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**Workforce Development Board of Oswego County
Business Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 8, 2025
Oswego County Workforce New York Career Center**

“The Business Development Committee shall identify and monitor the business services provided through the system, oversee public relations about business services, convene focus groups and community roundtables for identifying future workforce needs as related to economic development, identify available funding and assist in grant writing for employer training needs, and produce the State of the Workforce Annual Report.”

“Creating pathways to better careers and economic growth.”

Present: Jessica Barnes, Kelly Burkett, Lisa Guernsey, Brian Heffron, Eric Ingersoll, Tim McKernan, Zach Menter, Laurie Smith, Mark Southwick, Heather Vashaw, Rachel Pierce, Amanda Quaille, Terri Robbins, Kim Sizemore, Mike Metzgar, Alexis Cummins

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. and roundtable introductions were done.

1) Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 2, 2024

Austin Wheelock asked for a motion to approve the October 2, 2024 meeting minutes. Heather Vashaw made a motion to approve, and Tim McKernan seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion was carried.

2) Business News/Training Update (PY '24 Q2)- Terri Robbins

In PY '24 Q2 we served a total of 49 businesses in different ways. We had a total of 5 OJT placements (3 at Felix Schoeller, 1 at Pathfinder Bank, and 1 at Little Luke's.). In Q2 we have 2 OJT's that were successful, none that were unsuccessful, and 3 that are still active. Overall, for the PY we have 15 successful, 3 active, and 3 unsuccessful. We are continuing to provide Metrix to all registered customers and have provided licenses to Pathfinder Bank and Oswego County Public Defender's Office for their employees to utilize. We hosted 4 Events for various businesses including a mini Job Fair at OCO's Family Welcome Center in Pulaski that was well attended, and have attended 9 Community outreach events. We continue to provide prescreening assessments for First Choice Staffing (6 sessions, and 1 open interview day) Huhtamaki (1 Electrical Apprentice session), and we shared 14 jobs for 9 employers on the NYS Job Bank and our Social Media sites. We completed outreach with 9 new businesses. We have replaced our Business Highlight with the Business Snapshot, which is a 1-page flyer with the business information, current openings, quote from employee, and lists of benefits. The snapshot is sent out to partners/customers and shared on social media. All businesses that are featured in the snapshot are also invited to attend our Mini Job Fair and we did 8 snapshots in Q2. The next Mini Job Fair will be held on 2/4/25 from 11am-1pm at OCWNY.

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3) **Customer Feedback- Businesses PY '24 Q1-** Terri Robbins

134 surveys were sent out in Q1 and 9 were returned. Overall businesses were satisfied with the services provided to them. There was 1 response from an employer that was neutral, but it came from a SYEP worksite, and it wasn't a concerning issue to OCWNY.

4) **Director's Report-** Rachel Pierce

OCWNY was awarded \$125,000 for HVAC training from the Office of Just Energy Transition and will be partnering with CiTi BOCES to bring the class back to their campus in the Spring. We are still waiting on responses from grants submitted in June & October for Workforce Development Reemployment Training (CDL) and Work Readiness Training in partnership with OCO. We are also working with SUNY Oswego on a grant for workforce readiness and workforce development support for those that are transgender, nonbinary, etc. The grant would give the ability to hire a coordinator to provide support and assistance to these individuals and to provide training to businesses as needed. We are starting a partnership with Oswego County Probation Department where we will have office hours once every 2 weeks in their Oswego office to assist customers on probation with resumes and other job search assistance. We are working with the DOL Apprenticeship division to try and create a childcare and CDL A apprenticeship programs. In 2025 we will have to redo our local WIOA plan, and the Regional Plan in partnership with Onondaga and Cayuga/Cortland Counties to update labor market information and services offered. Rachel shared that the WIOA funding changes were not included in the federal continuing resolution passed at the end of the year, so WIOA is staying the same for now, but there is still a push at the federal level to make changes to it. We have received about \$750,000 in support from the County for 2025.

5) **Roundtable- All**

Austin Wheelock- ESD consolidated their funding application to batch cycle deadlines and the next deadline will be March 31st and won't be open again until roughly May. He stated that if your business has a project in mind to reach out to discuss it with OOC. They are working with Oswego County to apply for community development block grants to set Oswego County up with the Micro Enterprise grant program which would allow them to provide small businesses with support. They have a lot of projects happening at the moment such as N.E.T & Die moving into the Kmart plaza, and the expansion of ConnexCare in Oswego. Austin also shared that the name Operation Oswego County will be changed in the near future to showcase that the department is aligned with economic and business development.

Tim McKernan- EJ had one of their best years ever last year as they are supplying a lot of material that was previously imported. They acquired a new company in Florida bringing the US shop total to 4. They were recently awarded a partnership with Con Edison. They have plenty of job openings available in various parts of the facility and are very active in the community partnering with different businesses and schools.

Lisa Guernsey- Oswego Industries is partnering with Mozaic out of Waterloo to purchase an automatic cutter to increase efficiency as they make TSA belts. Lisa shared that they don't hire only those with disabilities, but they do have to have 75% of their workforce made up by individuals with disabilities. They also own the building next door where they do contract work for Novelis.

