

**SA: Ready to Work Advisory Board
Community Outreach Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

**Council B Session Room
Municipal Plaza
114 W Commerce St.
San Antonio, TX 78205**

**Tuesday, September 28 2021
8:00am - 9:00am**

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Atree Desai
Yadira Gonzales
Frances Gonzalez
Jason Smith
Jerry Graeber
Co-Chair, Doug McMurry
Co-Chair, Sonia Garza
Councilmember Rocha Garcia

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ruby Trejo

STAFF PRESENT:

Christina Ramirez, City Attorney's Office
Christina Reck-Guerra, Workforce Interim Assistant Director
Amy Contreras, Economic Development Manager
Mary Mills, Advisory Board Staff Liaison
Mike Ramsey, Workforce Development Office Executive Director

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. McMurry called the meeting to order at 8:06a.m. after quorum was established.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

No citizens registered in advance to make public comments.

C. INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

1. Review of Targeted Industries

Mr. McMurry provided an overview of the targeted industries for SA: Ready to Work as voted on by the full Advisory Board in April.

Ms. Gonzalez asked for some additional background on how the list of industries was created and whether the subcommittee can revisit and provide suggestions on them at a later date. Mr. McMurry asked City staff to provide some history on where the information on the industries came from. Ms. Reck-Guerra explained that the recommended industries came from Workforce Solutions Alamo, but that the Board also wanted the ability to review and revise the target industries on a quarterly basis. The first review will be during the October Board meeting. Ms. Contreras added that WSA creates a 4-year local plan that involves in-depth analysis to arrive at their recommended strategies and industry alignments.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia added that the WSA Local Plan gets reviewed by both the full City Council and the Committee of 6, which she also sits on, to confirm that the WSA information is well-vetted.

Ms. Gonzalez asked whether information is available tracking job trends from 10 years ago through today, into the future. Mr. McMurry stated that he didn't think such a report is available, but that he agrees that being able to track job trends from the past and into the future is important. Mr. Graeber added that there have been a lot of changes in the construction industry, and that while wages are rising, a labor shortage still exists in that industry.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia echoed the idea that quarterly adjustments in target industries is a wise move, and that the Board and Subcommittee should be constantly seeking out information to stay abreast of changes in the labor market. Ms. Gonzalez followed up with the example that manufacturing has a lot of sub-industries, and suggested that the Board try to identify more specific trends in smaller sectors of the Board's target industries. She then asked who will be responsible for the training in these target industries through Ready to Work. Mr. McMurry showed the group the WSA target industry slides again and said that these slides give some examples of local training providers, but they are not complete lists.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia added that one reason for the development of the Employer Engagement Subcommittee was to ensure that local employers know what Ready to Work trainees are learning through their training courses, and that they can even help develop the curriculum for these programs to make trainees more closely aligned with the skillsets they are looking for.

2. Discussion on Pathway from Train for Jobs SA to SA: Ready to Work

Mr. McMurry asked the group what suggestions they had to facilitate a positive transition from Train for Jobs SA to SA: Ready to Work. He then asked Ms. Reck-Guerra if she had any updates on the local interest in Train for Jobs SA lately. She confirmed that the recent marketing campaign has been very successful at garnering interest, and that it is ending soon. She confirmed that the intake pipeline for the program is strong, and mentioned that three job fairs for Train for Jobs graduates will be held in October and November. Mr. McMurry mentioned that he thinks the Subcommittee members could be great advocates for promoting the job fairs.

Ms. Contreras explained the differences between the two workforce programs, namely that Train for Jobs SA was created as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated job loss city-wide, while SA: Ready to Work will include longer-term degree programs to allow residents to upskill.

Mr. McMurry asked Mr. Smith if he had any questions regarding the differences between the programs. He replied that he would like to know what the process the City went through to identify the barriers to entry and target populations for Ready to Work. Ms. Contreras replied that unemployed, underemployed, and historically underserved residents are the target populations for the program, and that a robust assessment process will be used to identify potential barriers. She explained that the agencies who work with these populations will be able to best work with the participants to help them overcome their barriers.

Mr. Smith then asked if the Workforce Development Office thought that they have good strategies identified for reaching residents with technological barriers. Ms. Reck-Guerra mentioned a study that the City's Office of Innovation recently carried out that identified postcards and text messages as the most effective media communication strategies for residents without internet access, and that the information gathered in that study will be applied to Ready to Work.

Ms. Garza mentioned that direct service is a very effective way to reach residents with communication barriers to inform them of opportunities for assistance. She cited agencies service at-risk youth, especially those aging out of foster care as ideal partners to get the message out about the program.

Mr. Ramsey agreed that grassroots outreach is very important and effective, and that by laying the groundwork by connecting with these agencies now is key to building a solid coalition of community partners.

Ms. Gonzalez asked why the media campaign is ending if City staff mentioned that it was very effective. Ms. Reck-Guerra responded that it may be extended because the program is being extended, but that the City wants to be mindful to ensure that residents currently in the intake pipeline are being onboarded in a timely manner before that decision is made to extend the media campaign. Ms. Gonzalez then suggested that whatever strategies are being used for the successful Train for Jobs media campaign be reused for Ready to Work.

