



Board of Directors Meeting

January 26, 2023

A G E N D A

- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- Introduction to Benefit Cliffs Issue - Robin Golden/2Gen
- Board Discussion of Values Statement - Kymbel Branch
- Other Business

Workforce Alliance Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2022

Board Members Attending: Ed Dooling, Chris Cozzi, Lorna McLeod, Chris Brown, Marcia LaFemina, Toni Walter, Bonita Grubbs, Serena Neal-Sanjurjo, Maria Harlow, Robin Golden, Thomas Coley, David Reitz, Mary Burgard, Howard Hill, Tiana Ocasio

Staff Attending: William Villano, Kym Branch, Jill Watson, John Brancato, Bobbi Brown, Naomi Weinblad, and Earl Foster, Evelyn Brooks

Invitees Attending: Lisa Sementilli, Anthony Magnifico, Kelly Fitzgerald, Christine Bjork, Luann Gallicchio, Mike, Dunne, Erika Lynch

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dooling at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Harlow and seconded by Ms. Walker. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Introduction of New Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Villano introduced Ms. Naomi Weinblad, Workforce Alliance's new Chief Financial Officer. He indicated that she joined the organization on October 11 of this year and he was delighted to have her on board.

Ms. Weinblad told the Board that she had extensive experience in accounting and finance with for profit, non-profit and accounting/auditing firms. She indicated that she was the CFO for a non-profit in Connecticut and when she was with the audit firm she conducted the annual audit of Eastern Workforce Investment Board.

Expense Report

Ms. Weinblad reviewed the expense items where the percentage of utilization varies significantly from what would be expected for the first three months of the fiscal/program year. She indicated that several of the differences are due to timing, namely invoices that haven't been submitted yet. In some cases, we have submitted a request to transfer funds to other programs.

Ms. Walker asked why it has been so difficult to expend client support funds? Ms. Branch indicated that too few program participants have applied for support aide. Some individuals may not be comfortable asking for assistance. The State has also just changed the requirement to

apply for support assistance. Previously, an individual had to be enrolled in a program before they applied, now we can help people obtain documentation while in the enrollment process. Ms. Branch stated that enrollment tends to pick up in January, but we do need to do a deeper dive to identify client needs.

In response to Ms. Walker's question, Ms. Branch said that clients are informed of the availability of support services and the various payment methods numerous times throughout their period of involvement with us. Ms. Walker stated that if we needed to change any regulations in order to make funds more available to let her know.

Ms. Golden asked if we discussed the support services issue with our partner organizations since they may be closer to our clients than our own staff. Ms. Branch replied that she chairs a partner working group and makes them well aware of the availability of support services.

Ms. Walker also raised a question about the expenditure of funds for Youth Programs. Mr. Brancato stated that the money is front loaded due to the summer program and that the remainder of funds will be fully expended.

Mr. Cozzi questioned that with 65% of Skill Up dollars already expended, do we need additional funding sources for this program? Ms. Watson responded that we are on target to receive additional funding and are seeking to transfer money from other underutilized grants.

Mission, Vision & Values

Mr. Dooling indicated that as part of our Racial Equity initiative we wanted to revisit our mission statement and develop vision and values statements to reflect our Racial Equity objectives. Mr. Villano, at Mr. Dooling's request, assembled a team consisting of Workforce senior managers, another Workforce staff member, an AJC staff person and Earl Foster. Mr. Villano referenced the draft document showing the definitions of mission, vision and values statements. He also displayed the current and revised mission statement, with the words "equitable and inclusive" added by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Villano suggested that the Board may want to approve the new mission and vision statements today and discuss the values statements at our next Board meeting.

Ms. Golden stated that she felt this was a worthwhile process and that the Executive Committee had given its stamp of approval to the mission and vision statements. She said she looks forward to discussing the values statements at the next meeting, maybe in small groups.

Ms. Grubbs asked what the word "advance" in the mission statement means in this context. Mr. Villano replied that it's the responsibility of the Workforce Boards to move the workforce system forward to achieve our objectives. Ms. Golden added that it also speaks to intentionality. Ms. Grubbs then suggested adding the word "implement" to connote a more action-oriented approach. The group agreed. Ms. Branch said that we want to use words that resonate with people and that people will understand.

Ms. Golden made the motion to approve the revised mission statement to begin with “To advance and implement”. Mr. Cozzi seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The new Mission Statement is as follows:

“To advance and implement an equitable and inclusive workforce development system that addresses the evolving needs of employers and the essential skill development needs of our diverse regional workforce to create a positive impact in the communities where we live and work.”

Vision Statement

Ms. Grubbs recommended also using the word “develop” along with “provide” to create more of an action emphasis. Ms. LaFemina suggested the word “engaging” in place of “helping” communities and “supports” businesses instead of “helping”. Mr. Reitz proposed changing the order to put individuals and communities before businesses. The group thought all these suggestions were good ones. Ms. Brown felt that we needed to review the structure of the statement and Ms. Branch added that it has become more than a statement, so we should use another term to describe it. Mr. Villano indicated that they would revise the Vision and present it to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Hill commented that we needed to have a deeper conversation about structure. Mr. Villano said he would put that on the agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting.

Ms. Walker asked if there were any program participants on the Board. Mr. Villano said there were none. Ms. Walker felt that participants and students from higher education should be represented on the Board. Ms. Golden said the timing for this consideration is good since we are preparing a board matrix to determine who to invite to sit on the Board and could factor in individuals with lived experiences. Ms. Branch indicated that our leaders place heavy emphasis on obtaining feedback from customers.

Mr. Hill asked if we were working with the NAACP, Scott Esdaile’s group. Mr. Villano replied that we have been working with them for years.

Values Statement

Mr. Villano stated that a Values Statement conveys what the organization stands for, what are its priorities. The draft statement that was sent to the Board consolidates into four points the concepts that our staff team feels are the most important. However, there is no pride of authorship. We want the Board to discuss this at the next meeting and come up with a set of values that we can all be comfortable with. Ms. Golden suggested removing the word “statement” similar to what we did with Vision.

To allow sufficient time for an executive session, Mr. Villano deferred the Equus Update agenda item to the next meeting.

Executive Session

Mr. Dooling requested that the Board go into an executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Ms. Goldin made the motion; Ms. Neal-SanJurjo seconded the motion. The motion passed. Mr. Dooling excused most of the staff and all guests. The Board went into executive session.