

SA: Ready to Work Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

WebEx Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 2021

5:45pm – 7:15pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Council Member Adriana Rocha Garcia

Council Member Rebecca J. Viagran

Chair, Jerry Graeber, Senior Project Manager, Leonard Contracting

Vice Chair, Doug McMurry, Executive Vice President, Associated Contractors (AGC)

Daphene Carson, Risk Manager, Edgewood ISD

Sonia Garza, VP of Operations, WellMed Medical Management

Ben Peavy, Managing Director, Accenture Federal Services

Rosa Santana, CEO, Santana Group, Integrated Human Capital and Forma Automotive

Cynthia Teniente-Matson, President, Texas A&M University-San Antonio (joined meeting at 3:15pm)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Peter Holt, CEO, Holt Cat and Spurs Sports and Entertainment

Emily Spurlock, Registered Nurse, Methodist Hospital¹

STAFF AND OUTSIDE COUNSEL PRESENT:

Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager

Amy Contreras, Economic Development Manager

Christina Ramirez, City Attorney's Office

Christina Reck-Guerra, Pre-K 4 SA West Center Director

¹ Ms. Spurlock attended the WebEx conference; however, she was not able to interact with the Board via audio or video.

Heber Lefgren, Director, Animal Care Services
Mary Mills, Advisory Board Staff Liaison
Olympia Cuellar, Senior Economic Development Specialist

GUEST PRESENTER:

Dr. Edith Westfall, CALCO Consulting

A. CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Graeber called the meeting to order at 5:48pm after quorum was established.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT.

No citizens registered in advance to make public comments.

INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

AGENDA ITEM #C1: OVERVIEW OF SA: READY TO WORK

Ms. Lopez provided an overview of SA: Ready to Work program outcomes and eligibility, to provide context for discussions relating to wraparound services. (See **Attachment A**)

Dr. Westfall presented insights from the City's recent Request for Information, the City's recommended service model, and the City's recommended levels of wraparound support. (See **Attachment A**)

AGENDA ITEM #C2: BOARD DISCUSSION – WRAPAROUND SERVICES

The Board discussed the City's recommendations and offered the following input:

Dr. Teniente-Matson recommended that the City consider including 2019 poverty rate in outcomes, and to Dr. Matson requested that staff consider making the eligibility requirements easier to understand for potential applicants.

Mr. Peavy noted that it is highly unlikely for one firm to provide all recommended wraparound services, and that the City should strive to provide services based on needs rather than one-size-fits-all approach.

Ms. Garza recommended adding emotional intelligence and self-awareness to help residents understand the rigors of school and employment.

Mr. McMurry noted the need to incorporate lessons learned from Train for Jobs SA program, that transportation and childcare are critical, and to ensure that other funding is leveraged first before using City funding. He then noted that the Board should move forward to consider targeted occupations.

Dr. Teniente-Matson noted the importance of basic computer skills and access to internet connectivity. She also recommended that financial literacy and technology be shifted from a referral service to a required service.

Ms. Garza noted that several agencies provide basic computer skills, such as public libraries, and recommended that a “Risk Stratification” tool to assist with determining service model be used.

Mr. Graeber noted the importance of holding referring agencies accountable to ensure proper referrals and follow-up.

Mr. Peavy recommended increasing the eligibility income limits to offer services to individuals that may not qualify for other programs. He mentioned that some individuals may have jobs but need wraparound services to elevate their careers.

Ms. Lopez expressed that the City learned from the Train for Jobs SA program that the level of required remediation and high-school equivalency assistance was higher than expected.

Mr. Graeber noted that the experience gleaned from the Train for Jobs SA program is foundational and will inform future Board discussions, and that it should be placed on the next Board meeting’s agenda.

AGENDA ITEM #C1: OVERVIEW OF SA: READY TO WORK – IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

Dr. Westfall presented information from Workforce Solutions Alamo, SA Works and City survey results relating to target industries and occupations. (See **Attachment A**)

AGENDA ITEM #C2: BOARD DISCUSSION – VALIDATE IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

Mr. Graeber introduced Board discussions relating to in-demand occupations.

Mr. McMurry noted that construction, healthcare and cyber industries are obviously in demand.

Mr. Peavy noted that while many of the recommended target occupations require a bachelor degree and most employers prefer one, many employers are willing to hire employees with cybersecurity skills with associates degrees and with certifications from CodeUp, for example. He mentioned that the Board will need to identify willing employers.

Mr. McMurry and Mr. Graeber discussed that several high-demand occupations are not included in WSA target list, including carpentry. Mr. Graeber followed that an apprenticeship may last up to 4 years and provides a learning environment on-the-job.

Dr. Teniente-Matson noted that skilled trades and education are also in-demand industries.

Ms. Garza noted that warehousing positions are limited, even though employers like Amazon and Dollar General are paying higher wages. Dr. Westfall noted that there is a wide range of pay in logistics and warehousing jobs, and as such, some jobs may not have met WSA's criteria for targeted occupations.

Mr. Graeber asked Ms. Garza about healthcare occupations. Ms. Garza replied that there are many job shortages in healthcare and that the industry provides many opportunities and career paths for residents with certifications, associate degrees and bachelor degrees. She further noted that many nurses are shifting from bedside to administrative positions, leading to more opportunities in nursing. Ms. Garza continued to note that the target list does not include civil service occupations (e.g., City, Sherriff, SAPD, Fire) which provide better pay and benefits.

Mr. Peavy recommended that the City allow for flexibility to add additional occupations over time. Ms. Santana agreed, and mentioned that her company (a Toyota supplier) has 200 positions open. She further mentioned that the City should update the data often to reflect current labor market. Mr. McMurry supports a \$15/hour goal as a criteria. Mr. Peavy agreed, and mentioned that a \$15/hour job with benefits and opportunities for career progression is key.

Ms. Santana mentioned several barriers to employment, including unemployment benefits, failing drug tests, problematic backgrounds, and language skills. She also mentioned that it may help residents to learn about total compensation packages (including benefits such as health insurance) rather than just hourly wages.

Mr. Graeber mentioned that overall, the Board is in alignment with the targeted industries and with the criteria put forth by WSA but recommended additional flexibility to expand as necessary depending on employer needs. Further, quarterly reviews and updates may be helpful.

Dr. Teniente-Matson posed a question to the Board about limiting the program to residents that can pass drug tests, as this is often required to find gainful employment. Ms. Santana agreed that this should be considered in eligibility criteria. Ms. Lopez mentioned that there may be legal limitations on the city to impose such criteria.

Mr. Peavy recommended that the program include education about employer requirements (such as background checks and drug screens). Ms. Garza recommended that drug and alcohol counseling may be offered as a referral service under the program rather than eligibility criteria.

AGENDA ITEM #C1: OVERVIEW OF SA: READY TO WORK – RECOMMEND EDUCATIONAL ALLOTMENT

Due to time constraints the Board did not cover this item.

D. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Lopez reiterated the next meeting dates, and that City staff would provide information requested.

E. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McMurry moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Teniente-Matson seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16pm.

APPROVED:
