

**New York State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB)  
Meeting Minutes  
October 5, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
NYS Museum, Meeting Rooms A & B  
Albany, NY**

**SWIB Members Present:**

- Commissioner Roberta Reardon
- Albert Catalano
- Rick Plympton
- Katie Geise
- Annmarie Lanese
- Tony Baird
- Acting Commissioner and Executive Deputy
- Commissioner Barbara Guinn
- Dawn Burlew
- Zach Arnold
- Dan McGraw
- Todd Trantum
- Sergio Esteban
- Norb Fuest
- Rose Duhan
- Melissa Fleischut
- Florence McCue
- Commissioner Hope Knight (by video)
- Jessica Johnson-Cope (by video)
- Shawna Papale (by video)
- Kimberly Townsend (by video)

**Member Designees/Proxies Present:**

- Senior Vice Chancellor Johanna Duncan-Poitier for Chancellor John B. King
- Associate Commissioner Julie Hovey for Acting Commissioner and Executive Deputy Commissioner Suzanne Miles-Gustave
- Lauren Andersen (by video) for Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez
- Deputy Commissioner Ceylane Meyers-Ruff (by video) for Commissioner Betty A. Rosa

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- A. Commissioner of the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL), Roberta Reardon, welcomed members to the first reconstituted meeting of the SWIB in 2023. SWIB members attended in-person and virtually via Zoom. Commissioner Reardon thanked members who have stayed on as members since the last SWIB meeting and thanked them for their patience. She also welcomed new SWIB members attending the meeting.
- B. This is the first time the SWIB is meeting under the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul. NYS is still in the process of adding additional members and building out the full Board. There is no quorum at the meeting and no official actions or voting will take place. The purpose of the meeting is to get the business of the Board started. A Board Chair also needs to be established and must be a Business representative. NYSDOL is staff to the SWIB and will follow-up with the SWIB members to determine who is interested in being the Chair.
- C. Commissioner Reardon thanked everyone for their assistance with organizing the Board meeting as well as agency partners and non-SWIB members. Everyone around the room and on Zoom (both SWIB members and their proxies) introduced themselves. Commissioner Reardon discussed NYSDOL's three (3) primary divisions; Unemployment Insurance (UI), Worker Protection, and Workforce Development. In partnership with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) across the State, NYSDOL oversees 95 Career Centers and connects individuals to jobs and assists businesses with finding the talent they need. Governor Hochul is focused on workforce development, which contributed to the

SWIB reconvening. Commissioner Reardon also thanked everyone for their commitment to the future of workforce development in NYS.

## 2. SWIB Orientation

- A. NYSDOL Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development, Dana Politis, discussed items in the SWIB New Member Orientation Packet as well as additional SWIB member expectations.

Key points include:

- i. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in 2014, and aligns with and determines the goals of the workforce development system.
- ii. The structure of the workforce development system includes the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) at the federal level, NYSDOL at the State level, the SWIB, the LWDBs, One-Stop Career Centers, and service providers.
- iii. The SWIB is required under the Governor and membership includes the Governor, members of the Assembly and Senate, Business representatives, Workforce representatives including labor organizations and CBOs, Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), and NYS agencies. Assembly and Senate representatives have not been selected yet and the SWIB is currently not a full Board. However, NYSDOL wants to bring all current members together to begin the work that needs to be done.

## 3. Job Seeker and Business Survey Presentation

- A. NYSDOL Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development, Chris White, presented on the 2023 [Job Seeker](#) and [Business Workforce](#) survey results and findings, noting that the System should account for what businesses need, which is why the SWIB consists of 51% business membership. NYSDOL has partnered with Empire State Development (ESD), the Business Council, and the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) to develop the surveys. Key points include:

- i. Both the Job Seeker and Business surveys now have results from 2021, 2022, and 2023, with 20,200 Job Seeker survey responses and 8,500 Business survey responses.
- ii. The Business survey results show that businesses are still struggling to attract workers, competition for limited talent pools is driving the market, and there is a major need for skilled trades awareness and training. Digital automation, robotic automation, and space needs are topics that businesses are looking at 1-2 years in the future. Some of the top business challenges include attracting new workers, inflation, retaining current workers, and government regulations.

Hard to fill positions include teachers, laborers, Commercial Driver's License (CDL) drivers, and administrative positions. Common non-technical skills lacking among job applicants and new employees include self-motivation, communication skills, problem-solving/critical thinking, and timeliness/attendance skills. Common technical skills lacking among job applicants and new employees include basic computer use/digital literacy, software proficiency in Excel, email, and mechanical technical/engineering skills. Barriers that prevent business from hiring a candidate or prevent these candidates from taking a job include lack of experience, self-motivation/initiative, and a gap in salary and wage expectations.

Two (2) recruitment elements that work in the eyes of businesses are word of mouth/networking through current employees/referrals and [Indeed](#). Businesses would like to provide management/leadership training, mentoring/coaching, and on-the-job training (OJT).

