

Governor's Council on Women and Girls:
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity
Meeting Minutes
May 16th, 2023, at 3:00 PM
Microsoft TEAMS Virtual Meeting

I. Introductions

Christine Jean-Louis called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

II. Women Return to Work Economic Development Plan (*see Attachment 1*)

Anthony Barrett (Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of Workforce Strategy) and Billy Huang (Governor's Fellow, Office of Workforce Strategy) presented. Barrett explains the task that was assigned to him and Mr. Huang, showing the challenges that were taking place during COVID and in pre COVID.

- a. They focused on access to services such as healthcare and childcare, to achieve the goal of economic plans of addressing and put forth solutions for women going forward. They want to focus on developing a more comprehensive approach and solutions to supporting them back to work. In their research, they found that women of color were largely impacted with a decrease in wages and paid equity. They also found that lack of employment opportunities targeted these group of women, with these opportunities having a direct deficit link to childcare and healthcare resources.
- b. When it came to women led business, the impact doubled. They are unable to have access to the resources mentioned and do not have the capacity to run their businesses.
- c. Barrett provided research found supporting his claims and how it correlates to not only the United States, but the State of Connecticut.
 - i. He made clear that the impact of these inequalities does not only impact the women, but the children and families linked as well (Causing a chain reaction).
- d. Barrett discusses the unemployment rates that were filed during COVID and how women of color were disproportionately filing for these claims, despite comprising of a smaller shar of the workforce.
- e. To move forward and help resolve the issue, an implementation plan was braided into their Office of Workforce Strategy program called Career Connect.
 - i. He goes into more statistical details regarding the investment and program, along with its effectiveness.
- f. Their plan on building more diversifying work for systems and building inclusivity into the workforce.

- g.** Barrett and Huang play a video showcasing a program called HAVENLY (a non-profit organization in New Haven, CT that provides a 6-month training program that provides paid education with on-the-job training)
- h.** Barrett emphasizes the importance of investing in opportunities such as HAVENLY because of it building/designing a future for the individuals involved.
- i.** Barrett moves on to discuss individuals with personal disabilities which were also a specific population that was greatly impacted by the pandemic. Ability Beyond is another organization they invested in. This organization provides the training and opportunities to those individuals with disabilities to obtain pre-requisites and certifications prior to enrolling in training programs run by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.
- j.** Barrett continues to discuss another one of the agencies they recognize: people returning to citizen population. They are creating sustainable pipelines and pathways for our healthcare manufacturing and infrastructure industries.
- k.** They developed their very comprehensive marketing campaign YOU Campaign, which targets individuals from diverse populations. It was explained how their marketing strategy is to showcase women in jobs they are not overpopulating.
- l.** Huang continued the presentation by speaking on the number of investments using federal funding from Economic Development Administration sector-based initiatives (in Manufacturing, healthcare IT, and the Biosciences), which will help with building these systems.
- m.** They plan on working with more stakeholders to help them build out the programs. He goes on to discuss some of the programs, such as Manufacturing and Technical Community Hub (MATCH), Paid Family and Medical Leave Act, OEC Care 4 Kids and Blue-Ribbon Council, and OWS DEIA Committee + Ares Project.
- n.** He discusses their work with DOC. He also explains how despite having such programs and reports available to people who are reentering, there is a lack of awareness for said programs.
- o.** Huang talks looking to the future – thinking about inclusive employer practices and benefits and financial literacy counseling. He acknowledges women require more flexible working hours; and having remote work opportunities, childcare considerations, equal pay, and mentorship during return ship are important things to consider and think about.
- p.** Addressing the loss of benefits for those apart of the federal poverty level.
- q.** Discusses the Federal Bank of Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta working with the office of Early Childhood. They provide a benefits tools calculator that help women see what subsidies they have and if any may be impacted or lost if they return to work. Similarly, the Bureau of Rehab Services provides benefit counseling focusing on Medicaid and Medicare populations.
- r.** Overview: Huang emphasizes the importance of educating and making aware the vulnerable population of what is impacted, what support they have, and what can be granted.

Jean-Louis suggests the work group to think of the priorities they discussed and find ways private sectors, private provide support, and the state can help support women state employees and be a leading example as an employer.

