



**NIAGARA COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

Joel Feuerman, Chairperson
Bonnie Rice, Executive Director

Trott Career Center
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Phone: (716) 278-8251
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Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2020
ZOOM Conference: Video and Audio Conference

Members Present: Carolyn Bright, Michael Casale, Kathleen Granchelli, John Lang, Cathy Lattanzio, Michael Martin, Dennis Martinez, Kevin McCabe, Kory Schuler, Suzanne Shears, Joseph Steinmetz, Jerald Wolfgang, Todd Zyra

Members Excused: Paul Brown, Shawn Williams

Members Absent: William Carroll, Tim Lederhaus

WDB Staff: Helen Demler, Joanne Klemer, Bonnie Rice

Guests/Staff Present: Donald Jablonski

I. Call to Order

Chair Joel Feuerman was unable to join today's scheduled meeting. With Vice Chair Kory Schuler's permission, and due to the nature of Zoom and recorded meetings, Executive Director Bonnie Rice conducted the meeting. The meeting was called to order by B. Rice at 8:10 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 COVID-19 Pandemic the Sunshine Laws for New York State had been waived, however 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. B. Rice requested H. Demler take attendance. Attendance is listed above. Quorum was present. The agenda and informational materials were distributed to members through email prior to the meeting.

II. Old Business

B. Rice reviewed the agenda items section by section:

- A. Meeting minutes for February 25, 2020: Board Members received the meeting minutes in the informational materials email prior to the meeting. B. Rice asked the Board for a motion to approve the February minutes as presented. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by T. Zyra. Abstained by M. Martin. **Unanimous vote in favor of approval of the February 25, 2020 meeting minutes.**
- B. The second item on the agenda "Approval of Minutes – 3/24/2020 Executive Committee Meeting" was removed after discussion by the Board that it was not necessary for the Board to vote on the Executive Committee Meeting minutes.

III. WDB Items

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

- A. B. Rice reviewed the process for the award of every RFP (included in Board informational materials). For the WIOA Youth Event Planner and Site Management the Review Committee



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voted to recommend Ealy and Associates Consulting, LLC in the amount of \$88,000 which was voted approved by the Niagara WDB Executive Committee at the 3/24/20 meeting. B. Rice informed the Board that a vote was needed by the Board to approve Ealy and Associates Consulting, LLC as the award recipient of the WIOA Youth Event Planner and Site Management Request for Approval. K. Schuler asked for clarification on the vote regarding the amount. B. Rice stated that the vote was for the award of up to \$88,000 because with COVID-19 we are unsure what the expenditures will be. B. Rice explained that the RFP is for in-person events but that with the current issues of public health, Ealy may have to change to a virtual format. B. Rice opened the floor to questions. None brought forward. B. Rice asked the Board for a motion to approve the award for WIOA Youth Event Planner and Site Management proposal to Ealy and Associates Consulting, LLC with a budget of up to \$88,000. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by D. Martinez. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval for fully funding the award for WIOA Youth Event Planner and Site Management proposal to Ealy and Associates Consulting, LLC in the amount of \$88,000.**

- B. B. Rice informed the Board that due to a compliance issue New York State Department of Labor wanted addressed, the By Laws (included in the Board informational materials) needed to be changed to include listing the additional two standing committees, Youth Committee and Inclusion Committee. B. Rice requested a motion to approve the change to the By Laws to add the Youth Committee and Inclusion Committee. Motion made by M. Casale. Second by T. Zyra. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval for the changes to the Niagara Workforce Development Board By-Laws.**

IV. Policy Items

- A. and B. B. Rice informed the Board that the following policy items (included in the Board informational materials) were being changed to make accommodations during the time of the COVID-19 virus. Options to meet virtually were proposed and approved by New York State Department of Labor. B. Rice gave an overview of each of the policies: Classroom Training has been moved to a virtual setting and parameters have been set within the policy. On the Job Training cannot be conducted in person, parameters have been set to further assist the participant and the needs of the business. B. Rice noted that these policy items would remain in effect until October 20, 2020 which is the date for the next scheduled Board meeting. The Board will then revisit the policies to see if further action is needed. B. Rice requested a motion to approve OJT Policy. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by D. Martinez. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval for the change to the OJT Policy.** B. Rice requested a motion to approve the Classroom Training and Individual Training Accounts Policy. Motion made by T. Zyra. Second by K. Granchelli. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval for the change to the Classroom Training and Individual Training Accounts Policy.**
- C. B. Rice explained to the Board that the Needs Related Payment Policy was a new policy that would allow up to \$50 a week in a cash payment to individuals who are attending training and meet the dire circumstances listed in the policy (included in Board informational materials). The policy is as WIOA funds are available that Needs Related Payments will be provided depending on Fiscal standings. B. Rice informed the Board that some changes were made and a separate email with that information was sent to the Board members. It included changes to



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participants being enrolled twelve credit hours or twelve clock hours per week and the parameters were addressed as an individual based on our current Boards self-sufficiency rate. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. C. Lattanzio asked if this policy would take effect after a participant's unemployment runs out. B. Rice clarified that there are parameters in the policy and gave a few examples and reminded the Board that this policy was to provide service to those most in need. C. Lattanzio questioned participants double dipping. B. Rice informed the Board that there are parameters, as well as a form that the participant signs, stating that they are not receiving Needs Related Payments from another source. The policy also outlines that the counselor and participant need to exhaust a search for securing assistance from other sources; the Needs Related Payments are a last resort. T. Zyra questioned the \$2,600 reference. B. Rice explained that this was reference to the maximum amount of payments, over 52 weeks. B. Rice requested a motion to approve the Needs Related Payment Policy. Motion made by D. Martinez. Second by C Lattanzio. No abstentions. **Unanimous vote in favor of the approval for the Needs Related Payment Policy.**

