

**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021 2:00 PM
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Members Present:	Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>Chair, District 3</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Shirley Gonzales, <i>District 5</i> Councilmember Melissa Cabello Havrda, <i>District 6</i> Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>District 8</i>
Staff Present:	Carlos J. Contreras, III, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Alejandra Lopez, <i>Director, Economic Development Department</i> ; Christina Reck-Guerra, <i>Assistant Director, PreK4SA</i> ; Justina Tate, <i>Assistant Director, Economic Development Department</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
Others Present:	Mary Garr, <i>President & CEO, Family Service</i> ; Dr. Mike Flores, <i>Chancellor, Alamo Colleges District</i> ; David Zammiello, <i>Executive Director, Project Quest</i> ; Adrian Lopez, <i>CEO, Workforce Solutions Alamo</i> ; Mark Milton, <i>Chief Operating Officer, Workforce Solutions Alamo</i> ; Romanita Matta-Barrera, <i>Executive Director, SA Works</i> ; Nino Tarantino, <i>CEO, Chrysalis Ministries</i> ; Kelli Rhodes, <i>Executive Director, Restore Education</i> ; Dr. Andrea Guerrero-Guajardo, <i>Chief Information Officer, Workforce Solutions Alamo</i>

Call to Order

Chair Viagran called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on December 8, 2020.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2020 meeting of the Economic and Workforce Development Council Committee. Councilmember Pelaez seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by those present.

2. Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on January 12, 2021.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2021 meeting of the Economic and Workforce Development Council Committee. Councilmember Pelaez seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by those present.

3. Update on the COVID-19 Community Recovery and Resiliency Plan regarding the Workforce Development Pillar. [Carlos J. Contreras, III, Assistant City Manager; Alex Lopez, Director, Economic Development]

Alex Lopez provided a workforce development update and reported that 4,940 residents completed the Phase 1 preliminary intake; 3,694 residents were referred to an agency to enroll in Phase 2 training; and 1,793 residents were enrolled in Phase 3 training, with 1,447 pending enrollment.

Romanita Mata-Barrera reported that SA Works was tasked with leading employer recruitment and engagement for On the Job Training (OJT) Program opportunities and OJT job openings. She stated that SA Works partnered with Workforce Solutions Alamo (WSA) on targeted job fairs in manufacturing, aerospace, and other industries in a direct response to local employers' needs. She added that SA Works engaged in aggressive employer recruitment to fill their available job openings in the growing sectors of customer service, general, and manufacturing professional services. She noted that the COVID-19 Pandemic caused workers to be displaced in the restaurant, hospitality, leisure, and retail sectors and their skillsets were mismatched with the needs of employers in the growing sectors. She stated that City Council approved Amendments to adjust the OJT Program and expanded training for the OJT applicant pool which should be completed in approximately three weeks. She noted that employers were waiting for the training phase to be completed to offer OJT and employment opportunities.

Chancellor Mike Flores reported that many of the displaced workers had been out of an educational or training setting for a number of years and had limited exposure to new and emerging jobs in targeted industries. He stated that the Alamo Colleges District (ACD) would engage with participants in a seamless effort to meet their individual needs holistically and would continue to collaborate with Workforce Development partners.

Adrian Lopez reported that WSA worked to consistently improve virtual provider services. He noted that WSA continued to operate its workforce centers during COVID-19 and at times had to close its centers for deep cleaning. He reported that WSA invested in WiFi infrastructure to be expanded to its parking lots for client's job search use. He stated that virtual intake assessments, coaching, and working closely with clients for best long-term outcomes required heavy interaction and was a challenge. He added that obtaining proper copies of IDs, transcripts, and other necessary documentation during COVID-19 created further challenges. He noted that WSA needed to make adjustments to track particular types of available training and to consider the current market needs to avoid flooding the market in a particular area that may not have jobs in the future. He reported that WSA received a \$2 million Dislocated Worker Upskilling Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor which it invested in tuition for participants in its Train for Jobs SA Program. He added that WSA invested \$3.5 million in the Disaster Dislocated Workers Program and an additional \$3 million into Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Programs.

