

**Metro South/West Workforce Board Youth Connections Committee Minutes  
September 16, 2024**

**Members present:** Chair, Ernie Houle, Yemi Ajao, Jennifer Jackson, Kevin Lopez, Nick Pavone

**Members absent:** Lexi Winter

**Other:** MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board Staff: Henry Bryson, Greg Bunn, Meghan Burke, Tricia Lucier, Louise Meyer, Sheniqua Rogers. Admin Consultant: Cindy Cedrone

**Review of Agenda, Welcome**

Ernie Houle called the meeting to order. Introductions were made. Greg Bunn thanked Ernie for serving as the new chair.

**Approval of September 14, 2023, November 16, 2023, and February 1, 2024 Minutes**

Ernie asked for a motion to approve the September 14, 2023, November 16, 2023 and February 1, 2024 minutes. Nick Pavone made a motion. Jennifer Jackson seconded. Ernie abstained because he had not attended the prior meetings. All minutes were approved.

**Program Updates**

Meghan Burke reported that Youth Connections is striving to be seen as the best model that others want to duplicate. She presented an update of the \$1.3M non-WIOA programs. She noted that the successful Construction/Trade Expo was set to repeat on April 1, 2025, at the same location, with funding from the Community Foundation for Metro West with plans to increase the number of students from 420 last year to 500 in 2025. Ernie and Greg also noted there could be a potential for a healthcare industry event on a smaller scale.

Meghan noted that there were more than 3,000 subscribers to the Youth Connections Newsletter that was organized by two summer interns, who recruited and trained new interns to replace them at the end of the summer.

Henry Bryson raised concerns about programs that did not allow funding for staff which could result in a loss for the organization.

Tricia Lucier reported that the \$2.2M federally funded two-year WIOA program, that can carry over \$1.9M to next fiscal year, has 120 youth in intense services and hopes to increase to 200 youth. She also noted there had been an uptick in referrals. She shared photos from the current SkillsBuild class of 18, five youth from Tools for the Trade, representing nine communities.

**Committee Needs**

There was a discussion about the structure and purpose of the Youth Connections Committee, asking the members to guide strategies, develop policy and aid in resource development for funding. Ernie noted a need for a vision statement and a mission statement, and recruitment for additional committee members such as student alumni, representatives from participating schools and industries. He suggested gathering testimonials, drafting five statements to use as talking points and inviting people with youth expertise to attend meetings. Henry will contact Champ, who built the website, for analytics to present at the next meeting. Meghan suggested meeting in an informal in-person gathering to discuss branding. The committee members agreed to meet every other month on Mondays from 11:00am-12:00pm.

**Adjourn**

Ernie asked for a motion to adjourn. Nick made a motion. Kevin Lopez seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.