

**SA: Ready to Work Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Workforce Solutions Alamo Board Room
100 N Santa Rosa, Suite 120, San Antonio TX 78207
Wednesday, September 27, 2023
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Priscilla Aguilar
Jennifer Cantu
Stefanie Gaines
Jerry Graeber
Geronimo Guerra
Ben Peavy
Allie Perez
Amanda Wright

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sonia Garza
Councilmember Pelaez
Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia

STAFF PRESENT:

Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager
Michael Ramsey, Workforce Development Office Executive Director
Amy Contreras, Assistant to the Director
Christina Ramirez, City Attorney's Office
Ryan Loyd, Ready to Work Marketing Manager
Mary Mills-Nguyen, Advisory Board Staff Liaison

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Peavy called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. after quorum was established.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Walter Perry of Suit Up! The World spoke about his organization's mission working with youth and formerly incarcerated residents of the east side of San Antonio to help them achieve economic mobility. He stressed that life skills training should be partnered with job training to help residents be successful.

He explained that many people who have been underserved in San Antonio may feel they do not have a voice or a place in Ready to Work and encouraged staff to think of ways to better support and recruit Black San Antonio residents, especially those with justice system involvement, into the program. He gave an example of a participant that has had issues with the program and requested that staff address the issues.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Peavy asked the Board members to review the meeting minutes from June 20th. Mr. Graeber motioned to approve, and Ms. Cantu seconded. The Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes.

D. INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

1. Ready to Work Program Update

The Advisory Board members each introduced themselves to the group. Mr. Ramsey then began his update to the Board on programmatic updates since the last meeting, starting with highlighting recent Ready to Work graduates Jocelyn and Diana.

Ms. Cantu noted that the average intake process length for the partners is significantly shorter now than it was earlier on in the program, and asked Mr. Ramsey to clarify whether the partners all have the same intake process. Mr. Ramsey responded that while the intake and eligibility criteria is the same across all the prime agencies, each one takes its own unique approach for how to conduct intake with applicants.

Mr. Ramsey explained to the group that each prime partner has a strong employer engagement arm and that each is working to hone strategies to place training graduates in jobs more quickly.

Ms. Wright asked if data could be shared on the breakdown of job placements by industry. She expressed that the median hourly wage for job placements so far is lower than she would like to see. She also expressed concerns that some work may need to be done to ensure that intake and case management staff are providing a high level of professionalism and courtesy to participants. Mr. Ramsey thanked Ms. Wright for her comments.

Mr. Ramsey then introduced the UTSA Urban Education Institute Team to give some updates on the information they have collected from participant interviews, specifically those currently in training.

Mr. Ramsey then introduced a team from the North San Antonio Chamber Innovation Leadership Project to present their recommendations to assist Ready to Work, which include outreach and marketing, customizing the user experience, and creating a “buddy system” between participants and prospective employers.

Mr. Ramsey then introduced Dr. Steve Nivin and Dr. Belinda Roman to share results of their recent Economic Impact Study aimed at measuring the impact of the first program year of Ready to Work. Dr. Nivin explained that through increases in participant income and local spending, and social savings from participants transitioning off social services like SNAP and Medicaid, the total economic impact of the program would be \$1.7 billion.

Mr. Peavy encouraged the group to always consider framing high-level data conversations around the participant experience, and stressed the importance of respecting the individual.

2. Employer Engagement Subcommittee Update

Ms. Cantu presented to the Board members on actions taken by the Subcommittee during their July and September meetings. Highlights shared included a summary of JobFest outcomes, occupation

presentations from TPKR Scientifics and Family Service, and a September presentation from ESC Region 20 on the Education Collaborative they are spearheading to tackle the region-wide teacher shortage. She also shared the most recent talent pipeline for RTW completers, organized by industry.

3. Briefing and Possible Action on Ready To Work Target Occupations

Ms. Cantu presented two new occupations for consideration: Medical and Health Service Managers and Natural Science Managers. She provided some context for the positions based on information provided by TPKR Scientifics on the local demand and required skill sets for each position.

Mr. Peavy added that he was impressed by both the starting wage and local demand for these positions. He also mentioned that there are several occupations still being considered.

Mr. Graeber asked if WDO staff are aware of any training providers who train for these occupations. Ms. Salazar responded that the organization who requested the occupations be added to the catalog is actually a training provider, as well as an employer. She added that staff are prioritizing streamlining the onboarding process for new occupations to ensure that training providers are on board shortly after new occupations are added to the catalog.

Mr. Peavy motioned to approve the two new occupations, and Ms. Aguilar seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the occupations as presented.

4. Briefing on Employer Engagement Strategies

Mr. Peavy introduced Ms. Salazar to provide an update on recent developments in employer engagement strategies around Ready to Work.

Some recent projects include engagement with Green Light and Lightcast to create a dedicated credential storage system, job search platform and resume builder tool for Ready to Work participants.

She also highlighted a forthcoming MOU between Ready to Work and Joint Base San Antonio to solidify available workforce development resources for military families, as well as plans to expand incumbent worker training, with an aim to benefit small businesses and their employees.

Ms. Salazar then mentioned the Pay It Forward internship pilot program, in partnership with Social Finance. The pilot will allow training completers to complete an additional 6-week internship program with a local employer to further prepare them to enter the workforce in their new field.

She then provided some information on how the Apprenticeship Building America team is supporting Ready to Work by expanding available apprenticeship opportunities, as well as the employer convenings hosted by the Mayor.

5. Community Outreach Subcommittee Update

Ms. Wright updated the Board members on developments from their July and September meetings, which included an overview of the program's Year 1 and Year 2 progress, new community partnerships, progress updates from Creative Noggin, and the August Community Collaborative meeting on Childcare.

6. Briefing and Possible Action on Community Outreach Subcommittee Vacancy

Ms. Wright presented Allie Perez for consideration for the Community Outreach Subcommittee. Ms. Wright motioned to approve, and Ms. Gaines seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve Ms. Perez for the position.

7. Briefing on Community Outreach Strategies

Mr. Loyd gave an overview on outcomes from the doorhanger collaboration with the Solid Waste Management Department, out-of-home marketing and community events, the Community Champion Collaborative and CBO referral incentive program, and the forthcoming study on childcare availability in San Antonio.

D. STAFF MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Contreras summarized Ready to Work's recent national recognition, including receipt of federal funding for apprenticeship programs and the 2023 Sharman Stein Award for Storytelling Changemakers, and Ready to Work's engagement with the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and the StriveTogether 2023 Cradle to Career Network Convening.

She also presented on upcoming events at which Ready to Work will have a presence.

F. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Graeber mentioned that he has heard suggestions to focus more marketing efforts on local employers, to encourage them to get on board with learning more about how Ready to Work can benefit them. Mr. Peavy mentioned that having more video and multimedia marketing highlighting participants and training might help get more employers engaged.

Ms. Perez asked to see what flexibility might be in the program's marketing budget to put more emphasis on employers. Mr. Loyd mentioned his idea to create employer highlight videos that feature both the employer and Ready to Work participants that they may have hired.

G. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.