

SA: Ready to Work Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

WebEx Meeting

Friday, April 30, 2021

8:30am-10:00am

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Daphene Carson

Sonia Garza

Peter John Holt

Rosa Santana

Cynthia Teniente-Matson

Vice Chair, Doug McMurry

Chair, Jerry Graeber

Councilmember Rebecca J. Viagran

Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ben Peavy

Emily Spurlock

STAFF PRESENT:

Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager

Christina Ramirez, City Attorney's Office

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

Heber Lefgren, Director, Animal Care Services

Amy Contreras, Economic Development Manager

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 8:39am after quorum was established.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

No citizens registered in advance to make public comments.

INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Graeber asked members to review Advisory Board meeting minutes of April 16, 2021. Mr. Holt moved to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Santana seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve.

D. Individual Items

1. Discussion and possible action related to allotment of certificates versus two- and four-year degrees offered through SA: Ready to Work.

Dr. Westfall presented the recommended allotment of SA: Ready to Work funds between college degrees and certificate programs.

Dr. Matson asked if all the individuals listed as unemployed during the data dated March 2020 through March 2021 in Dr. Westfall's presentation (see **Attachment A**) are still unemployed, or whether these numbers are aggregated over the time period. Ms. Lopez replied that this information is based solely on unemployment claims, so some claimants may be employed again. Dr. Matson suggested to look at unemployment statistics from the last quarter instead, as overall unemployment has decreased recently. She also mentioned a gap in employment for "middle-skilled workers", and suggested that effort be put into identifying opportunities to re-skill residents who have some higher education.

Dr. Matson asked whether the program will support test preparation for students in fields that require testing for certification, such as construction. She asked Mr. McMurry to confirm that this is a legitimate consideration, and he agreed. Dr. Matson expressed concern in the ability to support these trades students under this program, since they are not unemployed, but may be only at an apprentice level in their field. Ms. Lopez confirmed that the eligibility requirements for Ready to Work will

include underemployed residents who need assistance to upskill. Dr. Matson mentioned to Dr. Westfall that Texas A&M San Antonio has training programs that align with the chosen target occupations that were not included in the presentation. She also asked for a breakout of unemployment claimants by gender identity.

Mr. Holt expressed concern with finding enough participants for the program to scale. He asked about the planned focus on “pull” versus targeted “push” marketing for the program in the upcoming Marketing RFP. Ms. Lopez suggested that the Board wait to discuss outreach and marketing until after the conversation on training allocations is completed. Mr. Holt expressed agreement with the proposed training allotment.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia expressed interest in continuing the marketing conversation with Mr. Holt at a later time. She then explained that the vision around what types of trainings that SA: Ready to Work will provide has changed since the initial ideation stage. She said that the allotment will take into consideration college enrollment time windows, and fill slower periods with more opportunities for shorter certificate programs.

Mr. McMurry agreed with the proposed training allotment. He then addressed Mr. Holt’s earlier question by mentioning that digital marketing tools exist that will allow for very targeted messaging to prospective participants.

Ms. Ramirez, City Attorney, suggested to Mr. Graeber that an item to discuss the Marketing & Outreach RFP can be included in a future agenda, to which he agreed. He asked when the RFP would be ~~put out~~ released, and Ms. Lopez said it would be in the coming weeks. Councilmember Rocha Garcia followed up to invite members to raise more questions during the next presentation when the budget for marketing would be discussed.

Ms. Garza asked what role the training providers will play in referring candidates to the program. Ms. Lopez replied that the training providers will have adequate information on SA: Ready to Work to give residents instructions on how to enroll, and potentially come back to them for training. Ms. Garza then asked if the program’s marketing and outreach would target training providers as well as potential trainees, and Ms. Lopez confirmed this could be incorporated.

Dr. Matson asked to confirm whether certificate programs will be stackable to allow participants to transfer their experience to a higher education institution, and Ms. Lopez confirmed. Dr. Matson then expressed agreement with the proposed training allotment. She followed up by asking if the program will weight training by industry to mirror those most in demand. Ms. Lopez replied that industry weighting is not currently planned.

Mr. Graeber agreed with the proposed allotment, then suggested that the infographic on construction trades be edited to better reflect the realistic career progression for someone entering the field. He expressed that in its current state, it could present a misleading picture of the career path to applicants. He also suggested that the training providers section be updated with additional providers.

Dr. Westfall clarified that the graphics she presented were prepared by Workforce Solutions Alamo, which includes information from the surrounding region, but that information presented to residents on target occupations, training providers and average wages will be more tailored to San Antonio. Mr. Graeber mentioned that in the construction trade, there are a wide variety of employment opportunities even within the individual project management position, and that being able to provide

more in-depth information on the types of positions available will be helpful when marketing to residents.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia mentioned that the area workforce partners will be key in marketing the program to residents at different stages of their careers. She expressed that City leadership has been discussing how to ensure that residents are placed in the trainings that are most suited for them.

