

Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board

Minutes of March 10, 2021

Members Present: Ananda Sweet, Patrick Harper for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Ethan Brown, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Dan Blake for Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Becky Sandoval for Audra Verrier

Absent: Ed Barr, Paul Duranczyk, Michael Pickens, Steve Herrington, and Audra Verrier

Staff: Katie Greaves, Shaydra Ennis, Sharona Elfus-Schatzkin, Amanda Gayda, Manuel Benitez, Lupe Castaneda, Lonje Deschamps, Pedro Guevara, Tiffany Hill, Sarah Lewis-Crow, Michelle Revecho, Katie Stohlmann, Antonio Vigil, and Judy Oates

***Attendees with asterisks arrived late or departed early.**

I. Introductions and Public Comment

No comments.

II. Approve Minutes of January 13, 2021

Reviewed the minutes and action items of January 13, 2021.

Motion to approve the January 13, 2021 minutes: Stephen Jackson /s/ Steve Herron.

(Ananda Sweet, Patrick Harper for Ed Barr, Ethan Brown, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Dan Blake for Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Becky Sandoval for Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes and Robin Bartholow abstained. The motion carried.

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III. Announcements

None.

IV. Overview of Regional and Local Workforce Plan Guidance

Katie shared an outline of the guidance received for our Local and Regional WIOA plan.

- We are winding up our previous plans and replacing them with new plans for 2021-2024 based on state directives to give us structure going forward. These plans are mandated, must be consistent with the vision and goals of the State plan, and are due April 30.
- There is recognition we are in the middle of a pandemic and we do not know the long-term effects on the Local, Regional, or State levels yet so changes/updates will be allowed at a later date.
- Both Regional and Local plans require stakeholder input and meetings have been set up to gather that. Both also require a 30-day public comment period.
- Want to include context from the Dr. Eyster presentation around what is included in our local program strategies as we emerging from COVID restrictions.
- A draft of the Local plan will be taken to the WIB Executive Committee in April for public comment and approval. The WIB Executive Committee approved plan will then go to the Board of Supervisors for approval before being submitted to the state.
- State plan goals include:
 - Strive to include a high road workforce system.
 - Fostering demand driven skills attainment.
 - Enable upward mobility.
 - Align and coordinate and integrate One-Stop services.
- Regional Plan goals for the North Bay Employment Connection (NBEC) made up of Sonoma, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, and Solano counties include:
 - Roadmap to bridge the Regional plan to the State plan
 - Use intentionality in our industry sector engagement.
 - Drive workforce development outcomes across the region.

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- Expand onramps to career pathways
- Continue to build our capacity to serve individuals with barriers
- Implement the goals in the State Plan
- Local Plan goals include
 - Operationalize and bridge the goals of the State and Regional plans in our programs.
 - Drive policy and coordination with local partners including the America’s Job Centers of California (AJCC) also referred to locally as Job Link.
 - Describe how we are going to deliver services.

V. Small Group Discussion and Report Out

Key Takeaways from Dr. Eyler’s Presentation

- Surprised with the positive outlook.
- Concern for training careers.
- The K-Shaped recovery directly relates to higher wage industries. This shows opportunities for re-training and re-placement for those in the lower industries.
- Compared different measuring points of sectors. Even though restaurants and hotels had biggest loss and need help, these jobs are not great prospects for career pathways for job seekers due to the income levels, specifically in high-cost living areas.
- Given that Leisure and Hospitality were the most impacted, we want to be sure Sonoma County is ready to sustain them when they re-open.
- Entry level business services jobs may decrease was surprising as those positions may be needed when we are able to go back to work.
- Students will most likely need counseling to help regain what was lost during the pandemic crisis.
- Some youth do not see a long term future in Sonoma County.

Given the takeaways from the presentation and workforce data shared, do we need to review and update our priority industries and our programs offered through Job Link? If so, what might need to be addressed?