Ms. Gonzalez then went on to suggest that the Ready to Work media campaign be mindful of shifts in the demographics of San Antonio due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as older women who have recently lost spouses to COVID-19.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested to see a media flowchart outlining the media strategies for Train for Jobs SA, so the Subcommittee can start thinking about how the success of the current media campaign can flow into Ready to Work. She also asked for an update on what strategies are being implemented to serve women through Train for Jobs.

3. Discussion on Messaging: Who is Covering What and What is the Message?

Mr. McMurry asked Mr. Smith to elaborate on his earlier comment about specific targeting of historically underserved residents. He responded that his idea was to create “personas” of a variety of residents who are in the demographic groups that we want to see benefitting from Ready to Work. He suggested interviewing people who are a part of Train for Jobs to see what their motivations for joining the program were and how they found out about it.

Mr. McMurry added that whatever the messaging for the program is, that it must be concise and simple enough for a wide variety of people to understand. He also mentioned that while most of the messaging will be carried out by the agency that receives the marketing and outreach contract for Ready to Work, the Subcommittee should not wait for that agency to come on board to start identifying strategies and personas for the marketing.

Mr. McMurry then asked Ms. Garza if she had any comments on the messaging. She responded that the fact that SA: Ready to Work is funded with sales tax could be an opportunity to spread positive messaging and get community buy-in. She used the example of “San Antonio taking care of San Antonio” to illustrate that residents and prospective stakeholders can take ownership of the program because residents’ tax dollars are funding the program.

4. SA: Ready to Work RFP Updates

Mr. McMurry asked City staff to provide an update on the three RFPs for SA: Ready to Work.

Ms. Gonzalez mentioned that she hopes that City staff and Advisory Board members will be mindful of the many challenges that San Antonio residents are facing as a result of COVID-19 in the decision-making process for the marketing and outreach RFP. She said that flexibility is important in adapting messaging to suit the situations that residents are dealing with.

Ms. Contreras presented on the 3 RFPs. Ms. Gonzalez asked whether marketing efforts would be focused towards residents with some college education who are eligible to complete their degrees through SA: Ready to Work. Ms. Contreras confirmed that those who have some college but who have not been enrolled in college recently will qualify.

Mr. Smith added that this program is ideal for those who cannot access support through other avenues such as student loans or financial aid. Ms. Gonzalez expressed concerns that residents enrolled in SA: Ready to Work may still have to take out student loans to cover their cost of attendance.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia clarified that funding through SA: Ready to Work will be used as a supplement to aid offered by other agencies and institutions. Mr. Graeber added that he thinks it is important that clarify the idea of SA: Ready to Work funding as “last dollar funding” to avoid misrepresentation of the program in the media. The Councilwoman agreed.

Mr. Smith asked whether the addition of a “persona” exercise could be added into the RFP, or whether it had already been done. Ms. Contreras responded that a persona exercise had been done in preparation for the first RFP, but encouraged the Subcommittee members to continue to suggest additional ideas.

Ms. Gonzalez asked whether the use of community voice would be required or suggested to respondents to the community outreach and marketing RFP. Councilmember Rocha Garcia expressed that she thought the ideas of community voice and developing client personas are connected.

Mr. Smith reiterated that speaking to Train for Jobs participants about their experiences could be a helpful place to start in developing personas.

Ms. Gonzalez asked for City staff to clarify the use of the terms “human interest stories” and “testimonials” in the RFP requirements, as she thought that they felt distant and not focused on the resident. Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that “human interest story” is a common term used in the media, but that from a public relations standpoint, the Ready to Work program should be highlighting community voices within its service population to tell authentic stories of their experiences.

Mr. McMurry suggested that this discussion could be continued as a future agenda item.

D. STAFF MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Contreras suggested the members discuss ideal meeting locations for the next meeting. Mr. McMurry suggested Lions Field. Ms. Gonzalez suggested the SAWS Headquarters.

E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. McMurry asked Mr. Graeber to start with suggesting agenda items for the next meeting. Mr. Graeber commented that he thinks the conversation around how to market the transition from Train for Jobs SA to SA: Ready to Work should continue, especially since the target populations are slightly different for each program. He also mentioned that highlighting the central intake agency or agencies should be key in the SA: Ready to Work marketing to ensure the enrollment process is transparent for future participants.

Ms. Gonzalez suggested including a discussion around the impact of COVID-19 on the social determinants of health for residents to the next agenda. She also recommended an analysis of residents with a household income within 200% of poverty.

Ms. Gonzales suggested a deeper discussion on the transition from Train for Jobs SA to SA: Ready to Work and to start thinking more about participant personas.

Ms. Garza suggested that reviewing the labor market data that Ms. Gonzalez requested should be considered as an agenda item. She also suggested that any demographic data available from the City regarding target populations for SA: Ready to Work would be beneficial to review. She also suggested that connecting with the Mayor’s Office on human interest stories that they currently track is a good idea.

F. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:06am.

APPROVED:
