

**Meeting Minutes, One Stop Partners Meeting
September 28, 2021**

Bonnie Rice called the meeting to order via zoom.

Those in attendance were:

Colleen Casali – Native American Community Services (NACS)
Don Jablonski - Niagara County Employment & Training (NCET)
Jennifer Jackson - NYSDOL
Luke Kantor - Iroquois Job Corps (IJC)
Monica LoPoyda - Niagara County Community College (NCCC)
Brian Michel - Niagara County Community College (NCCC)
Bonnie Rice - Niagara County Workforce Development Board (WDB)
Suzanne Shears - Niagara Community Action Program (NiaCAP)
Patricia Stovall - PathStone
Chandra Wingrove - Niagara County Employment & Training (NCET)

Bonnie Rice then turned the meeting over to Don Jablonski to give a One Stop Career Center update.

Don Jablonski thank those in attendance for attending the meeting and gave an update on the One Stop Career Center. Since June of 2021, the Career Center has been open regular hours with the exception of 12 pm to 1 pm for cleaning and sanitizing. The Career Center is seeing more traffic and is anticipating more. There have been more recruitment events with businesses and service organizations, which has shown the tremendous need. The Veterans Department has come back into the Career Center and we are glad to welcome them back. Don shared that DOL has come back into their remodeled office space and are offering virtual services at this time.

Currently, bids are being reviewed for the One Stop Career Center updates. Eventually there will be a reconfiguration of the Career Center; Don will ask for recommendation at that time. The self check-in kiosks for customers in the Career Center will be being installed soon. The kiosks will assist Career Center staff in checking in customers and collecting more accurate data for the Career Center. Career Center traffic has seen an increase since the Labor Day holiday. It is assumed that this increase comes from the Extended Unemployment and Enhance Benefits no longer being offered. Don shared that they should have more accurate numbers by the end of the month.

Don Jablonski asked Chandra Wingrove to share with the Partners what the Career Center is seeing.

Chandra Wingrove shared with the Partners that customers are coming in with questions as to why benefits have ended. Career Center staff assist customers as best they can and encourage customers to access Career Center services such as resume services, open interviews, and other job seeker needs.

Don Jablonski shared with that Partners that 39 On-the-Job Training customers have been funded, and 75 Classroom Training customers have had their tuition, books, and transportation funded through Career Center services. Don noted that businesses are desperate for qualified workers. Manufacturing, Health care and Hospitality industries are looking for qualified workers. Regarding health care, nurses can't graduate fast enough to meet employer needs. NCET is looking forward to getting into the classrooms and let the students know how we can help pay their tuitions in the last year of their degrees

and training. There are 147 confirmed new jobs by customers from the Career Center. Chandra Wingrove commented that this exceeds last year's numbers, but to keep in mind that last year was a unique year.

NCET is looking for usable space in Lockport to serve more people in Niagara County. It is difficult for some customers to get to Trott. Even with tech and virtual meetings, some customers still prefer coming into the Career Center.

Regarding the Occidental Chemical closure, 128 jobs are being lost and a lot of them are highly skilled positions including professional engineering positions. A few have taken severance and gained new employment. Affected employees have received letters regarding services that the Career Center provides. There may be a ripple effect as OcciChem provided various gases and chemicals to local manufacturers. NCET's Business Services team is working with NCCED and the County Legislature to come up with solutions. Transportation is an issue as CSX is the main transportation service. Looking into other rail service providers to get into the county.

Don shared with the Partners that two Career Fairs have been held since the last meeting. One held at Ida Fritz Park in Lockport had a great turnout of 40 businesses and over 100 job seekers, and the other will take place tomorrow (September 21) at Oppenheim Park with 54 businesses planning to attend. Don also thanked the Partners as many assisted with advertisement of the career fairs. Chandra added that the Partners sharing flyers and assisting with advertising is what helps the Career Fairs be so successful. She added that 5 Career Fairs have been held this year, which is the most ever held and each has been successful.

Employee focused grant services with Probation has been renewed for 2022. The program has been a great success and the program has meet all goals for the last three years. The grant covers staff salary and items for customers in the program who need clothing, transportation and other assistance with obtaining a job to prevent recidivism. Chandra has been instrumental in running the program, along with her team. Chandra added that if any of the Partners know of any businesses willing to take on someone with barriers to employment or a criminal background to let her know. Many of the program participants are eager to find employment and the grant provides a readiness curriculum prior to employment.

Over the next few months, Don would like to meet with each of the Partner agencies to reintroduce and reconnect to better understand what each agency does in order to reestablish relationships. In the future, Don plans to hold a business round table with the Partners and local businesses so that the businesses know what is offered in the community as well.

In conjunction with the Niagara County Workforce Development Board, NCET has received two substantial grants that specifically target youth in Zip codes where there is an inordinate amount of gun violence. One grant extends the summer youth program to the end of the year (WIOA SYEP). The second grant (NYS GVP) pays up to 90% of the wages for new hires (up to \$4,000) and provides wrap-around services for the youth. NCET will be able to assist the youth with gaining real, substantial, long-term employment.

