

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, INC.
OF
MAHONING AND COLUMBIANA COUNTIES**

Individuals with Disabilities Committee Meeting
January 12, 2023
9:00am
OhioMeansJobs Center Mahoning County

Committee Members Present: Shirley Bowald, Ed Emrick, Brian Eskridge, Dawn Haines for Joe Caruso, Susie Kooser, Melissa Maiorano, Meribeth Noble, Troy Rhoades, and Julie Rupert
Committee Members Absent: Matthew Golladay, Brenda Heidinger, Erich Offenburg, and Marcy Patton
Adjunct Members: Jack Hile, Ashlee Iannucci, Patty Koehnlein, Carol Ramsay-Loomis, and Jennifer Strank
Board Staff: Mary Ann Kochalko and Sharlene Senediak
Guests: Steve Lyons

Mr. Eskridge, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00am after verification of a quorum, and introductions were made.

Approval of October 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the October 13, 2022 meeting minutes as prepared.
Motion made by: Troy Rhoades
Seconded by: Dawn Haines
Discussion: None
Motion approved.

Committee Membership Updates

Motion: To appoint Melissa Maiorano (Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber), Meribeth Noble (Compco Industries), and Julie Rupert (Huntington Bank) to the Individual with Disabilities Committee.
Motion made by: Troy Rhoades
Seconded by: Ed Emerick
Discussion: None
Motion approved.

Discussion Topic: Employee Retention Strategies

Changes in workforce trends, as well as generational differences in the workplace, have been discussed. Since the pandemic, employers have experienced an employee shortage, and given the amount of baby boomers retiring, there is not enough people to fill the vacant positions.

The Regional Chamber and Eastgate Regional Council of Governments are seeking grant funding to start an initiative that focuses on migration opportunities to capitalize on people from Ukraine or other countries who are looking for places to reside.

The Regional Chamber is also working on a complementary effort known as the Regional Workforce Coalition, which focuses on attracting individuals to the area as local area population is projected to continually decline. The coalition is expected to be a sustainable opportunity from Ohio to Work Mahoning Valley, and the goal this year will be to identify a strategy. The National Funding Hub will be presented next week at the Area 17 WDB meeting to discuss additional ways to fund the coalition.

It is critical for employers to consider new retention strategies. Retaining employees is more cost effective than hiring new employees. It is important to learn and understand what motivates an employee; what is important may not be the traditional benefits normally offered.

In a *Forbes* article, 15 effective employee retention strategies were highlighted. Some of the strategies noted include offering competitive base salaries or hourly wages; letting employees work from home; encouraging and promoting work-life balance; and providing flexible scheduling and reduced workdays.

Many individuals with disabilities are motivated to gain full-time employment, however, if they work full-time, they may lose their benefits. Some bridge programs are in place to maintain an individual's benefits until they are received through the employer, but the assistance may not be enough. The state offers some benefits to employers, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), but the benefits of the program may not be enough to entice the employers to utilize the program. Everyone's situation is unique, and not all programs can meet all situations which can create limitations for employers and individuals receiving needed assistance. Many employers focus on hiring full-time employees, however, if a full-time position can be changed to two part-time positions, this can be advantageous to individuals with disabilities and employers – employers will not need to offer benefits, which can provide a cost savings.

Grant Updates

The State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities was looking for ways to increase the number individuals with disabilities who receive micro-certifications, certifications, and enter apprenticeships. CCBDD and YSU Excellence Training Center submitted a grant proposal and was successful in receiving an award. A statewide meeting with all grant recipients will be held on January 20th to review the details of the project. Appreciation was extended to OOD and the WDB staff for their assistance with providing letters of support for the proposal.

Member Updates

No member updates were reported.

Guest Invite Ideas

Shirley Bowald from CCBDD and Jackie Ruller from YSU Excellence Training Center will be invited to discuss the recent grant award received from the State of Ohio.

Other Business/Next Steps

YouScience – A presentation about YouScience, which is an online career assessment tool, was made to the BRN partners in Stark County. It was described as a tool employers can utilize to determine if an applicant is an appropriate candidate for job positions. Area 17 gained access to YouScience through the Ohio to Work initiative, and it will be available until December 31, 2023. Area 17 has focused more on the jobseeker perspective of the assessment to help individuals learn more about their strengths and skills. YouScience has also been introduced in some of the local school systems. A YouScience workshop will begin in February at the OMJ center in Mahoning County, and it may be extended to the OMJ center in Columbiana County.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30am.