- iii. Job Seeker survey results show that workers' needs and expectations have shifted, and that there is a significant need for training and upskilling. In addition, a lack of professional networks, experience, and credentials limit growth. Workers are looking for flexibility and the ability to work remotely full time as well as paid time off and higher pay/higher starting pay.

The age bracket that completes the Job Seeker surveys tends to be a little older than the population overall, so NYSDOL organized focus groups and heard from younger people that they may not be interested in a fully remote job due to wanting to build networks following the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the barriers that job seekers experience include not having enough experience in the field, not having a large professional network, and not having the right degree, certificate, or credential. The top trainings that job seekers are interested in include digital skills, information technology, Excel, and administrative skills.

- iv. A SWIB member asked whether digital literacy deficits cut across age demographics. NYSDOL responded that yes, they do, and that someone who has been working in the same job for over 20 years may not have had to learn digital skills, but that now they may need to. In addition, there is an unavailability of technology in schools and retired workers are returning to the workforce.

#### **4. Asylum Seekers Initiative**

- A. NYSDOL Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development, Dana Politis, discussed the asylum seeker initiative. Key points include:
  - i. There is an extensive initiative to connect over 100,000 asylum seekers with the opportunity to work in NYS. NYSDOL is taking a two-pronged approach to the initiative:
    - a. Business Community – Over 400 employers reached out to NYSDOL and the number is growing. In response, NYSDOL developed a [portal](#) where employers who are interested in hiring asylum seekers can submit information on what they are seeking. NYSDOL's regional business representatives will reach out and follow-up with the business on the skills needed.
    - b. Asylum Seekers – Those who are working towards obtaining their work authorization and those who have already received approval for work authorization can visit the Helping Connect Asylum Seekers to Employment Opportunities [webpage](#) located on the NYSDOL website. If these individuals are interested in working with NYSDOL, then a NYSDOL team member will reach out to conduct a basic skills assessment to understand the individual's education and skills needs so they can be matched with jobs of their interest. Job matching will occur once work authorization is attained.
  - ii. A SWIB member asked whether the process of assisting asylum seekers is only for new asylum seeker arrivals. The focus is on newly arrived asylum seekers, but NYSDOL's services are open to anyone in NYS who is authorized to work. NYSDOL is looking to work with asylum seekers/migrants who arrived from September 2022 to the present, and also looking to work with those in temporary protected status and individuals in shelters. In addition, NYSDOL is working closely with federal counterparts, clinics, and legal providers through the NYS Department of State (DOS) to reach asylum seekers, and recently conducted a large training with DOS staff for legal providers both in- and outside of NYS.

There is a federal work authorization sprint going on right now in Manhattan and NYSDOL staff are on-site to assist. Individuals can fill out a consent form and NYSDOL will follow up to conduct full intake. Staff are also working at the NYS Application Center. Asylum seekers can complete intake forms or fill out consent forms and NYSDOL staff will follow-up from there.

## **5. Workforce Development Planning and Discussion**

- A. NYS Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Workforce, James Katz, discussed group collaboration and Governor Hochul's ten (10) priority workforce objectives. Key points include:
- i. Interagency group collaboration – ESD's Office of Strategic Workforce Development was launched, along with the expansion of interagency teams to move forward with a new Statewide workforce strategy that underscores the commitment to sustained change and forward momentum that supports businesses and workers across NYS. The group will meet quarterly with related subcommittees and will be convened by the Director of State Operations, Kathryn Garcia, and James Katz to implement the Governor's ten (10) priority workforce objectives:
    - a. Creating a Statewide workforce strategy document;
    - b. Producing and implementing a new technology tool to help businesses, training and education providers, and individuals navigate workforce resources;
    - c. Aligning efforts of training providers and funders across the workforce development ecosystem;
    - d. Developing common success metrics;
    - e. Implementing tracking and reporting requirements;
    - f. Articulating best practices and identifying opportunities for integration into new or existing workforce development programs;
    - g. Engaging industry on talent need and opportunities;
    - h. Aligning regional workforce development stakeholders;
    - i. Improving access to quality jobs and career growth opportunities for marginalized and underrepresented communities; and
    - j. Designing new materials to help the public navigate the State's workforce development and funding opportunities.
- B. Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development, Chris White, discussed the 2024 Combined State Plan priorities that Governor Hochul would like to accomplish. The six (6) draft priorities include:
- i. Ensuring training programs in NYS stay in line with the needs of businesses;
  - ii. Supporting all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills, accessing support services, and connecting to jobs;
  - iii. Attracting, supporting, and developing businesses in promising and priority industries;
  - iv. Aligning workforce resources and data collection and holding System partners accountable to standardized success measures;

- v. Supporting existing workers to ensure they remain competitive throughout their career; and
- vi. Strengthening the long-term pipeline of workers to support the future of work.

SWIB members are asked to provide feedback on these priorities to inform the 2024 Combined State Plan process.