Don asked Bonnie Rice for an update on the MOU. Bonnie shared that there is still a wait on the MOU review from NYS. When she hears further, she will update the Partners of next steps. Signatures will be done electronically and if Partners are unsure of the process Bonnie is happy to assist.

Bonnie commented on the grants Don spoke of earlier, the WIOA SYEP program already has 31 of the 40 youth enrolled. The grant is for youth ages 14-24. The grant can be spent down until December 31st. The NYS GVP grant, which covers 90% OJT, is for youth ages 18-24, and 75% of the youth must live in the Zip codes for Niagara Falls and up to 25% can live in the City of Lockport. If the Partners know of any youth in those zip codes looking to connect to employers or employers looking to hire, contact Bonnie so that she can assist with making those connections.

Bonnie shared that the WDB Inclusion Committee is scheduling a session November 3rd for a business panel discussing diversity, equity and inclusion: the How, What, Why? The focus will be on how a business can retain employees who become disabled with different measures to accommodate them, as well as the funding and materials available through the Career Center and ACCES-VR. The event is free. Five local employers will be speaking on the panel.

Bonnie shared that the Youth Committee met recently and was updated about the earlier youth grant opportunities.

Bonnie also shared that if any Partners have any employment or training or workforce needs, to get in touch with Bonnie and she will be more than happy to assist in making available connections.

Don thanked Bonnie for her update. Don opened the floor to the Partners who would like to make any announcements or updates to their organization.

Bonnie shared an update from Suzanne Shears of NiaCAP. Suzanne has no audio but sent Bonnie an update prior to the meeting. NiaCAP's programs are continuing to be offered throughout Niagara County. If any of the Partners need information on their services, they can visit Niagaracap.org.

Brian Michel from NCCC shared that Niagara SBDC has an office in the Bewley Building in Lockport, the lease agreement is up at the end of the calendar year and the office is open to looking other locations around Lockport to maintain their presence. Brian offered the idea of a joint presence with NCET. Don commented that he would be open to having that conversation.

Brian will be making introducing Don and Bonnie with a local business to make connections and share information regarding the One Stop Career Center and all it has to offer.

Brian also shared that he has a press release being reviewed by NCCC PR, which contains information about what the Career Center has to offer. Brian also shared that there could be a chance for marketing assistance with NCCC Workforce Development, it is a conversation that he can have with Bonnie and Don at a later date. Brian is also working with Bonnie to set up a presentation to NCCC's Academic Council and a few other offices in the Student Services division that would benefit to hear of the services available through the Career Center.

Colleen Casali from NACS shared that she recently returned from the National Indian and Native American Employment and Training Conference which is a specific conference for the 166 and 477 areas of the WIOA program. There were presentations from DOL representatives that reviewed the Law and shared that WIOA funds could not be used for outreach, but it could be used for advertising and marketing. Colleen was unsure if this only affected related Native American parts of the law, or if it was something NCET should look into. Don thanked Colleen for the information and commented that with the limited funding and limit of advertising it's hard for NCET and many of the Partners to be known by the community for their available services. Advertising dollars would go a long way.

Luke Kantor from IJC shared that 75 students have recently started, they have slowly been building their numbers back since the COVID shut down. New students have a virtual start for the first eight weeks for almost all Job Corps Nationally. They receive a Chromebook and hot spot. IJC is getting lots of calls from businesses looking for staff, and there is a waitlist for many of the programs for interested students. Congressman Jacobs visited and had a tour of the center. There are two open admissions positions, IJC is looking to grow their teams in Medina and Rochester. Next Workforce council is November 4th for those who would like to attend. The Workforce council discusses trade industry, connects with a lot of businesses, unions, national training companies. There is also a Community Relations council meeting in December which meets to discuss what is going on in the community and how to help. SST training is required in NYC, IJC is looking to offer the training. Bonnie noted that should NCET encounter customers requesting this training they will be referred to IJC. Vaccine mandate has been affecting centers and could pose an issue in future with staffing.

Patricia Stovall from Pathstone shared that the Lockport office at 9 Ontario Street is open. They are recruiting for new staff and have received an increase in funds which will enable them to further serve Niagara County and are also looking to expand and serve other counties. Participants are being seen by appointment and they have been able to serve those who need to utilize the food pantry. They are also offering free training and incentives. Pat and Luke plan to connect to discuss trainings and presentations for each other's organizations.

Colleen Casali from NACS added that they are still closed to the public, but they are working in the office and doing remote meetings with clients. They are expanding staff and have opportunities in Rochester and Syracuse. Colleen would also like to connect with Pat and Luke to discuss trainings and presentations for each other's organizations.

Don Jablonski thanked the Partners for their participation as this was an extremely productive meeting. Don asked the group if there are any other announcements. There being none, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Don Jablonski, Director Employment & Training.