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- Would like to know more regarding the careers that will be in demand coming out of the pandemic.
- What are occupations that are going to be growing with wage increases, how do we figure out what paths and which opportunities will be available? These appear to be moving targets.
- Health care will remain as a key industry sector. Mental health trained professionals are in short supply and the Pandemic has increased the demand for Mental health professionals. Apprenticeship programs in health care could be a great way for people to get more training in health care.
- Broadband is an emerging industry that we may need to highlight and support.
- Sonoma County specifically is very dependent on high-end restaurants, how do we help that particular industry?
 - Find a way to bring hotels, restaurants, and the wine industry to the table for discussion that they are inter-related and the primary cause they were so affected by COVID is the loss of jobs and there is a larger gap of wage disparity due to the jobs lost in that sector. Look at what they need to pay workers so that they will come to work and can afford to get to work.
 - Given that Leisure and Hospitality were the most impacted, we want to be sure Sonoma County is ready when we can re-open. As hospitality will be the last to recover - how long will it take to gain that back?
- How do we help people in those restaurant and hotel industries transition and apply those skill sets to other industries?
 - Soft skills are very prevalent in hospitality, can be applied anywhere.
 - Can we develop skills from hospitality workers into in-home care or other non-medical care positions?
 - Jobs that are more easily accessible are low-paying.
 - Sonoma losing short-term training providers (Empire College) limits our ability to upskill to living wage employment.
- Why are more people not looking for work at this time?

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- Job Link is not currently seeing the flood of job seekers that we normally would. Traffic may increase when benefits start running out.
- How many people are staying on unemployment insurance with the increased money and extensions?
- Waiting for their job to call them back in.
- Some people are worried about working outside the home or participating in programs due to fear of illness, or having someone at home who they are worried about infecting.
- This also could be a result of having schools closed and costs of ECE and childcare- could be a disincentive
- Funding.
 - WIB should follow the grant money (State and Federal) to target who has been hardest hit- industries or education providers (technical, language, etc.) so we having funding to support our efforts and take advantage of anything we can use locally and have an actual funding mechanism.
- Telework.
 - Work with employers about how to accommodate requests to work from home.
 - If workers can develop skills that can also accommodate employer needs; telework jobs will most likely still be prevalent, how do we identify those jobs and transition into and direct job seekers looking at those emerging occupations
- Transportation.
 - Affects all workers in some way.
 - There is a need to get to jobs, between job sites, etc.
 - Many youth are not getting their license until they are 18.
 - The expense of buying, owning, and maintaining a car can be prohibitive.

Do you have specific input for the Local Plan?

Local Plan 2021-2024, assuming two phases:

1) Emerging from COVID 2021-? What should WIB focus on during Phase 1? Are there any goals / metrics we should establish?

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- Focus should be demand driven. Would like to get numbers on need and the amount of jobs Job Link is able to get people placed and hired in. Hard to know what training to offer when the jobs are not really there. Have worked with temporary agencies like Nelson before so see what employers are asking them for. When they had five open positions for certified forklift classes offered that class and people took it and were hired into those positions. How can we get timely information and data trends so we know what to offer at sites like the Makers Space?
- Opportunities require strategic messaging. Promote careers that provide living wages (Trades, Information Tech, Manufacturing, etc.)
- Education – Santa Rosa Junior College's Virtual Career Workshops have seen a significant increase in attendance. These workshops are available to SRJC students/alumni and community members. They will be maintaining this model as we move forward.
- Medical for Phase 1 and 2. There are more tele-appointments now and need to emphasize medical education available. Our aging population will be here and need services. We need to meet their needs.
- Manufacturing: Resilient Industry in the short term; 4 added payroll during COVID through Q2.
- Short Term Focus on Lower Skilled Labor, possibly as equipment operators;
- Cannabis; Retail and Agricultural (Many programs being created in local educational institutions for these areas.
- Construction is slated to be one of the first back to full employment.
- Support leisure, hospitality, and Healthcare industries.
- Equity Should be part of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 goals.
 - Define it. Include definition of a good job, outreach efforts, list efforts we can take, refine what equity means to us.
 - Address equity issues with job losses and how to address needs of low income workers ability to return to work such as childcare.

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- Look at equity from the view of the economic growth of the county. If we are dedicated to workers we need to address the plight of low income workers and what put them there in the first place and address it from that perspective. We want to be intentional in what needs groups have and focus on helping people where they are at. Workforce opportunities are sustainable way to help people out of poverty.
- Train Job Link staff on helping the special populations and their unique challenges. Language is a big reason and then skills.
- People with disabilities are affected by equity as they were affected more with job loss during COVID and we are providing the training and other abilities to prepare and access jobs so they can rejoin the workforce.
- Thinking about the equity goal and given the surges of violence and discrimination reported throughout the nation against the Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) population, it may be interesting to add an examination of how AAPI business owners and workers have been impacted in Sonoma County.
- Transportation issues only exacerbate the equity issue.
 - Equity around the transportation/ability to get to the better jobs and work on internet access as a utility like power to more workers to work remotely AND support distance learning.
- Livable wage.
 - Look at what is a livable wage in Sonoma County. There are people working a 60 or 80 hour week to afford to live here.
 - Living wage information resources.
 - EDB often has the data of living wage framed in cost for a family of X
 - United Way publishes the Real Cost Measure
 - <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06097>
- Transportation.
 - A lot of youth and adults do not have money, drivers' licenses, and cars.

