

Lee County Recovery Task Force Supporting Business & Workforce Workshop

Session 2 – Meeting Minutes

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM | JUNE 7, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | JOB PIPELINE

Call to Order

On June 7, 2023, the facilitator of the Workshop, Tessa LeSage, convened the Supporting Business & Workforce Workshop: Job Pipeline at 11:02 AM with the following panelists present:

- Angelo Biasi
- Dr. Kenneth Savage
- Michele Watson
- Michael Ramirez
- Dr. Guido Minaya
- T. Sharon Woodberry

The following Branch Members were present:

- Marion Briggs
- Stephanie Wardein
- Bill Ribble
- Fred Forbes
- Phyllis Calloway
- Dan O'Berski
- Laura Siebenmorgen
- Lee Ford

Workshop Topic Discussion

Ms. LeSage asked how to leverage and grow business partnerships with issues pertaining to the talent pipeline. The participants responded with the following solutions:

- Finding a way to bridge the language gap between K-12 and higher education, and higher education and corporations;
- Understanding the languages that can help with moving forward with initiatives;
- Partnerships with a shared vision and identified goals;
- Finding a strategic partnership that can allow for the achievement of goals together;
- Increasing engagement that is mutual;
- Finding projects that allow for self-discovery and experimental learning;
- Allowing students to see where jobs lead to;
- Looking for opportunities to better align with career programs; and
- Engaging with career source partnerships.

Ms. LeSage asked for some solutions that can help address the issue of early childhood education and barriers associated. The panelists and members suggested the following solutions:

- Tracking kindergarten readiness rates;
- Encouraging participation in VP-K (before the age of 5):
 - Finding ways to overcome barriers for those not participating, such as transportation or affordability of the programs;
- Identifying childcare workforce issues, such as affordability;
- Policies at the legislative level that can help, such as an early learning tax credit for employees;
- Holding conversations about funding and the mapping to get children into an educational pipeline;
- A Children Services Council (CSC) with a dedicated funding source to support cradle to career timelines;
- Creating recommendations to distribute funding to qualifying CSC agencies within the County, ultimately leading it to an independent model;
- Educating parents about the importance of the cradle to career pipeline;
- Building family capacity to help the students; and
- Looking at institutional partnerships (i.e., UCF and Children's Home Society).

Ms. LeSage asked for examples and ideas to consider for opportunities to address behavioral issues for children and adults. The panelists stated the following:

- The extreme need of mental health resources and assistance;
- Social and emotional learning have been a bit political. There are programs that are being piloted that could be helpful;
- A true needs assessment;
- Mentorships to help add to the workforce to support mental health needs;
- Money and professionals in the community are needed;
- Growing the teacher pipeline and taking care of the teachers in the region;
- Thinking of workforce development as an opportunity to increase outcomes in the community;
- Optimization of remote aspects;
- Youth mental health training is for teachers, employees, and counselors;
- Looking into career readiness platforms that can inform the workforce in the area; and
- Critical thinking.

Ms. LeSage asked what opportunities and resources were needed to address literacy. The panelists stated the following were opportunities and barriers:

- Getting the early learning pipeline right;
- Getting communities involved with the literacy needs;
- Increased parent engagement and collaboration;
- Partnerships for literacy;
- Exposing students to the benefits of a lifestyle and giving them projects to learn more about themselves and opportunities; and
- Creating opportunities for exposure [with the use of available technologies].

Ms. Hagen asked how real estate brokers or commercial investors can help community partnership schools change the landscape near and around the schools and change the type of retail units that go into the commercial spaces that would better serve the families/communities' needs. Additionally, if there was an opportunity to enhance mixed-use spaces and foster the business and workforce pipeline. Ms. LeSage encouraged the Branch Members to think about policies and practices. Ms. Wardein encouraged the listening of community members and their needs in hyper-specific areas.

Next Steps and Questions

There were no next steps or further questions discussed.

Public Comment

Betsy Haesemeyer stated the importance of bringing educational opportunities to businesses and asked what businesses needed the students to know.

Ed Kleinow stated that a CSC in Lee County was previously advocated for but was turned down. He said there is now a chance for funding streams to help with this request.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked all members and panelists for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM on June 7, 2023.