

Education & Workforce Branch Meeting

Meeting Minutes

11:00 AM | MARCH 23, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON ST, FT MYERS | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

On March 23, 2023, the Education Branch meeting convened at 11:00 a.m. with the following members present:

- Dr. Mike Martin (Lead)
- Mike Wukitsch
- Sharon Woodbury
- Dr. Denise Carlin
- Jamie Lienhardt-Engle
- Laura Siebenmorgen
- Katy Errington
- Dr. Guido Minaya

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Tessa LeSage
- Robbie Heere
- Harrison Newton
- Ilani Fernandes

Introductions

Dr. Mike Martin, Branch Lead, welcomed all participants and provided Branch Members with his background and experience in Lee County. Branch Members went around the room and introduced themselves. Dr. Martin began by discussing the Branch and its compliance with Sunshine Law. Ms. LeSage provided context to the requirements of the Sunshine Law. Dr. Martin then summarized the task at hand and the current state of the education system in Lee County and its relationship with the workforce in Southwest Florida.

Review of the Recovery and Resilience Planning Structure and Timeline

Ms. LeSage presented on the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and Branches, looking for initial priorities for when the RTF would meet on March 24th.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ms. LeSage reviewed the main responsibilities of the Branch including the development of a community engagement plan, initial branch priorities, and the Branch Action Plan.

Initial Branch Priorities Discussion

Ms. LeSage facilitated the discussion on Initial Branch Priorities. The following topics were discussed by members:

Initial Branch Priorities:

- Improve workforce participation by increasing skilled and credentialed workers to fill jobs in Lee County
 - Increase percent of residents with post-secondary credentials
 - Mechanisms to attract workforce
 - Solutions need to be aligned with employer needs
 - Focus on attracting businesses
 - Supporting lifelong learners and complex needs for future
 - Career and technical training pathways
 - Supporting non-traditional students
 - Alternative ways to empower students in traditional and non-traditional career pathways
 - Access to higher education
 - Job training for career transitions
 - Skills assessment to help align students to different pathways
 - Job sharing and complex training needs
- Create ways to partner and leverage resources to increase shared ownership of education, to improve outcomes and opportunities from early childhood education to career
 - Pipeline of workforce
 - Early childhood programs and increasing accessibility to high quality Pre-K education
 - Education staffing needs
 - Student funding vouchers for Pre-K
 - Project-based learning programs for English language learners
 - Multi-generational approach to educational programs

- Supporting before and after-school care programs
- Scholarship opportunities for students
- Collaboration among educational institutions
- Create systems that foster lifelong learning and training opportunities for all
 - Keep the workforce local
 - Establish a Children Services Council
 - Adapting the education system for future
 - Partner with non-profits organizations to engage communities
 - Engaging retirees as a resource
 - Engaging HOA and gated communities
 - Literacy efforts with strategic partnerships
 - Focus on providing educational opportunities for residents of all ages to promote a productive and dynamic workforce
 - Diversification of skills
 - Engage with existing coalitions and partnerships, identify gaps in current planning efforts due to emergent issues caused by Hurricane Ian
- Address outside variables (housing, transportation, mental health, childcare, etc.) that hinder education and workforce
 - Commute times and loss of productivity
 - Mental health of employees and students
 - Addressing burnout and other mental health needs
 - Public transportation for workers
 - Address shortage of raw labor
 - Address housing issues
 - Transportation design for the community
 - Childcare programs and workforce to support

Ms. LeSage reminded the Branch of the resources, especially from the relationship between Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), Hagerty, and Collaboratory, to support the ideas and framework developed by the Branch.

Branch Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

Ms. LeSage presented opportunities for community engagement in the Recovery and Resilience Planning process including, On the Table (OTT) community dialogues, public

meetings, public workshops, social media, online surveys, and regular Branch meetings and town hall events. Public workshops will occur in April to engage Subject Matter Experts (SME), including county and municipal experts, to provide information.

Branch Members agreed about the importance of talking with other branches since work is interconnected and initiatives will be collaborative. Additionally, opportunities to collaborate amongst community organizations were agreed upon to make it easier to obtain funding.

The Branch discussed engaging workforce-focused organizations such as Society for Human Resource Management, as well as how teachers and others will be important.

Members suggested that private school and charter school providers should be included as subject matter experts and their representatives should be engaged in public workshops.

Next Steps

Branch Members discussed the schedule of meetings. Members stated that Wednesdays would be the best days to accommodate schedules for the members.

Public Comment

Ms. Alex Breault provided a comment that the FutureMakers Coalition is administering a 22.9 million dollar grant through the Economic Development Administration. Their coalition utilizes navigators to help individuals overcome barriers such as benefit cliffs. They use a multi-generational approach. Second-chance hiring is also important for those in the community trying to get a good-paying job while meeting workforce needs.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the Branch Members for their participation. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:23 p.m. on March 22, 2023.