

Career Services Minutes – March 17, 2023

In Attendance: *Carmela Albano, Wayfinders, Brunilda Aponte, Wayfinders, Farida Bature, WMNEH, Bud Delphin, MassHire Holyoke, Shannon Doran, GCC, Maureen McLaughlin, BCC, Judy Raper, Jasmin Rojas, Wayfinders, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Pamela Wojtkowski, MassHire Berkshire*

Updates

MassHire Holyoke: There are many training programs offered (all available on the MassHire websites). All of these programs are heavily promoted, but unfortunately, there is difficulty in filling spots.

MassHire Berkshire: Also seeing difficulty in filling trainings. One of the bigger challenges in Berkshire County is a lack of local training providers. Most of the trainings are online or suggest people going to other communities for in-person trainings.

MassHire Berkshire has a great partnership with Berkshire Transit Authority for CDL training, resulting in on the job training for new drivers for Berkshire Transit, which also helps to meet the driver shortage.

MassHire Berkshire has their Spring job fair coming up on March 28-30th in 3 different locations across Berkshire County.

Wayfinders (SJI / CEIS): Noted the challenge of maintaining momentum for clients. There may be initial interest, but then a gap in communication from a potential training program can result in loss of participation. Working with community colleges and MassHires to close that gap.

Other barriers to participation in Way Finders' own cohorts includes lack of transportation or child care. Incentives are making a positive difference.

Greenfield Community College: A new initiative specific to Franklin County called ARISE is launching this month; it is a grant-funded collaboration (currently through September, hopefully to be extended) with The Opioid Task Force, Mass Hire and others designed to support individuals in recovery from alcohol, opioids or other substance misuse to re-enter the workforce in Franklin County. It will offer skill building workshop and life skills, workforce readiness, as well as the opportunity for employers to meet the needs for people in recovery. Holding career fairs for individuals in recovery, individualized employment and training assessments. The goal is to place 40 individuals in jobs with wrap-around services.

MassHires are also doing work around workforce employment for people in recovery, working to support career readiness (just completed their 100th cohort of Access to Recovery). Perhaps leveraging of resources with ARISE is possible.

The Governor's FY24 Budget

Items of note include:

- free community college education for individuals over 25 who have not previously earned a college degree.
- \$16.2 million for Youth Works
- \$5 million for apprenticeship program
- Not yet clear on \$ allocated to MassHires but understood that overall will be a reduction relative to the pandemic spending

Pamela requested any additional information on priority items for MassHires and community colleges; she would be happy to incorporate advocacy requests in communications via the Network blog.

Network Updates:

- The Network convened legislators across the four counties on Feb. 27 to share recent data on homelessness and our legislative priorities. Please go [HERE](#) to see the powerpoint presentations for each county (with county-based data).
- FY24 State Budget: Governor Healey's proposed FY24 budget was released a couple of weeks ago and includes some concerning cuts, in particular to the RAFT – rental assistance – program. The Network has just released its FY24 budget priorities [HERE](#) and will be advocating for these priorities as the House and Senate budget processes unfold.
- Be sure your calendar is marked for the Network's Annual Gathering on Friday, May 12, 10:30am-12:00pm, at HCC Kittredge Center. The invitation is coming soon; the [save the date flyer is here.](#)

Next Meeting: May 24, 11 am – 12 noon