III. 2023 Priorities and Entrepreneurship as an Option to Return to Work

Erin Mercedes (The Women Business Development Council) presents on their 2023:

- a. Mercedes briefly discusses what the Women Business Development Council does and their 25 years of supporting Connecticut's women entrepreneurs. She gives statistical data of women owned business in the United States, along with those in Connecticut.
- b. She discusses the mission of the Council, which is to support the economic prosperity for women and communities through entrepreneurial and financial educational services that create and grow sustainable jobs and businesses across Connecticut (In other words, they help women start and grow businesses).
- c. She goes into depth of their headquarters and businesses they've served.
- d. She emphasizes the positive impact their virtual programming has been for women who cannot access their offices in person. She further elaborates the benefits their virtual programming has provided.
- e. In terms of investing, they have grants that are offered to childcare businesses and non-childcare businesses.
- f. They have a podcast that has conversation with leaders from different industries and backgrounds around the country.
- g. They have partnered with the Office of Early Childhood to provide training for these childcare providers, and they offer entrepreneurial and financial training and advising. They have partnered with the Office of Early Childhood which has helped provide monetary support.
- h. They have two main grants: Equity Match Grant and Launchpad
- i. They further asked to spread the word of their Council and to encourage individuals to join.

IV. Opportunities with the Entrepreneurial & Women's Business Center

Lacey Banks McGill of WBDC (Women Business Development Council) Program Manager, University of Hartford presents.

- a. Banks discusses the mission of the Entrepreneurial and Women's Business Center, which is to empower women and people of color to take control of their economic future. They provide similar services that were discussed by the WBDC. They help businesses better understand the financial portion of running a business and help them grow and succeed.
 - i. This includes improving their websites, implementing SEO programs and other sorts of technology applications.
- b. Banks goes on to elaborate on their in-depth technical assistance program and their tech lab program. The tech lab initiative focuses on making sure businesses can sign small local level contracts as means to boost/build up their capacity.
- c. She moves on to their social services and behavioral health field clients. She emphasizes how these clients impact the workforce development by not only creating jobs, but providing social services that individuals need to interact in the workforce.

- d. She discusses how they are working on creating systems that help negotiating bureaucracies to grow and scale their clients' businesses easier. She explains how their programs not only help the businesses, but the employees working in those businesses to have good paying jobs.
- e. Similarly, she encourages individuals to talk about their programs and share information.

V. Connecticut Businesses with Untapped Potential ([link to presentation](#))

Candace Freedenberg from Untapped Potential presents.

- a. Freedenberg begins with introducing Untapped Potential – founded in 2015, advancing business and reigniting careers. They are supporting what businesses need and finding ways they can help them adapt and change to support women returning into the workforces.
- b. They encourage entrepreneurship because of its flexible way of women getting back to work. They also play a part of keeping women engaged in their work and to add value to the workforce.
- c. They discussed statistics regarding the problem before COVID: lack of network, lack of confidence, lack of skills currency and geographically bound.
- d. She discusses Untapped Potential seeking “Hidden Talent:” women who are degreed, have 5-7 years in a profession, and women who are seeking work-life success. She illustrates their work-life success definition.
- e. Freedenberg discusses the challenges with “the GAP”: Need to re-acclimate, job board is daunting and mismatched, lacking keywords (ATS leaves them on the sidelines), Catch-22 (Job vs. Caregiving support).
- f. She discusses engaging the women that are placed on the sidelines, which will increase their potential to have power equity in the workforce. This earns a return investment on their degree and increases GDP and the state’s economic vitality.
- g. She discusses a few of her client’s stories.
- h. She brings to light the problem of overqualification. She also discusses women beginning to make up more of the workforce compared to men.

VI. Future Agenda Discussion/Announcements

- a. Technical difficulties arose and Jean-Louis discusses the July meeting that will focus on women returning to the workforce and entrepreneurship. The august meeting was also addressed briefly.
- b. Jean-Louis discusses the need for the different organizations to brainstorm ideas to help bring more women back into the workforce. Discussion of any need for legislation that may help with said topic, will be discussed in August.

VII. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at around 4:13 p.m.