Mr. McMurry made a motion to approve the recommended allotment. Mr. Holt seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the item.

Dr. Matson reiterated the importance of ensuring that training credentials can be stackable. Mr. Graeber asked to clarify if residents currently making \$15 an hour or more can qualify for the program. Ms. Lopez explained that the eligibility criterion for income is that the resident must earn no more than 200% of the federal poverty level for their household size, so \$15 an hour may or may not exceed this, depending on the resident's household.

2. Discussion related to SA: Ready to Work draft budget.

Ms. Lopez presented the SA: Ready to Work draft budget and 5-year financial forecast for the program.

Dr. Matson asked where establishment of the ERP system for the program fits into the budget. Mr. Graeber asked for clarification on what she meant by this, and Dr. Matson replied that she was asking about system that will support the program through client data management. Ms. Lopez replied that the City is allotting \$250,000 for the data system annually. Dr. Matson asked if the system will be a new iteration of what is currently being used for Train for Jobs SA, and Ms. Lopez responded that a new system will be adopted. Dr. Matson then asked if the City expects that all Ready to Work contractors will be required to use the new system, and Ms. Lopez replied that they will have the choice to either use it directly, or integrate their own system with the common system managed by the City. Dr. Matson asked whether the reason there is no RFP for the data system is because it will be developed in-house. Ms. Lopez clarified that it will not be developed by the City, but will be selected through a City procurement process that does not include an RFP. Dr. Matson expressed that the \$250,000 figure for the system seems low, and she asked Mr. Graeber to consider future discussion of technology for a future agenda.

Ms. Lopez requested that more context be provided on the conversation surrounding technology to ensure it fits within the scope of the Advisory Board's responsibility.

Mr. McMurry mentioned to Ms. Lopez that he was happy to see that the initial City staffing estimate of 163 has been reduced significantly in the draft budget. Ms. Lopez clarified that the estimated 163 that was published in December was an error, and had actually been 63 staff members.

Ms. Garza expressed interest in talking more about what technology will be available for the program participants to apply for trainings and check their referrals. She then asked if the budget estimate of \$500 per person for emergency funds is flexible to accommodate participants who may need more assistance than that. Ms. Lopez replied that the \$500 is a maximum, but that the budget assumes that about half of participants will require the funding.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended to Mr. Graeber that he create a subcommittee for marketing and outreach, and offered to serve as its Council liaison. She then referenced a past effort to have City contractors use Viridis for data management, and asked Ms. Lopez if that effort was successful. Ms. Lopez responded that the City hopes to adopt a system that can integrate more with case management data, and allow the program to utilize networks that the Department of Human Services has for connecting clients with social service providers. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the Economic Development Department has a designated IT liaison who will inform this process, and Ms. Lopez affirmed that Mr. Lefgren is supporting the data management plan internally, as well as staff from both ITSD and the Office of Innovation. Councilmember Rocha Garcia then recommended that a further discussion around technology be added to a future agenda.

Mr. Graeber agreed that the idea to establish a marketing subcommittee would be beneficial.

Mr. Holt asked if the Program Support and Administration parts of the budget are mainly comprised of employee wages and benefits, and Ms. Lopez confirmed this. Mr. Holt then asked where the marketing and outreach for the program are represented in the draft budget, and Ms. Lopez replied that those budget items fall under the Administration category, with \$435,000 yearly allocated for marketing.

Mr. Graeber asked if there will be a cap on spending for wraparound services. Ms. Lopez replied that \$1,300 per year will be budgeted for these services for each participant, but that the actual spending will fluctuate depending on individual client needs. She also mentioned that the \$1,300 estimate is based on observations from the Train for Jobs SA program. Mr. Graeber then asked to clarify the difference between this figure and the budgeted client emergency assistance. Ms. Lopez clarified that the majority of the wraparound services component is client case management, and not direct services assistance, which will be covered by the emergency assistance funding. She ~~then~~ explained that the \$500 emergency assistance funding will be used when clients cannot access the ~~services~~ assistance they need through referrals from the case management agency.

E. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Lopez thanked the Board for their feedback, and explained that the next step in reviewing the draft budget will be to brief City Council in mid-May. After that, the Pre-K 4 SA Board will also need to review it, and then City Council will approve it at the end of May.

Ms. Lopez also mentioned that the Intake & Case Management consolidated RFP will be posted in draft form for public input soon, and that City staff will share it with the Board to review as well.

Mr. Graeber asked how to best gather interest from the Board in establishing an Outreach & Marketing subcommittee for the Board. Ms. Lopez suggested that City staff send out a message to the Board to start the conversation and to allow members to respond individually.

F. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:56am.

APPROVED:
