



## Massachusetts Workforce Association Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

January 25, 2022

In attendance: Rebecca Bialecki, Bob Bower, Maura Geary, Ron Iacobucci, Ron Marlow, Karen Pelletier, Kathleen Weislein, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

### Notes

#### **ARPA Funding Updates/FY23 Budget**

- Tonja provided an update of the ARPA bill that was passed last year. In addition, state budget season starts tomorrow with Governor Baker submitting his proposal.
- Tonja mentioned that there will at some point be an ARPA bill number 2 and we should have some recommendations for how we would like to see workforce funding spent.
- Kevin - can we hold some reserve from ARPA for workforce development specifically?
  - What is the minimum amount needed to run a career center? That could be a way to build the buffer.
- Bob - plenty of money out there for workforce development, but not enough money for staff capacity.
- Maura - concept of the true cost v. the fixed costs of what it takes to run each center. Could that type of analysis be done under the umbrella of capacity building. Could be some type of ROI that could articulate the costs to run the system.
- Mary - no movement, limited movement on navigator role, recruiting on 4-5 new programs and if they had the stipends could do a better job. Things are just moving way too slow.
  - Raija provided an update on the navigator role and the salary amount that Alice had shared.
  - Issue with setting a salary at the state level
- Kathleen - have to train that person and bring them up to speed. Would rather promote someone in house and bring in someone new.
- Ron M. - when Alice sent out the email with an all-in number, the amount of information relative to that position has not been sufficient or has the process moved enough.

#### **YouthWorks Feedback**

- Tonja reminded the committee about a proposal [here](#) from a coalition seeking to advise Commonwealth Corporation on how to spend the \$25M in ARPA funds for YouthWorks. They are asking MWA for input and if we could support.
  - Feedback: being the “employer of record” is much more complicated than people realize, also can impact you on employment size and the rules/regulations that come with that.
  - Eligibility of students is a big issue too.
  - Ron also shared some thoughts on Breaktime and some potential issues with the proposal.
  - Tonja asked committee members to follow up with any additional thoughts on the letter.

#### **2022 Priorities/Budget/Etc./Planning for a New Administration**

- EOLWD conversation on staffing

- North shore - will be raising wages for local staff soon to bring parity to the state v. local salaries. Hope this will help with retention and new hires.
- Need more flexibility in terms of hybrid v. remote work. Want to work somewhere with windows and certain workplaces. What other things can you offer to attract people?
- Kevin - can't be any disconnect between current staff v. new hires. But as a nonprofit, the state wage equity act, cannot be hiring people and providing things.
- Rebecca - need to do internally what we are telling employers to do - look at salaries, work schedules, things that make good jobs.
- Ron - two part conversation: (1) the way state gov has shifted into a more flexible model is probably the same flexibility that should exist in those who are conduits; (2) where does an operator land on such a question. Seeking flexibility is important regardless of how individual operators might apply it to their center.
- Issues with stipends and using them to incentivize existing staff to take on more work. Layering on too much right now.
- ATR - how to expand statewide. We should work with ATR to price out expansion and decide how to potentially advocate for funding for expansion.
- Tonja/Raija to think about how to vision recommendations for a new administration and the best way to engage members in this work. More information to come soon.