

SA: Ready to Work Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

WebEx Meeting

Thursday, June 24, 2021

1:00pm - 3:00pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Daphene Carson

Sonia Garza

Peter John Holt

Ben Peavy

Emily Spurlock

Cynthia Teniente-Matson

Vice Chair, Doug McMurry

Chair, Jerry Graeber

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rosa Santana

Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia

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

Ana Salazar, Workforce Development Manager

Mary Mills, Advisory Board Staff Liaison

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Graeber called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. after quorum was established.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

No citizens registered in advance to make public comments.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Graeber asked members to review Advisory Board meeting minutes of May 27, 2021. Mr. McMurry moved to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Peavy seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve.

D. INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

1. City of San Antonio Workforce and SA: Ready To Work Updates

Ms. Lopez provided an update to the Board members on Council's approval of the Signify platform, and the search for the Workforce Development Executive Director. Dr. Matson asked Ms. Lopez to provide some information about the candidates being considered for the Executive Director position. Ms. Lopez responded that the two candidates both have leadership experience and workforce development knowledge.

Ms. Lopez continued by sharing new information regarding the consolidation of 3 planned RFPs into one Program Implementation RFP, and the community input that went into the decision to consolidate them. She then went on to outline the current timeline for beginning SA: Ready to Work.

Mr. Peavy asked whether the in-person community meeting scheduled for July 1st had been announced publicly yet. Ms. Lopez responded that the plan was to send the invitation to relevant community stakeholders as soon as the Advisory Board had been informed. Mr. Peavy then asked if the RFP issuance would include a period for respondents to ask questions of the City before their submission. Ms. Lopez responded that the RFP will include details as to when the period for responses is, and when pre-submittal conferences will be held.

Mr. McMurry asked Ms. Lopez to remind the Board members of the previously agreed upon target occupations, and asked whether any community organizations had issues with any of them. Ms. Lopez replied that she could remember Construction & Trades, Healthcare, IT, and Manufacturing. Mr. McMurry added that he thought Education and Social Services were also target industries. He asked what the main issues that community stakeholders had with that list of industries. Ms. Contreras responded that the main complaint was that the industries themselves were not outlined in the draft RFP. She also mentioned that stakeholders wanted to ensure these

industries were aligned with WSA's targeted industries, and that the Board could reassess and update the target industries quarterly. Mr. McMurry requested that the target occupation list be documented for future reference. Mr. Graeber reminded the group that there are actually two separate lists, one for target industries, and one much longer list for target occupations. Dr. Matson mentioned that Finance & Insurance was also a targeted industry.

Ms. Garza asked whether there are any public expectations regarding the start date of the program that the Board should be aware of. Ms. Lopez responded that there has been no established deadline from City leadership for the start of the program, but that previously presented timelines have been pushed back to allow for community feedback to inform the development of the program. Ms. Garza responded that she read a news article recently that stressed the need for workforce development locally, and wanted to ensure that the Workforce team was aware of the pressing community need and can be proactive rather than reactive to that need.

Ms. Spurlock asked if there are specific qualifiers for target occupations, like a minimum annual salary. Ms. Lopez responded that those qualifications have been agreed upon by the Board.

Dr. Matson asked Ms. Lopez to reiterate her earlier statement that guidelines on training numbers would be fluid to allow more flexibility for service providers, and to confirm whether the previously agreed upon ratio of 2- and 4-year trainings versus certificate programs was changed or not. Ms. Lopez confirmed that there was no change to the training ratio. She then addressed the first question by explaining that there were concerns that having defined guidelines for the number of clients to be served and the service cost per client in the RFP may have a chilling effect for potential respondents who cannot meet the guidelines, so they were removed.

Mr. Graeber asked whether there would be overlap in service as Train for Jobs ends at the end of 2021 and Ready to Work begins in fall 2021. Ms. Lopez responded that the current Train for Jobs contracts are set to expire at the end of September, but that clients who have not completed their trainings by then could continue their courses past that time. She also mentioned that the Workforce team is currently discussing the feasibility of extending Train for Jobs through December with the agencies. Mr. Graeber then asked to confirm whether respondents to the consolidated RFP can respond only to suggest training providers. Ms. Lopez confirmed this is possible. Finally, Mr. Graeber reminded the group that amendments and additions to the target industries list and degrees vs. certificates ratios are possible later on in the program, which may be necessary to reevaluate whether food service and hospitality should be part of the program.

Ms. Garza mentioned that St. Philip's College now has a Hospitality two-year degree. Mr. Graeber added that they also have a Culinary Arts program. Ms. Lopez provided the original list of target occupations and qualifications for jobs, which included Health, IT/Cybersecurity, Construction/Architecture/Utilities, Education, Aerospace/Manufacturing, and Oil & Gas/Warehousing & Transportation/Finance.

2. Discussion and possible action related to Community Outreach Subcommittee nominees and meeting schedule.

Mr. McMurry introduced the two nominees for the Community Outreach Subcommittee, Ruby Trejo and Jason Smith. Mr. Graeber provided information on Ms. Trejo's background, and why he felt she would be a good fit for the Subcommittee. Mr. McMurry informed the Board that he met with Mr. Holt and Mr. Smith, and he felt that Mr. Smith was ready and able to participate as well.

Mr. Graeber reminded the Board members that a maximum of nine members can serve on the Subcommittee, and that both he and Mr. Peavy would be willing to relinquish their positions on the Subcommittee if other willing participants came forward. Ms. Garza informed the Board that she is in contact with one individual who she would like to nominate.

Mr. Peavy asked whether the July 1st community meeting would be a good example of events that the new Subcommittee would participate in. Ms. Lopez confirmed that this type of community event would be ideal for Subcommittee members to help with.

Mr. Graeber suggested that other ideal participants in the Subcommittee may be community members who were considered for Board membership but who were not selected. Mr. McMurry added that a member of SA Works may be another person to consider. Mr. McMurry went on to mention that community outreach will play a big role in the success of SA: Ready to Work, and that he looks forward to working with the Subcommittee members.

Ms. Garza suggested that the Board look to initiatives that are assisting San Antonio residents of color and/or women with entering the workforce to see how SA: Ready to Work can complement those efforts.

Ms. Spurlock asked whether there are any requirements for the Subcommittee to include any workforce program participants, similar to the larger Advisory Board. Mr. Graeber said that he did not think there were requirements. Ms. Lopez asked Ms. Ramirez to confirm that the Subcommittee cannot have more members than the Advisory Board, and Ms. Ramirez confirmed that is true.

Ms. Lopez agreed that SA Works would be a good partner to include on the Subcommittee, as their expertise in marketing training opportunities within our community could be very useful. Mr. Graeber agreed that this would be a good idea, and that he would be willing to step down from the Subcommittee to allow a member of SA Works to join. Ms. Lopez offered to reach out to SA Works to identify an ideal candidate.

Mr. Graeber called for a motion to approve the addition of Ms. Trejo and Mr. Smith to the Community Outreach Subcommittee. Mr. McMurry motioned, and Dr. Matson seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the nominees.

Mr. Graeber asked whether the Advisory Board will establish the frequency and dates for Subcommittee meetings. Ms. Ramirez explained that while the Subcommittee members can decide when and how often to meet, the larger Advisory Board must approve those decisions. She also informed the Board that all Subcommittee meetings will be open meetings and subject to the same requirements for agenda postings and public comment as the Advisory Board meetings.

3. Discussion on upcoming Workforce Development Symposium.

Mr. Lefgren presented to the Board members an overview of the goals and logistics of the upcoming Workforce Symposium.