David Zammiello reported that a proactive approach to community outreach during the COVID-19 Pandemic was adapted by all the Workforce partners and concurred that the virtual intake assessments were a challenge. He noted that Project Quest (PQ) and other partners had to pivot from an anticipated high demand for short-term training to a stronger demand by participants for long-term training that led to better job outcomes with higher wages in demand occupations. He stated that PQ adjusted to the preferred approach for most residents and updated its curriculums and job offerings accordingly. He added that PQ had forged a partnership with St. Mary's University to create two new programs: 1) Rattler Focus; and 2) Rattler Readiness. He stated that both programs were designed to navigate students towards a career path that best suited their situation.

Nino Tarantino reported that Chrysalis Ministries (CM) supported incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals and their family members. He noted that changes to the Justice System occurred due to COVID-19 resulted in court closures, limited video hearings, and reduced jail releases. He stated that CM formed a partnership with the Bexar County Sheriff's Office for video visitations to inmates to introduce them to CM prior to their release. He noted that CM's braided funding requirements required focused client data to qualify participants for vetted job programs. He added that CM was committed to streamlining the process and worked closely with partner agencies to make job placement for its clients more efficient going forward beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Mary Garr reported that 70% of Family Services (FS) clients were women, and many were single mothers. She stated that it was the goal of FS to increase client education levels, close earning gaps, and create sustainable living pay jobs with benefits. She noted that many FS clients lacked a high school degree, some needed English classes, and some needed help with basic math and reading skills. She reported that FS worked with partners to provide educational components and to address other life barriers. She added that comprehensive wrap around resources were needed for safety in their homes, health and well-being improvements, and economic stability, and noted that one component could not be addressed without addressing others. She stated that one of the core components of FS was the Financial Empowerment Center that provided systematic, enrolled financial coaching in conjunction with job training and education.

Kelli Rhodes reported that Restore Education (RE) worked to address academic barriers to enrollment while balancing the high demand for its GED program and short-term training programs. She noted that 75% of RE clients had an 8th grade reading level or below. She stated that RE pivoted quickly during the COVID-19 Pandemic to address education gaps and created several ramp-up training programs including a GED short-term training pathway, a flexible Spanish GED class, and intensive remedial courses that provided readiness for the skilled trades. She added that RE provided intensive job placement support and created individual and group workshops to address resume building, digital literacy, and online job searches and application processes.

Alex Lopez noted that the Workforce Development partners recognized that participants needed time to understand and choose a career field that best suited their situation. She stated that career exploration was an absolute critical value of wraparound support for all the programs. She noted that long-term training was very beneficial as it provided additional training skills. She added that braided funding impacted programs that needed to provide comprehensive service levels and distinct programs for their clients, such as Chrysalis Ministries. She recognized that job training and job placement took time for each individual's specific needs.

Chairwoman Viagran asked the Workforce Development partners if they had job banks stocked with available jobs. Mary Garr confirmed that FS had jobs available through its multiple partners for its programs that created high quality substitute teachers and participants in child development association certificate programs with pathways to Associate Degrees and Bachelor Degrees in teaching. She added that RE partnered with other agencies for trades and apprenticeship training programs on the near Westside. She reported that RE partnered with Chef Johnny Hernandez who established a kitchen campus at RE and provided job opportunities. Mr. Tarantino reported that CM worked with over 400 employers willing to do second chance hiring and matched participants with employers that accepted certain background levels.

Chairwoman Viagran asked how the current 200 available OJT slots could be filled. Ms. Lopez noted that a key finding was that many OJT opportunities did not align with participants' existing skill levels and remedial and ramp up training was needed. Ms. Matta-Barrera stated that SA Works could help participants with career exploration and augment interests in manufacturing and other growth sector industries that they were not aware of. She added that SA Works could find more creative ways to engage employers in career advisor roles. Mr. Lopez stated that WSA monitored participant career track selections and not all targeted industries the Workforce Partners promoted were considered. He noted that the job market had changed drastically and quickly. He added that OJT programs did not guarantee jobs or credentials at the end of training; therefore, short-term or long-term training programs were more marketable. He noted that background checks and drug screenings also presented challenges.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested Ms. Lopez glean a list of age demographics of the applicant pools and that RE share its job placement model with other Workforce Development partners. She called for the Workforce Development Partners to provide outreach to single mothers, differently-abled individuals, second chance individuals, and individuals over 45 years old.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked what were the main barriers to recruitment and how could such barriers be removed. Ms. Garr noted that each participant had individual circumstances and each tended to have more than one barrier. She noted that comprehensive assessments determined immediate needs in the areas of transportation, childcare, and domestic violence. Mr. Zammiello noted that the COVID-19 environment required a different approach and proactive engagement had to be made exclusively through virtual settings to unpack layers of services needed. Chancellor Flores noted that participants encountered many barriers during long-term training and participants needed support and engagement while they maintained their focus on long-term opportunities.