- C. Associate Commissioner for Workforce Development, Dana Politis, further discussed the NYS Combined State Plan process and required SWIB input. Key discussion questions and SWIB member responses include:
- i. Discussion question #1 – Regarding the industry sectors/occupations you represent, what are some of your employment needs?
    - There is an enormous teacher shortage with teachers leaving the profession in droves. There is a need to replace them, and we are actively looking and recruiting in this field.
    - There is a population decline in the Finger Lakes region, which started in 2010 and continues. There are also smaller families than there were 20-30 years ago, and the number of high schoolers graduating has declined by 50%. We do not have enough faculty in optics, and schools cannot hire the faculty as they do not have enough students.
    - We are having issues being competitive as we cannot pay people what they could earn in the private sector. There are union issues as well.
    - The number of licensed security jobs has dropped and clients want a more in-depth screening of security officers. The background screening piece has impacted the ability to find and keep the number of security officers we need in NYS.
    - Registered nurses (RNs) are a huge need as we do not have the pool of individuals. We also very much need phlebotomy technicians; the enrollment numbers in these programs have decreased.
  - ii. Discussion question #2 – Industry/sector partnerships and career pathways are proven strategies for improving labor market outcomes and economic mobility for working people, and in particular, people with low incomes and people of color. What are the most valuable industry/sector partnerships and accessible career pathways you utilize or are aware of, and why do they work?
    - From a manufacturing perspective, we need to ask whether we are doing enough to empower our LWDBs. We do not have the flexibility or funding to help the organizations and employers who are trying to help. We need to think about our workforce programs and whether there is something we can do to be more efficient. We also need to allocate more dollars at the local level.
    - In the restaurant industry we have a culinary arts program at our Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and we have relationships with community colleges and secondary schools. However, we do not have good data to track what happens to these individuals after and to show who is hired by the industry and whether these individuals are now owners or sous-chefs.

- Healthcare providers have training programs on-site and that can be an important pathway in showing opportunities, but also challenging in operating these programs. In healthcare, more flexibility in terms of what certain occupations can and cannot do would be great. We are working with NYSDOL on a medical assistance apprenticeship program, which would provide OJT, and then these individuals could move on to be a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or RN. These are key in terms of career pathways.
  - In healthcare, we focus on the underserved and people of color, and we have been successful in working with BOCES and Adult Education in accomplishing this.
  - We really like the Pathways in Technology ([P-Tech](#)) model. If we could multiply that, it would resolve some of the challenges we have.
- iii. Discussion question #3 – What are your businesses or organizations doing to promote and develop inclusive training, hiring, and career advancement strategies? Where do you see opportunities to advance equity?
- We developed [GLOW with Your Hands](#), and appreciated NYSDOL staff coming to this event. We had 1,100 students attend and gave the students hands-on activities for manufacturing careers such as welding. This is important for students as our BOCES has an all-time high enrollment in Advanced Manufacturing fields. We also developed a Healthcare GLOW with Your Hands and will have about 700 students attend. These hands-on activities expose students to all different types of Healthcare industry areas such as physical and occupational therapy.
  - At Optimax, we encourage people in our leadership team to get involved in local school boards and scholarship boards to make sure we are aligned and creating awareness of equitable opportunities in Advanced Manufacturing.
  - There is a need for better training as employees are dealing with high-needs individuals, and they need more in training so they are better equipped to handle these situations. Training is often included in administration and is often limited so we should do more to support training needs.
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is so important. We partnered with a number of different organizations to fund a specialized employment coach. The coach will help individuals become work ready and provide services such as driving someone to get their birth certificate or helping them get their first apartment. How about having every local workforce area receive workforce dollars to put on a GLOW with Your Hands type event? If we know something works, then we should fund it Statewide and see what happens.
  - Women and girls are not getting into technical occupations. We need to build confidence in the schools, and we need our partners in NYS education to help us as well. Digital skills are critical in applying for jobs.

## 6. Next Steps and Wrap Up

- A. NYSDOL Director of the Bureau of Workforce Innovation & Quality, Kerry Douglas-Duffy and NYSDOL Bureau Manager for Workforce Development & Strategic Planning, Liz Martin, provided

information on Board Chair selection and committees, travel reimbursement, and future meetings. Key points included:

- i. Board Chair and Committee Surveys – NYSDOL will send out a survey regarding SWIB Chair and subcommittee interests. In the past, there have been subcommittees on topics including priority industries, aligning workforce programs, and education & credentials. In the survey, SWIB members will be able to decide whether they want to create different subcommittees from prior years as a lot of the work the SWIB does comes from the subcommittees.
- ii. Travel Reimbursement – Folders provided to the SWIB members contain travel-related documents including the Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Instructions, the AC 3257-S (Claim for Travel Reimbursement by a Non-Employee), and the AC 160-S (Statement of Automobile Travel). Reimbursement requests can be made for hotel, meals, and mileage costs and NYSDOL staff will assist SWIB members with booking hotels for future SWIB meetings.
- iii. Future SWIB Meetings – The 2024 quarterly SWIB meetings will be held on January 24, April 24, July 24, and October 9.

## **7. Closing/Adjournment**

- A. NYSDOL Commissioner Reardon asked everyone to think more about how to build inclusive networks that consist of individuals who are normally left out and who members may not run into on a daily basis. She then thanked all for attending and being a part of the important workforce development work in NYS.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00PM.