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- Bus lines and SMART are running at lower capacity and many are afraid to use them due to COVID. More creativity is needed here. If we give someone a bus pass will that actually work? We need to define what jobs need transportation (construction and medicine, e.g.) v. those that really don't?
- Engage youth so they do not move away.
 - A large number of young people cannot see themselves living here. What kind of industry can keep them here? Affordability is very tough.
 - Sonoma County does not incentivize youth to stay in the county long term. It is inaccessible transportation wise, which prevents the formation of communities, it is expensive, and the suburbs just don't provide much to do. These young people are important component to our future workforce and if we can't engage with them and address why they are leaving, it will impact the health and economic well being of our community.

2) Healthy Economy ?-2024

- Long term focus on coding and higher skill positions.
- Medical for Phase 1 and 2. There are more tele-appointments now and need to emphasis medical education available. Our aging population will be here and need services. We need to meet their needs.
- Equity Should be part of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 goals (see details above).
- Transportation (see details above).
- Engage Youth (see details above).

VII. Dashboard/Job Link Operations

- Paul Castro of California Human Development who is the provider of the contracted One-Stop Operator and Navigators at Job Link reported they are in the process of hiring four Navigators who will be located in Cloverdale, Guerneville, Petaluma, and Sonoma and a new One-Stop Operator. Navigators are the first person you interact with when you access the One-Stop and based on your interest and needs will help you navigate the system to find resume assistance, training, job postings, or other services. By placing Navigators in these more remote locations of Sonoma County

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this will give more equitable access of services to the community and help clients and businesses connect as well as assist clients with other county programs.

- John Paul of Job Link reported that four dislocated workers were placed in new positions last month. One transitioned from a bartender to a truck driver due to COVID. One received resume assistance and got a job with Tesla. Two clients who were looking for work were connected to and hired by employers Job Link was already working with.
- Katie shared the pandemic has created an opportunity to convert Job Link's service delivery model of all in person support to telephone, zoom, and virtual workshops to continue to support our clients. These virtual services will also be used for those clients reaching out to the more remote areas where the new Navigators are assisting clients who are not able to come into the office.
- Katie led a review of the dashboard report. Highlights included the following.
 - Noted the reduction of clients entering Job Link due to COVID and the limited hours of in person services, fear of illness, lack of childcare, and lack of transportation. The Employment Development Department also waived the job search requirement during COVID so fewer people came to use for job search assistance.
 - Job Link services are being supplemented through virtual services and workshops. There was a lot of support offered around the COVID grants that were offered last year.
 - Looked at the increase in Lay Off Aversion efforts.
 - Review client demographics and the types of jobs most requested.
 - Noted even during COVID we are meeting our goals set by the State.
 - The Youth program was able to host Sonoma County Youth Employment Services summer program last year, but the group was a bit smaller than normal. We plan to host the program again this summer.
 - Thank you to Sarah, Tiffany, and Andie for their work on the report.
- **Request: Temporary suspension of industry criteria for training funds**

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Staff requests a temporary suspension of existing policy of training funding to be used exclusively by priority industries of Construction, Healthcare, and Hospitality. The reason for this request is we have one quarter left to this fiscal year and we still have funds left in our reserves. These are “use it or lose it” annual funds from the State. If we do not use the money in our reserve for our community we by the end of the fiscal year in June we will have to return the funding to the state and our community would not receive the benefit of these funds. Staff further recommends a restoration or revision of the training funds policy in the new fiscal year looking at what industries would be our priority.

Motion to approve temporary suspension of priority industry for us of training funds, and to revisit the criteria at the July 14, 2021 WIB Executive Committee meeting: Scott Kincaid /s/ Steve Herron. (Ananda Sweet, Patrick Harper for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Ethan Brown, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Dan Blake for Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Becky Sandoval for Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes and no abstentions. The motion carried.

VIII. WIB Strategic Focus 2021

Final thoughts of how to move forward in a strategic way or position ourselves to meet the plan requirements.

- Appreciate all the participation in the meeting discussions today.
- Enjoyed Dr. Eyler’s presentation. It was a good way to look into a future a bit on a local and national level to help us focus.
- Need to remember to remain nimble in our actions so we can access federal funds that become available for our programs.

IX. Adjourn 4:56 pm

Next meeting: **May 12, 2021 via Zoom**

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