Mr. McMurry asked how long the Symposium is scheduled for. Mr. Lefgren replied that it will start in the morning and last until the early afternoon. Mr. McMurry then asked if the scope of the Symposium will extend beyond COPS/Metro's initial request for the event. Mr. Lefgren replied that the Symposium is open to all organizations operating in the local workforce space. He also added that a second pre-submittal conference for the RFP will likely be held directly after the Symposium.

Mr. Peavy suggested that the Symposium prioritize actionable steps towards establishing a solid model for SA: Ready to Work, rather than discussing local best practices at a high level. Mr. Lefgren responded that representatives from Opportunity Accelerator, who are helping facilitate the Symposium, have a similar viewpoint, and are focused on having community-wide collaborative discussions at the Symposium. Mr. Peavy asked for the Workforce team to stress to attendees that the event will be collaborative, and will request input and participation from attendees.

Ms. Spurlock asked whether the invitees for the Symposium will be community members who have already expressed interest in the program, or whether anyone can attend. Mr. Lefgren responded that anyone interested in being a part of the program could participate. Ms. Spurlock followed up by asking if she can invite her employer to the event, and Mr. Lefgren confirmed that this was welcomed.

Dr. Matson suggested that workforce leaders implementing best practices be invited to the Symposium for a facilitated discussion of their work, rather than relaying information to participants through local facilitators. She also suggested that SA Works help host the event. Ms. Lopez mentioned that because the Symposium will take place in the middle of the procurement period for Ready to Work, being mindful of the way best practices from around the country are presented at the event is important. There are concerns that highlighting some programs and not others may skew RFP respondents' impressions of what the City expects from Ready to Work partner organizations.

Ms. Garza suggested that it may be useful to clearly state the scope of the problem that Ready to Work is hoping to help solve early on in the Symposium, and foster a tone of partnership. Mr. Lefgren asked Ms. Garza whether she thinks the draft topics for discussion for the event are effective for meeting the goals she mentioned. Ms. Garza clarified that she thinks that it would be beneficial to provide a clear overview of what the local workforce environment looks like, and clearly identify the changes in the workforce that the COVID-19 pandemic has made.

Mr. Graeber asked whether any Train for Jobs SA partners will attend the Symposium. Mr. Lefgren responded that they will be invited to share feedback at the event. Mr. Graeber then mentioned that he thinks outlining how the transition from Train for Jobs to Ready to Work will happen is helpful to include in the Symposium as well. Ms. Lopez added that having the Train for Jobs SA partners participate in the Symposium will help develop a new collaborative effort,

rather than replicate efforts that any one workforce partner is currently implementing. She then mentioned that there may not be time during the Symposium to discuss the transition between programs with the attendees.

Ms. Garza recommended that the Workforce team think about how to involve small businesses in the Symposium. Mr. Graeber followed by suggesting that local business associations be invited to the event, to help connect those businesses with the program.

Mr. Peavy mentioned that the success of Ready to Work will partly depend on uniting workforce partners throughout the City together to work towards the program's outcome, rather than having competing organizations trying to meet their goals individually.

Dr. Matson stressed the need for actionable items for prospective participants, employers, and Ready to Work partners to be very clear, to maximize community buy-in. Ms. Lopez mentioned that the July 1st meeting could be an opportunity to pitch the Symposium to the community and get feedback as well.

Ms. Spurlock suggested that the Symposium might be a good way to get employer feedback on what sort of experience they want from Ready to Work graduates, as the gap between job-seeker experience and employer expectations has been a criticism of the Train for Jobs SA program. Ms. Lopez agreed that addressing that gap should be a priority in future conversations with local employers.

E. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Lopez asked the Board members whether they would like to hold an Advisory Board meeting in July. Mr. Graeber said that he thought it would be a good idea in order to prepare for the Workforce Symposium.

Mr. Graeber asked when a new Council Member would be appointed to the Advisory Board. Ms. Lopez responded that the Mayor will make that appointment in late July or early August.

F. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Matson moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Carson seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 2:32pm.

APPROVED:
