted hours and the Career Center closing for an hour each day to deep clean the center and take lunch breaks. This is something the Career Center will continue to do as hours return to "normal" starting July 6th. D. Jablonski shared with the Board that a wheelchair lift has been installed at the main door of the Career Center to allow for better accessibility and has made the Center fully ADA compliant. Over the past year, NCET has held outdoor career fairs: two on the front lawn of Trott, another at Oppenheim Park. All allowed job seekers and businesses to be outside and allowed for social distancing. Another career fair at Oppenheim Park is scheduled for June 9th (tomorrow) with 37 employers registered to attend and several employers on a wait list. D. Jablonski informed the Board that he has been meeting quarterly with One-Stop Partners. He noted that he is planning a Business Roundtable regarding recruitment and digital marketing,



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once further COVID restrictions are lifted, possibly September. D. Jablonski also noted that NCET has increased business outreach and has done a record number of OJT contracts and free job postings. NCET has also created a YouTube Channel with videos on how to tie a tie, resumes and interviewing tips. They have plans for a podcast, and plan to host Meet the Employer events as well as business audio and video segments. NCET has started work on the TANF Summer Youth Employment Program with plans to enroll 100 youth. D. Jablonski asked if Board members had any questions or comments. K. Granchelli asked regarding job applicants if other businesses were seeing an increase as she hasn't, even with outreach. D. Jablonski answered that even with the One-Stop Center open, center traffic is down 50%. One issue is people who are making more being on unemployment than what their previous job paid. It is very difficult to recruit right now. He noted that the Center has helped 132 people find jobs this year, but that number is behind from what is normally accomplished. Things may change in the Fall when benefits change. B. Rice added that many women have been strongly affected by this downturn; many have to stay home because children are on remote school, or they can't find an open day care. The hope is that things will improve as the benefits end and the economy changes. D. Jablonski added that NCET has seen daycare centers go out of business, which will lead to issues for demand as the economy improves.

- B.** D. Martinez updated the Board regarding the Inclusion Committee. The Inclusion Committee is currently working on three projects: one to recognize a business in the county that has hired people with disabilities, a second to offer training to Career Center staff on adaptive equipment for customers who may be visually impaired, and a third project planning a virtual business workshop in November on retention services available to help existing employees who are developing a disability that may impact their ability to retain their jobs and the business's ability to retain its employees. The next Inclusion Committee meeting is July 29th. If anyone is interested in participating, please reach out to D. Martinez as they would like to have some input from businesses.
- C.** B. Rice opened the floor to Board Members who would like to make an announcement or update the Board.
- a. K. Granchelli shared with the Board that funds for tenants and landlords with back rent based around the pandemic have been distributed to the county. The funds are paid directly to landlords. If anyone has questions, they can reach out to her.
 - b. M. Casale shared with the Board that he is part of the Invest Buffalo Niagara group, a regional business attraction group. Invest Buffalo Niagara hired a Site Selection Consultant to do a WNY Industrial Real Estate Strategy to look at the industrial real estate vacancy rate in the region and compare it to comparable metro areas. Niagara County's available industrial real estate is very, very low (below 2.5%). This results in the region losing projects because we have no place to put companies looking to invest. M. Casale noted there are 158 recommended actions in the areas of business recruitment, incentives, marketing, recruitment readiness, site development readiness, and workforce development. Three committees have been established for incentives (M. Casale will be on), site development readiness, and workforce development committee which D. Jablonski will be on. Eventually the regional WDBs will be brought into the conversation to make sure incoming projects can be supported. M. Casale stated he would update the Board as more information becomes available.



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- c. S. Shears with Niagara Community Action Program shared that they have a child care resource and referral program that has a list of local registered child care providers for families seeking child care. Information is available on the website, along with other funding and services.
- d. M. Martin with Native American Community Services shared with Board members that NACS can bring federal money into the workforce area by serving Native Americans who are employed by a business. He also shared that the organization has been tasked with incorporating 15 additional counties to provide them with services.

No further announcements were brought forward.

IV. Adjournment

B. Rice thanked the members in attendance for their time and requested a motion to adjourn. Motion made by J. Lang. Second by M. Martin. Unanimous vote in favor of adjournment. The Workforce Development Board meeting was **adjourned at 9:07 a.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2021.**

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Dennis