



**Metro South/West Workforce Board Youth Connections Committee Minutes
February 10, 2025**

Members present: Yemi Ajao, Jennifer Jackson, Nicole Marchand,

Members absent: Kerry Bartlett, Joe Collins, Ernie Houle, Nick Pavone, Lexi Winter

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

Review of Agenda, Welcome

Ernie Houle was not able to be at the meeting. Greg Bunn and Meghan Burke called the meeting to order.

Approval of September 16, 2024 and November 25, 2024

September 16, 2024 and November 25, 2024 minutes will be approved at the March meeting due to lack of quorum.

State Funded Grant Updates

Meghan reported that the monthly school partner convenings, which are required yearly by DESE, have been held at the Youth Connections office. These meetings are opportunities for the schools to meet in person for conversations and discussions, and each meeting has grown in attendance and participation. A Google classroom has been created to share resources, meeting notes and answers questions for all. There are topics such as VR implementation, Innovation Pathway Planning, Tools for Trade Info and opportunities for HS Seniors in transition planning. Meghan asked for volunteers to speak on any topic of expertise.

Meghan and Greg spoke about the concerns regarding the replacement of the MA Work-Based Learning Plan. The new database is the MEFA Pathways Database, which no one has direct access to and that students only are expected to enter data which could lead to inequity among students who need extra support. Meghan spoke about concerns regarding the FY26 budget which is increased by \$200K but also increased in the number of youth to be served. She voiced concerns about the importance of serving as many youth as possible while maintaining adequate staff and infrastructure. Meghan and Henry Bryson created a realistic budget, lowering the number of youth served and the addition of one more staff member to accommodate the capacity. Meghan highlighted the need for expanding YouthWorks into Norwood, Hudson and Brookline, asking for contacts with employers in those areas and noted the importance of brand recognition.

MEDC Meeting Update

Greg and Meghan discussed the recent meeting with the Marlborough Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to together work more closely to help promote the youth programs and expand the reach in the area, noting MEDC has a database of over 2,500 employers. They highlighted the possibility of MEDC introducing larger corporations that do foundational giving for more funding and for assistance in branding Youth Connections.

Employer Partner Engagement

Meghan discussed the increasing demand for employer engagement and the challenges faced by limited staff capacity. She requested the committee's assistance in making introductions and speaking on behalf of Youth Connections to potential employer partners, including small businesses in the area to provide internships.

Trade and Construction Expo-4/1/25 & Tools for the Trade

Meghan noted that the Trade and Construction Expo is being held April 1, 2025, with 16 school signed up and increasing the number of students from 400 to 500. She asked the committee members to attend this very successful day. Meghan also described the “Tools for the Trade” program which is an exploratory program for high school seniors interested in trade and construction. Tricia Lucier, who leads the program, said they have received 50 applications and are planning to take the students to various trade sites for hands-on experiences.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is March 17th.