

Education & Workforce Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM | AUGUST 17, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET,
SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 11:01 AM on August 17, 2023, Dr. Mike Martin, Branch Lead, convened the Education & Workforce Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Dr. Mike Martin, Lead
- Dr. Aysegul Timur
- T. Sharon Woodberry
- Dr. Guido Minaya
- John Roth
- Phyllis Calloway
- Laura Siebenmorgen
- Mike Wukitsch

County Liaison:

- Dominic Gemelli

Facilitator and Branch Support:

- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Tracey Phillips, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Dr. Martin framed the meeting and education and workforce challenges across the region. Tessa LeSage, Branch Facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches.

Overview of RTF Members One-on-One Meetings

Ms. LeSage summarized the series of one-on-one meetings with the RTF Members and their jurisdictional leadership teams.

Review of Draft Initiative Profiles and Branch Member Feedback

Ms. LeSage reviewed the template of the draft Initiative Profiles of the Branch. Members discussed the draft Initiative Profiles and the method to provide feedback on them through the online QR code and survey. Mr. Roth asked about the measures of success; Ms. Phillips stated that the measures of success are currently at a high level and until there is agreement on broad draft Initiative Profiles, then numbers and specific goals can be listed. Ms. LeSage explained goals in the region for skills gaps and skilled workers. She stated that the information and benchmarks can be measured using the FutureMakers Coalition to pick targets.

Dr. Timur asked if ongoing programs would be included and how they should be incorporated. Ms. LeSage stated that the Education & Workforce Branch is ahead of others as a lot of partners are already in place and encouraged feedback for metrics to expand measures of success. Ms. Phillips suggested that Members incorporate the points of contact and metrics available for the best next steps. Dr. Timur stated that the targets are historically set by the FutureMakers Coalition and require an update of the goals.

Mr. Wukitsch suggested changing the title of the first draft Initiative Profile to “skills-based hiring”. Ms. LeSage discussed family literacy programs. Members agreed that a family literacy component should be included along with partners for adult education. Members stated that a measure of success should be included in language learning. Dr. Minaya asked if the information on programs has been piloted or is already ongoing. Ms. LeSage explained the Tice Elementary Family Literacy Pilot Project. Ms. Phillips stated that the appropriate subject matter experts would be able to give additional information on pilot projects to help fill in the blanks. Members were asked to provide the information through the QR code and online survey.

Ms. LeSage introduced the draft Initiative Profile for mental health and schools. Ms. Phillips suggested including broadband and technology in early learning draft Initiative Profiles as funding opportunities are identified. Ms. LeSage introduced the draft Initiative Profile for lifelong learning. Ms. Woodberry stated that the technical college expansion is limited to the number of programs in place and requires funding to expand capital improvements.

Mr. Wukitsch discussed the change of culture for lifelong learning and how participatory and engaging it has become. He suggested that it could bring people into the education space and suggested different ways to engage people in lifelong learning to enhance participation in the workforce. He asked how to engage youth to participate and understand the value of learning and suggested a bigger and cultural aspect of normalizing lifelong learning. Ms. LeSage suggested adding implementation steps to engage those that are not considered traditional in the workforce.

Dr. Timur stated that people may not know the meaning of micro-credentialing and that it is non-traditional, yet flexible, way to adapt to the changing conditions of the workforce. Dr. Timur suggested communicating how the programs work and why they are in place. Members discussed the programs and pathways that are currently working for traditional and non-traditional students and ways to upskill and obtain credentials to help those entering the workforce. Members discussed communicating and marketing the credentialing programs to residents. Members discussed the culture and marketing of education to meet the needs of the workforce.

Dr. Minaya provided an example of technological solutions with facilitators to access online learning. Ms. LeSage said that lifelong learning must be coupled with skills and credentialing. Ms. Phillips summarized the discussion as an outreach and facilitation strategy for programmatic offerings. Members suggested expanding the capacity of technical colleges through innovative and creative solutions. Additionally, expanding technical schools and private partnerships through capital improvement dollars. Dr. Martin stated that agricultural and youth education programs could be leveraged to reinvent the network of programs.

Ms. LeSage introduced the draft Resilient Economy Initiative Profile. Ms. Woodberry stated that this draft Initiative Profile could fall under the Economic Recovery Branch. She noted that Cape Coral is working on a program that supports this.

Dr. Minaya suggested making educational tools easy and accessible to small businesses to make them more resilient. Members suggested offering skills to workers and having businesses at the table. Ms. Woodberry stated that a lot of the other draft Initiative Profiles support this outcome. Mr. Roth brought up the Small Business Development Center and the good work it is doing. Members discussed the scale of the programs to support businesses.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for August 10, 2023, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM.

Ms. Calloway suggested additional information be provided to the Branch in place of a meeting next week.

Public Comment

Jenn Robinson from the School District of Lee County stated there are capital improvements in the projects list to consider. Additionally, there might be barriers with staffing courses due to teaching availability. She then discussed lifelong learning for single parents who are trying to maintain a household and the importance of providing access to those individuals.

Roger Mercado from the Lee County Department of Human and Veteran Services shared his support on the comments pertaining to culture. He stated that in the city of Brevard, extra time is given to have a work-life balance. He stated that until the culture mindset changes, nothing else will improve.

Keisha Jackson stated that the last draft Initiative Profile pertains to economic recovery and business opportunities to protect the workforce.

Julian Ramirez shared his comments on quality life centers and values. He shared his opinion on traditional education and discussed the needed space of alternate education. He asked to work on a narrative for each generation pertaining to the role of artificial intelligence and the hesitation of accepting the technology. He additionally asked how to move forward economically and provide care to the community.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 12:24 PM.