Brian Heffron- Brian shared that Christopher Todd will be retiring this year, and they are searching for his replacement. On March 25th they will be hosting an event for students in Oswego County to be given STEM problems and present solutions. CiTi BOCES will be hosting Engineering Wars for all P-TECH cohorts in the region. There will be a CTE job fair on 3/27 for the seniors who will be graduating in June, and they will be able to "speed date style" interview with multiple businesses that day. The Health Career Expo will be held on 3/28, and they have about 30 vendors committed so far. The Spring advisory meeting for CTE (to review the programs) will be held on 4/9 and if you are interested in participating, please let Brian know. On 4/30 there will be a Spring Showcase "open house" for the public to be able to tour facilities, and see what programs and

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equipment are available. CiTi has a new partnership to create a new robotic and automation training facility for Fanuc robotics training (previous closest training facility for this region was in Michigan). They are working on getting the HVAC class up and running and trying to bring the Diesel Mechanic and Home Health Aide trainings back. They are working on a nursing education diversity program grant to increase education opportunities for students entering the nursing field and working on a grant for CDL tuition assistance for students coming from different diverse economic backgrounds. Brian also wanted to acknowledge the donations that CiTi has received from various businesses and how grateful they are for the support (Constellation- \$10,000 to support Skills USA, Huhtamaki- \$50,000 for CMA lab, \$30,9000 from the County through ARPA funding for their EMT Certification for their high school seniors, and \$8,000 from the Youth Bureau for their Women in Trades program). He also encouraged everyone to stop by the Coco Café located on Cayuga Street as they are a work-based program run by students.

All- Austin asked Brian what the next steps were regarding the WorkKeys program due to CiTi hosting an event back in October to celebrate Oswego County becoming the first Work Ready community in the state. Brian shared that CiTi is working with the districts to be able to utilize the assessments into their assessment plans in classes to make it available for all students. They are also trying to build more awareness with industry partners to help them understand what the assessment is and how it would benefit these employers when they have candidates apply that have the credential. The group agreed that it would be beneficial for employers to list on their job applications that a NCRC certification would be preferred so that individuals see the value in taking the test. OCWNY and OCO have been building the testing into different programs, and OCWNY offers to test to all registered customers. Mark shared that Huhtamaki gives people different tools that are available to upskill when they are denied employment, and he would be willing to share the template with other employers if they are interested.

Eric Ingersoll- Overall 2024 was hard for the transportation industry, but Page made changes throughout the year to ensure that they remained profitable. Their retention rate was roughly 75% overall and 100% (30 people) for local drivers. They were able to put 12 people through their CDL training and retained 9 of them. Page may be acquiring a company out of Western Massachusetts which would lead to new positions available in their Weedsport location. They have also submitted their application to the State to become a school and should hear within the next few months.

Mark Southwick- Huhtamaki is up 3% in production hours. They hired 100 employees last year and retained about 60 and are focusing on improving for 2025. They did pre-employment testing with OCWNY for their Electrical Apprentice program and have identified 2 current employees for it. Huhtamaki did experience a small fire but were up and running within 8 hours. They are engaged with the Real Life Rosies program and have extended offers to 6 participants. Mark shared that the application process for 2025 will run similarly to last year and they anticipate needing about 40-50 new employees. They have also seen the pool for their professional positions grow.

Terri Robbins- Terri is in the planning stages for a Spring Job Fair. We are looking to have it in Oswego in May.

Kim Sizemore- Kim shared that the mini job fairs that OCWNY has been hosting every 1st Tuesday have been going well and we continue to see an increase in attendance from applicants and urges businesses to attend. Kim also shared that OCWNY is working on processes for their Summer Youth Employment Program to help it run smoother this year, and that we have received funding for the Oswego Build program and have hired a Senior Employment Specialist to run it, with a hopeful start date for the 1st cohort in June/July.

Heather Vashaw- Heather encouraged OCWNY to try different marketing strategies to try and promote services as she sees plenty of individuals who don't know OCWNY exists, and Kim shared that we try everything we can think of but are open to options. Heather shared that Pathfinder has a fairly new senior management team, but everything is going well.

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Zach Menter- Right now they are stable with staffing at Menter Ambulance and will be figuring out what to do about their future EMT classes due to CiTi offering the certification to their high school seniors, and he encouraged Brian to let the students know there are plenty of job opportunities available for them.

Laurie Smith- Fulton Savings Bank has begun a remodel of their main office in Fulton and will also be remodeling their Constantia branch this year. They also have meshed their Teller and Customer service positions into a Universal Banker position which will help with customer service and allow other staff to assist customers in case of turnover.

Jessica Barnes- ConnexCare is having similar struggles that other businesses are having, such as having entry-level candidates who want a higher wage without experience or having people not follow through with the application process. They are moving forward with their Oswego office and have opened up a satellite at Leighton Elementary to offer medical and dental services.

Kelly Burkett- Kelly has been working with Adele Cronk (OCWNY) to develop an Oswego County Consortium and they have about 50 people on board with different agencies within the county so far. The consortium will share resources and address issues. ACCES VR broadened their qualifications for counselors and were able to fill the openings they previously had. Kelly shared with the group that ACCES VR helps individuals with disabilities with training for different types of employment, but they also can assist businesses with hiring costs through different programs.

Mike Metzgar- Mike shared the TDO has grant money available and can do up to 20 hours of free work for companies who need supply chain assessments. He also shared that there will be a series of workshops coming up this Spring with a partnership with Syracuse University

There were no other updates at this time. Austin Wheelock called for a motion to adjourn. Tim McKernan made a motion to adjourn. Jessica Barnes seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Next Meeting: April 9th, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

Location: OCWNY, Conference Room 2A, 200 N. 2nd Street, Fulton, NY 13069.

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