

Minutes of MOU Core Partner Meeting of August 14, 2020

ZOOM meeting - Attendance sheet available upon request.

Audio recording available

Meeting opened at 10:32 by Jim Oliveira

Jim welcomed the group, noting that the last meeting was before the pandemic on January 17, 2020. He felt it had been so long that it would be more important to hear from each of the partners about they have pivoted due to the pandemic and how they will be moving forward together.

Agenda item: Partner Updates

Bernice Jensen, New Bedford High School Evening Extension – Evening High School pivoted quickly into virtual online classes in about a week. The challenges were with connectivity and participants having devices for participants to connect to virtually. As a result, there was a drop in participation of about 50%. They made sure all emails were up to date as well as mailed packets to the students. They had a drive-through graduation ceremony and 70% of the 80 to 85 graduates participated. They are submitting 3 plans to the Department of Education for fall. A blend of classroom and virtual seems to be the best using Google Classroom. School Committee has approved a hybrid plan.

Wendy Savary, DUA – Immediately the governor’s office deployed resources to their agency and they are still with them today. They have had meetings daily with the Governor and Secretary Acosta. Originally they were not prepared to handle the volume or set up for remote call center capabilities. They provided everyone with laptops within two weeks and set up the remote technology. There were over 1 million claimants throughout the state due to layoffs from the pandemic. They had to borrow staffs from other agencies as well as contracting 3 outside vendors and hired over 400 temporary employees to manage the call volume. They contracted with Amazon to build a remote call center with a challenge of incorporating the existing out-of-date system. They had to create a separate system and call center to handle the self-employed Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Claims were backed up, and many needed investigation. They have a significant number of appeals and are looking to incorporate in-person hearings for suspected fraud and identity theft cases. They will continue to provide remote services to claimants. Massachusetts is in the top 5 states for paying UA benefits quickly. The number of claims is decreasing, but the number of claims needing adjudication is increasing.

Jennifer Menard, BCC – They moved to remote in March. They were pleased to see that there was a high retention rate from 75% and up to 95% in some cases. They brought students back over the summer to prevent delays in obtaining credits. They plan on being all remote in the fall until at least October 13th, except a few hybrid offerings for labs. Their reopening plans, called “Bristol Together” are available on their website. They are building an online adult education program due in part to their high retention rates with the remote classes. They assessed their tech capabilities and took their labs apart and handed out laptops, tablets, and Chrome Books. They have discovered that a lot of their online testing programs are not tablet or Chrome Book friendly, and they are looking at ways to make improvements. Jennifer introduced Angela Johnston who is now the Director of Business Solutions and Partnerships. Angela is overseeing areas of corporate training, individualized professional development, credentialing, and business partnerships. Their Corporate Services are currently remote only. They are working with Maersk Training, a European offshore wind training organization to set up the U.S. academic credentials needed for their Bristol National Offshore Wind Institute (NOWI) – <https://youtu.be/wnz6mG5125w> (video link was shared in the chat box). This will assure they meet requirements of the Global Wind Organization (GWO) which have created industry self-imposed credentials for safety and other types of training. NOWI will have an academic Associate’s Degree and a credential program. They will also offer an introduction to offshore wind course to inform students about the variety of jobs available in the offshore wind industry.

James Daniels, MassHire Career Center – The career center is fully virtual with Career Center Seminars (CCS), RESEA services and workshops online. They are still taking phone calls. They recently completed a fantastic Youth Program with 200 youths participating. They were able to acquire 100 Chrome Books for some of the participants. James felt that CommCorp did an outstanding job on the curriculum. James reported that one of the youth participants, Philip Trahan, received the Gold Scholarship of \$500 for his video on voter registration.

Beth Costa, MassHire Career Center – The CC is open, but not to the public. There are renewed CCSs that are now part of the customer flow and introduce customers to the Career Center and services offered. If they don't have access to technology or limited English speaking they will arrange a one-on-one consultation. The RESEA program was reactivated in the past two weeks with 50+ people per week participating. They are encouraging customers to call the Career Center so they can assist with registering in JobQuest. Beth and James stated that anyone looking for work should contact Career Center.

Nelson Abreu, DTA – They totally virtual and all their teams are at home. The DTA office won't open until 2021. They had over 2,700 web applications and 70,000 calls and are open 7 am to 7 pm and on Saturdays. They were able to successfully complete over 80,000 applications in one month.

Lisa Mello-Frost, YouthBuild – They never stopped their services and went remote the next week. They worked remotely for three weeks and then transitioned into assisting PACE with their mobile food bank. They created 15 internships and served over 1000 families in the city through different agencies along with managing the warehouse distribution center. The warehouse became so important that PACE hired 12 students part time and two were selected as managers. They recently held graduation for nine students. Services will be hybrid for September. They have moved out of their Rodney French Boulevard location, which is a good move for them.

Jane Reis, Job Corps – Keeping the new candidates engaged is the most difficult thing. She continues to recruit all the time. The kids are bored and want to know when things will start and they are trying to determine the best way keep clients engage. The most difficult thing is getting the documents need to enroll new students. They are also considering how to process the enrollments giving the current situation.

Rosemary Wilde, NBHS Evening Extension – They are offering GED and HiSET remotely but Chrome Books won't work and students need a desktop and a phone. The students have to take a practice test to prove they are ready. The test center is opening up around September 16, but the Department of Education limits room size to 8 people including proctor and presenter. This will allow for serving only 6 students as a time. They have not yet established a testing schedule which will be determined once they establish a reopening date. They are considering evening high school as a hybrid model alternating half the classes every other week. They are also examining remote options in case they are not able do in-person classes.

Carrie Irujo, UMass Dartmouth Workers Education Program – They are much more prepared for the fall. They plan to be remote through January, 18, 2021. They have created welcome videos in three languages. They did tech surveys to see what the needs were. They provided 19 CNA students laptops. They received a COVID-19 grant for \$50K for student for \$250 gift cards at Target for any of their needs and are encouraging them to look into tech and connectivity items.

Erik Rousseau, SRTA – Erick shared a link in chat with services they are offering. They will not be offering Sunday services. They have a New Bedford Fall River Express that goes terminal to terminal. It is now the Fairhaven Rte. 11 that goes by the Career Center, no longer Rte. 2. They also have reduced 2 routes in New Bedford. A challenge is the limited airflow on busses and filtering more fresh air. They still have a no-fare policy and rides are free since March 22.

Other Business:

Links shared in chat of MOU Partners meeting:

- From Angela Johnston
 - <https://youtu.be/wnz6mG5125w> Bristol's NOWI launch.
- From Robert Vitello
 - Bristol is also offering an array of short free workshop on a variety of timely topics for educators, job seekers, and professional development <https://bristolcc.coursestorm.com/>
- From Robert Vitello
 - Bristol is also launching a new on-line Google IT Support Professional Certificate program with a cohort of 18 participants on September 14th. The course should be ITA Section 30 and Trade eligible, totally on-line created by Google, and completed in 2 - 4 months. Respond with your e-mail and I can send a flyer/infographic with details. We are registering participants starting the end of next week Aug 21
- From Erick Rousseau
 - Changes at SRTA from the spring and summer are available here including ridership trends. We will continue to post updates on our website and push those through social media. <https://www.srtabus.com/covid19>

James Oliveira closed the meeting asking that the members return next meeting with an agenda item that they would like to put forth as a potential action item to the group.

Next meeting:

Friday, October 16, 2020 10:30 – 12:00 Zoom call

Adjourned at 11:42 am