



**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  
Fax: (716) 278-8149

**Meeting Minutes – March 5, 2024**

**Niagara County Center for Economic Development/IDA  
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive in Sanborn, NY**

**Members Present:** Nasreen Akhtar, Maureen Bartlett, Jeanne Battaglia, Michael Casale, Lindsay Collins, Joel Feuerman, David Haylett, Cathy Lattanzio, Michael Martin, Dennis Martinez, Kory Schuler, Suzanne Shears, Divya Tandon, Michele Taylor, Katie Thompson, Todd Zyra

**Members Excused:** William Carroll, Tom Grzebinski, John Lang, David Miller, Bill Robbins, John Scherrer

**Members Absent:** Tim Lederhaus, Jim Scordato, Tom Seaman, Shawn Williams

**WDB Staff:** Helen Dennis, Joanne Klemer, Bonnie Rice

**Guests/Staff Present:** Jeannine Brown Miller – JBM Consulting, OSSO; Donald Jablonski – Niagara County Employment and Training

**I. Call to Order**

J. Feuerman welcomed Board Members to the meeting and called the meeting to order at 8:06 am. J. Feuerman noted that quorum was established. J. Feuerman took a moment to congratulate C. Lattanzio on her retirement and thank her for her participation on the Workforce Development Board for the last 5 years. C. Lattanzio thanked the Board Members in attendance. J. Feuerman turned the floor over to B. Rice to lead the meeting. B. Rice also thanked C. Lattanzio for her time on the Board. B. Rice shared with the Board that advertisements for the meeting were placed in local newspapers and online so that the public would be able to attend.

**II. Old Business**

B. Rice reviewed the agenda items section by section. All information regarding each item was distributed to the Board members through email prior to the meeting.

- A. Meeting Minutes for November 14, 2023: Board Members received the meeting minutes in the information materials emailed prior to the meeting. B. Rice asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by C. Lattanzio.

**Unanimous vote in favor of the approval of the November 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes.**

- B. B. Rice noted that the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes were included in the packet. No vote was needed as further discussion for the approved item will be discussed under New Business.

**III. New Business**

**All updates to items listed below were noted in the Agenda Packet sent to Board members prior to the meeting.**

- A. B. Rice turned the floor over to J. Klemer to review the proposed budget transfer of funds from Administration to Adult. J. Klemer explained the need transfer up to \$50,000 from the Administration budget back into the Adult budget in order to support future training contracts,





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supportive services and transportation costs for participants. B Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the transfer of funds. Motion made by M. Bartlett. Second by M. Casale. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval to transfer up to \$50,000 from the Administration Budget to the Adult Budget.**

B. Rice shared with the Board that the items B-E contained small adjustments to the policies based on new information and clarifications from New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL).

- B.** B. Rice shared with the Board that NYSDOL has created a new Basic Skills Assessment Form in order for line staff to easily and quickly identify those who have basic skills deficiencies. This assessment is being added to Niagara's Basic Skills Deficiency (BSD) Policy under acceptable assessments. B. Rice opened the floor to questions. M. Bartlett asked if this form would be replacing the WRAT test. B. Rice explained that the form could be looked at as more of a supplement. BSD is a program eligibility factor, the form will give line staff another option to prove BSD eligibility for a participant. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the added Basic Skills Assessment Form to the Basic Skills Deficiency Policy. Motion made by T. Zyra. Second by S. Shears. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval to add the Basic Skills Assessment Form to the Basic Skills Deficiency Policy.**
- C.** B. Rice reviewed the revisions to the Youth Incentive Policy. B. Rice explained the need to include a time frame for submissions of incentives for payment. The policy outlines which incentives would need to be submitted within a 30-day timeframe, versus those that would require a 90-day timeframe. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. T. Zyra asked a question regarding invoice documentation. B. Rice explained that the chart in the policy listed the documents needed for the incentives to be paid as well as completing a voucher that is signed by the youth participant. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the update to the WIOA Youth Program Incentives Policy. Motion made by L. Collins. Second by K. Thompson. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval to update the WIOA Youth Program Incentives Policy.**
- D.** B. Rice reviewed the updates to the WIOA Youth Eligibility Criteria Policy. B. Rice explained that the updates to Criteria C within the policy are those suggested by line staff to further clarify eligibility. B. Rice opened the floor for further questions. A discussion ensued as members had questions regarding the document as a whole. B. Rice gave a brief explanation of how line staff use the form to determine eligibility for a Youth participant entering the program. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the updates to the WIOA Youth Eligibility Criteria Policy. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by M. Taylor. **Unanimous vote in favor to approve the updates the WIOA Youth Eligibility Criteria Policy.**
- E.** As mentioned in item B under Old Business, B. Rice reviewed the Executive Committee approval of updates to the OJT policy for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth. B. Rice explained that in the January Executive Committee Meeting it was shared that local WIOA On-the-Job Training (OJT) staff members were encountering businesses offering sign-on bonuses, which would prevent their ability to participate in OJT under the current policy. NYSDOL Program and Fiscal representatives were contacted for input as to the language that would be acceptable to address sign-on bonuses. The revised OJT policy will permit WIOA OJT at





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businesses that allow sign-on bonuses; however, the sign-on bonus cannot be reimbursed using WIOA funds. Also, the sign-on bonus must be listed as a separate Payroll Line Item. This is to ensure WIOA funding is not reimbursing any portion of the sign-on bonus. B. Rice further explained that the same policy reflects further language updates ensuring bonuses of any kind are not reimbursable under OJT contract. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. A discussion regarding examples of bonuses and allowable bonuses based on the OJT policy was had. B. Rice further explained that reimbursable OJT hours are those specific to the participant learning their job. A bonus of any kind would not be reimbursable as it is not time the participant spends learning their job. No further questions brought forward. B. Rice asked for a motion to approve the On the Job Training for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth Policy as presented at the Executive Committee and further clarified as presented. Motion made by S. Shears. Second by K. Thompson. **Unanimous vote in favor for the approval of updates to the On-the-Job Training for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth Policy.**

**IV. Informational Items**

B. Rice provided the Board with an update regarding items A-C. Item A, the WIOA Youth Program. The goal for this program year, PY23, starting on July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024 is 75 planned Youth enrollments. To date, 77 youth have been enrolled into the program for the program year. B. Rice noted that this exceeds the goal. Item B, the New York State Gun Violence Prevention (NYSGVP) Grant will be ending March 31, 2024. B. Rice reminded the Board that Niagara County Employment and Training (NCET) had been awarded an additional \$30,000. She explained that these additional funds had been from recouped unspent funds of other providers and reissued by NYSDOL. B. Rice shared with the Board NCET's accomplishments with the NYSGVP grant funds. 24 youth were hired full time directly by employers, using 90% wage reimbursement for OJT. 33 youth were hired in subsidized work experiences, and four additional youth received Classroom Training, supportive and transportation services. NCET's goal was to have 50 youth participants hired; 57 were hired out of 61 served (to date). Item C, B. Rice informed the Board that NYSDOL chose a few areas in the State to pilot a grant that is similar to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), but expands into a continuous year-round program called Youth Employment Program (YEP). Niagara is one of the areas that will be piloting the program. B. Rice shared that 31 youth have been enrolled and placed in a youth work experience at six different local worksites. B. Rice shared that there is no set goal to the pilot program. D. Jablonski added that due to this and other funding NCET was able to add two new employees. One is dedicated to the YEP grant, the other will be working in the Career Center assisting staff and customers.

- D.** B. Rice turned the floor over to J. Brown Miller of JBM HR Consulting to give the One-Stop Operator report. J. Brown Miller noted that B. Rice had reviewed the GVP and Youth section of her report previously. J. Brown Miller shared with the Board the information regarding Classroom Training: 119 participants enrolled at the end of the second quarter, participants utilized 11 different Approved Training Providers, and utilized 19 different courses. At the end of quarter two, 47 had successfully completed training and 61 were in progress. She noted that within the report were the names of training providers and courses utilized. J. Brown Miller moved on to On-the-Job Training: 17 participants enrolled at the end of the second quarter, 11 different companies had provided OJT opportunities to participants in 14 different job titles. At





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the end of quarter two, 10 participants had completed training successfully and three were in progress. J. Brown Miller opened the floor for further questions. None brought forward. B. Rice thanked J. Brown Miller for her report.

- E. B. Rice turned the floor over to D. Martinez to give an update on the WDB Inclusion Committee. D. Martinez shared with the Board that there are plans for another virtual presentation for DEI: What, How and Why regarding a question J. Feuerman had proposed, “How do you prepare your workforce for those who are being hired with accommodations who are going to be their coworkers?” D. Martinez shared that although accommodations are set privately between the employer and incoming employee, there may be a need to prepare staff as to how it could affect them. The presentation is being planned for either May or June. D. Martinez also shared that the Inclusion Committee is planning and preparing an in-person Career Exploration Fair at SUNY Niagara (formerly NCCC), in October for high school youth with disabilities. They plan to have hands-on demonstrations to encourage student engagement. Lastly D. Martinez shared that R. Piaseczny from Niagara Pride had volunteered to hold a business community event, either in person or virtually, discussing LGBTQ and transgender individuals in the workforce. He shared that NYSDOL’s great survey on LGBTQ issues prompted this training. D. Martinez said he will share the details with the Board as they become available. B. Rice opened the floor for further questions. No further questions were brought forward.
- F. B. Rice turned the floor over to L. Collins for an update regarding the Youth Committee. B. Rice also congratulated L. Collins on becoming the Chair of the Youth Committee. L. Collins shared that the Youth Committee had a meeting in the beginning of January. She shared that those who attended introduced themselves. She added that the Youth Committee would be working closely with D. Martinez and the Inclusion Committee on the Career Exploration Fair.
- G. B. Rice opened the floor to Board members and guests for announcements.
  - a. J. Feuerman shared with the Board his memories of the Board since he started. He shared his thoughts on the importance of grants and the work that goes into obtaining them. J. Feuerman thanked D. Jablonski and B. Rice for all their working on getting so many great grants into the WDB in order to help serve so many people. He praised them for their hard work and dedication. D. Jablonski added how important the human element of their work is, that without the funding and assistance from the Board there are so many people who would not have the opportunity to positively change their lives, by what the Career Center has to offer. D. Jablonski mentioned the partners NCET works with who are a part of the Board, as well as the County departments that NCET works with in order to bring individuals into the Career Center, connect them to jobs and agencies that can assist them. D. Jablonski encouraged Board Members to visit the Career Center to see how staff counsel and assist job seekers and businesses and to further understand what the grants and WIOA funding provides to the community. D. Jablonski thanked the Board for their time and service. M. Bartlett added that ONBOCES works closely with D. Jablonski and NCET. She shared that many individuals come to ONBOCES for training and to change their lives, some of them don’t have the financial ability to do so, and being able to encourage them to contact NCET for assists is very helpful. She added that of the 90 adults they are currently training, three quarters or more are being funded with assistance from WIOA. D. Jablonski added that 5 years ago only a few individuals from ONBOCES were being funded, now at





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least 100 per semester are receiving assistance, which is due to the side-by-side work of ONBOCES and NCET. M. Casale added that D. Jablonski has a flyer for what NCET has to offer that he gives to every retention meeting that he goes to with local businesses. D. Jablonski commented on the great partnership NCET has with M. Taylor of NYSDOL.

- b. S. Shears shared added details regarding Niagara Community Action Program (NiaCAP) and the services they have to offer. She added that if Board Members know of those looking for job, she is looking to fill positions within her organization.
- c. D. Jablonski shared with the Board details regarding Dream It, Do It. He shared it was started in 2008 by Todd Trantum and how the program is designed around high school students, focusing on connecting them to advance manufacturing. He was excited to share that he and Todd are working together to get local high schools and businesses invested into the program for the Niagara County area. Youth are able to make connections to local employers, visit the worksites, and attend STEM Wars and Manufacturing boot camps in order to learn the specifics of what is available to them. A phone application is used for the youth to connect to the employers to ask further questions, be mentored, and apply for jobs. D. Jablonski shared with the Board that as the program is developed more into the area, he will give further updates.
- d. M. Casale shared updates regarding programs being offered by Niagara County Center for Economic Development. He encouraged Board Members to visit their website, [niagaracountybusiness.com](http://niagaracountybusiness.com), and review the programs being offered. M. Casale shared details for the Niagara Production Program and how it assists employers to purchase manufacturing equipment to improve their processes and efficiencies. He encouraged Board members to review the information on the website.
- e. M. Martin shared that Native American Community Services of Erie and Niagara Counties has a new Economic Empowerment Director who will be visiting partners as she can and reacquainting herself with the area. M. Martin added that the Youth Clubhouse in Niagara Falls has been re-funded for another year. If any Board Members are interested in connections or partnering with Native Youth, please reach out to him. M. Martin also mentioned plans and goals to preserve the Turtle Building in Niagara Falls. M. Martin discussed the history and possible plans for the building with Board member. J. Feuerman asked M. Martin to forward the letter of support information to B. Rice for distribution to Board Members.

No further announcements from Board Members were brought forward.

**V. Motion to adjourn.**

B. Rice thanked the members in attendance for their time and requested a motion to adjourn. Motion by J. Feuerman. Second by T. Zyra. All in favor. **Unanimous vote in favor of adjournment.** The WDB Meeting adjourned at 8:52 a.m. The next WDB Meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Dennis