V. Informational Items

- A.** B. Rice shared with the Board an update on how things are proceeding with the WIOA Youth Program. Programmatic Information: Two WIOA Youth Programs currently functioning. Niagara County Employment and Training (NCET) has 62 Youth enrolled and is at 83% of their overall goal of 75. Of those: 34 youth have gained paid work experience, 15 have gained employment that is unsubsidized; 12 retained employment more than 30 days. Three enrolled in military or college, seven gained a WIOA recognized certificate for training, eight achieved a Measurable Skills Gain, six have obtained their TASC/GED or a high school diploma. Nine have had driver's education paid for, and the driver instructor picked them up at their home for the driving courses. Ten youth did not need lessons, but NCET paid for their learner's permit, 4-hour course, and New York State Drivers License. At this point, NCET is meeting and exceeding their performance goals. Niagara County Community College (NCCC) has 40 youth enrolled. Of those: 21 entered occupational training (Pharmacy Technician, Machine, Medical Billing), 10 entered TASC or GED programs, zero entered employment to date; Pharmacy Technician training just completed 3/30/20 they have one participant awaiting an interview. NCCC training programs did not begin until January 2020. Other participants are either awaiting training start date or are focusing on job search/employment. NCCC needs to enter further data into the OSOS system; it is not possible to calculate performance until this is done.
- B.** B. Rice opened the floor to Joanne Klemer to give an update on how NCET and NCCC are doing financially. J. Klemer informed the Board that NCCC's total Youth contract was awarded at \$234,000. To date, through March 31st, they reported expenditures of approximately \$77,000. Approximately 33% of their contract. Approximately \$157,000 is remaining or unspent which is approximately 67% of their contract. J. Klemer informed the Board that NCET's total Youth contract was awarded at \$477,000. To date, through March 31st, they reported expenditures of approximately \$298,000, which is approximately 62% of their contract. Approximately \$180,000 remaining or unspent, which is approximately 38% of their contract. B. Rice opened the floor for questions. None brought forward. More updates will be brought forward with the next Board Meeting.



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- C. B. Rice reminded the Board that the RFP for the One-Stop System Operator is currently open. The deadline to submit proposals is April 23, 2020 by 2 PM. B. Rice also request one more Board Member be added to the review team. Any interested Board Members are encouraged to contact her.
- D. B. Rice reminded the Board that the RFP for the Youth and Young Adult Services is currently open. The deadline to submit proposals is May 5, 2020 by 2 PM.
- E. B. Rice discussed with the Board future planning for Niagara County regarding the reopening process. B. Rice shared with the Board that New York State Department of Labor has been awarded \$12 million in National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds. These grants are not yet available. Board members were encouraged to contact B. Rice to offer their thoughts and suggestions of ways to help our local businesses with these funds. She shared guidelines from New York State will be provided, but that we have an opportunity now to have some input before the grant rules become “locked down”. B. Rice provided the Board with some data to consider regarding the NEG funds and crucial areas to be addressed. The provided data is from the Center on Rural Innovation, or CORI at the following web address: <https://ruralopportunitymap.us/covid-maps/> B. Rice provided the Board with data from the website regarding the Employment Risk due to COVID-19 between Niagara and Erie County. CORI considers a high risk focus on four industrial sectors which they expect are at a high risk of disruption: Tourism, Manufacturing and Wholesale, Transportation and Oil, Gas and Coal Production. Over 56% of Niagara County industries are considered high risk. Of the workforce age 55 and older, CORI reports that Niagara has 25% of its share of workers aged 55 and older are more prone to disruption die to COVID-19. They could also experience a longer term of disruption due to a larger share of the workforce experiencing severe illness or death. The last statistic that B. Rice shared with the Board was the percentage of firms that have less than 50 employees. Small firms typically suffer a disproportionate share of job losses in recessions and depressions. 35.9% of Niagara Counties businesses fall with in this category. With the NEG grant coming to New York State, B. Rice encouraged the Board to provide her with insights and input.
- F. Announcements: B. Rice opened the floor to announcements from Board Members:
- M. Casale informed the Board that the Center for Economic Development has been answering questions regarding resources to local companies. They have updated their website, niagaracountybusiness.com, to include resources and information pertaining to COVID-19. The Center for Economic Development has partnered with the Niagara USA Chamber to create a Western New York COVID impact survey that is open until Friday April 24, 2020 to help evaluate the recovery and reopening of Western New York. M. Casale discussed with the Board the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and appropriation of funds. K. Schuler discussed the multipronged approach the Niagara USA Chamber has come up with to advocate for funding. He mentioned that they have seen businesses close permanently now and that many Niagara County small business do not qualify for the PPP. He noted that the NEG funds should be recommended for small businesses, 501(c)6 organizations, and non-profits. M. Casale noted that something needed to be done for the true small business in the country. B. Rice encouraged the Board to send her their ideas and recommendations and she will pass them forward to the state.



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- B. Rice noted that the Niagara County Employment and Training website, worksource1.com, has a COVID-19 resources tab that is updated daily.
- K. Schuler announced that he and M. Casale are looking to create a Niagara County Recovery Committee that will discuss how Niagara County will reopen, what the parameters will be, and how the reopening will be conducted.
- T. Zyra noted that Silipos is working to create masks and shields; they are importing and acquiring materials and working to get masks and shields to local entities that need them. They are hoping to have these needed items available by the beginning of May.
- B. Rice opened the floor to further updates and questions. None brought forward.

IV. Adjournment

B. Rice thanked the members in attendance for their time and requested a motion to adjourn. Motion made by K. Schuler. Second by M. Casale. Unanimous vote in favor of adjournment. The Workforce Development Board meeting was **adjourned at 8:50 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Demler