4. Briefing on the 2021-2024 WSA Local Plan as approved by the Committee of Six on January 27, 2021 for submission to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

[Carlos Contreras, Assistant City Manager; Alejandra Lopez, Director, Economic Development]

Mr. Lopez explained that WSA was required by the Texas Workforce Commission to create a four-year plan, Local Plan 2021-2024 (the "Plan"), to demonstrate to the 13 communities it served how WSA would invest its funding in support of particular industries in targeted occupations. He reported that WSA had an annual budget of approximately \$100 million of which 75% was allocated to childcare for the enrollment of approximately 12,000 children in childcare for approximately 1,000 parents that worked, attended job training, or were in an educational program. Mr. Lopez reported that the deadline was March 1, 2021 to have the Plan approved by the WSA Board of Directors and the Committee of Six and requested this Committee's feedback.

Dr. Guajardo reported that the Plan was approved by the Committee of Six on January 27, 2021 and by the WSA Board the week prior. She stated that the Board's strategic vision was sector-based, was a model implemented extensively in other areas and other States, and focused on a career pathway system made up of organizations that would provide on-ramps and entry points into the workforce.

Dr. Guajardo presented a list of WSA Targeted Industries for both high demand and targeted occupations that were expected to continue to experience high growth, high demand, and offer living wages in the industries of health care, social assistance, retail trade, educational services, finance and insurance, manufacturing, scientific, technical services, construction, transportation and warehousing.

Dr. Guajardo stated that the State of Texas outlined and generated heat maps of industry clusters made available to WSA to identify the most concentrated targeted industries in the 13 regions served by WSA. She reported that the WSA Targeted Clusters were Aerospace/Manufacturing, Health, Information Technology, Cybersecurity, Construction, Architecture, Utilities, Oil & Gas, Warehousing & Transportation/Finance/Others, and Education.

Dr. Guajardo presented a list of WSA Target Occupations with the top ten being in computer and information systems, information security, network and computer systems administrators, software and web developers, and computer hardware engineering followed by General and Operations Managers, Compliance Officers, Human Resource Specialists, Logisticians, Management Analysts, and Training and Development Specialists. She noted that gender was included in some of the analyses to establish a baseline in some occupations that were historically male-dominated for a focus on gender equity in the future as needed. She noted that trends in the hiring gap analysis for June 2020 through November 2020 were attributed to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Dr. Guajardo reported that WSA had 16 job centers across 13 regions and over 91,000 individuals came to the Job Centers last year. She noted that when WSA pivoted to a virtual environment after stay at home orders were in place, over 116,000 individuals were seen virtually; over 127,000 active job seekers sought jobs; and 8,000 jobs were filled through the Texas Workforce Commission job website.

Chairwoman Viagran requested further information on the data for the Not Self-Sufficient barrier. Mark Milton reported that participants were placed in the Not Self-Sufficient category if their reported wages were below the average job category wage in their community when they entered the program. He stated that he would provide average wage data for San Antonio.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how targeted industries affected San Antonio and its surrounding counties. She noted that there were no participants reported for Customer Choice Occupation Training in the Aerospace Industry, and called for more efforts to be made by the Workforce Development Partners to fill that category. Dr. Guajardo explained that WSA performed and provided a county-by-county analysis to identify industries that were prevalent in rural parts of a county such as Oil & Gas and did not encompass an entire region. She noted that WSA funding allocated 80% to Bexar County and 20% to its surrounding rural areas. She added that WSA Budget also allocated special funding initiatives such as a \$50,000 skills development fund dedicated to ramp-up training for employees of the newly formed United Alloy located in Seguin.

Chairwoman Viagran reported that the Ready to Work SA Subcommittee met and submitted board appointment recommendations to the Mayor for candidate interviews to be conducted at the Governance Committee. She requested that staff conduct analyses of peer city relief efforts and area rates for rental and mortgage relief for micro and small businesses due to COVID-19.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Rebecca Viagran, Chairwoman

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Cano, Office of the City Clerk