



City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager
Trustees
Thomas Bent
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Thomas F. Galligani, Jr.
Colleen Moran
JT Scott
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Online via GoToWebinar Platform

Date: June 21, 2022

Time: 6:05 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Lisa Cook, Silvana Dinka, Tom Galligani, Colleen Moran, Rand Wilson, and Anika Van Eaton
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancia, William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:05pm. Quorum established with 8 trustees in attendance.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. V Choitz: Review and Approval of May 17 Meeting Minutes

- Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve May 17, 2022 meeting minutes. T. Galligani seconds the motion.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 8-0 approving May 17, 2022 meeting minutes.

2. W. Blackmer: reviewed Estimated Linkage Fees for 2022 and 2023

This document shows estimated linkage fees the JCRT is expected to receive in 2022 and projected to receive in 2023.

- No additional funds have been received since our last meeting.
 - Document has been updated to show that \$102,000 are currently available, reflecting the obligations made last meeting to Per Scholas and AACA
 - We are still anticipating the arrival of approximately \$2M over the next 3-4 months
- T Galligani: 74 Middlesex is also beginning vertical construction.
 - V.Choitz: Trust, keep in mind that there will be \$2.7 million available by the end of the year

3. W. Blackmer: Review Current Status of Investment Priorities

This is a pretty good picture of the investment priorities and updates since our last meeting which are captured in red. They include AACA and Per Scholas grants that were renewed at last month's meeting. Priority number 2, the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative is currently out to bid. A couple of other items that are in red are being reviewed in tonight's meeting including Priority 5: workforce development practitioners professional development and the Job training scholarship grant, Good Municipal Jobs training scope and the partial funding of the City Staff role. We will get to most of these in other agenda items. We will be sharing this again in the next meeting.

- V. Choitz: I encourage board members to look at the list and to begin thinking through what additional investments to add to the list. Is it all clear, is it helpful?
- T. Bent and C. Moran stated that this document is helpful.

4. V. Choitz: We will next take an agenda item out of order to discuss board voting processes and procedures. We responded to feedback on the previously shared version of the Schedule for establishing investment priorities by adding that at times additional opportunities to fund may arise and we will be flexible to consider these items at any time. This schedule is not necessarily a formal document, but it is a public document. The next part to discuss is related to a proposed amendment to Article 4 of the Board's Operating Procedures which concern board voting procedures for prioritizing and funding investments. A couple of the items that were suggested at the last meeting was to give a title to each vote; for example, Vote #1 is the "ranked priority investments vote, second vote would be to obligate the funds to put out an RFP. Then the third vote would be the funding distribute the funding. We also said that for the first and the third votes we would use a super majority approval, 6 out of 9 in order to establish the right to priority investments. For the investment obligation vote we will move forward with a simple majority. Any discussion, does anyone want to add any feedback?

Motion: V Choitz makes motion to approve amending the JCRT operating procedures with the language in the document that William has shared with the Board and displayed during this meeting. A Van Eaton seconded. Keep in mind that for this vote, we need a simple majority for the motion to pass.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 8-0 approving the amendment to Article 4 of the JCRT Operating Procedures.

5. V. Choitz: Supporting Staffing to coordinate facilitation of JCRT

An ongoing priority of the JCRT is to support staffing to coordinate facilitation of the JCRT. In FY22 the JCRT funded 50% of the Workforce Development Coordinator role, thus current Board funding concludes at the end of this month. In the advertised agenda it states \$47,500 but I would like to vote to obligate twice the amount to fund two years. This is what was done for the first two years. Any thoughts or questions?

- T. Galligani: I agree with the sentiment, however for this year there is a 2% cost of living adjustment, but the amount would be unknown for the following year.
- V. Choitz: Motion to obligate and distribute \$47,500 to fund 50% of WFD staff person for fiscal year 23.
 - T. Bent: Can we say up to \$47,500 so that the amount can be adjusted based on finalized city calculations, if needed?
 - Motion: V Choitz makes motion to obligate and distribute up to \$47,500 to fund 50% of WFD staff person for fiscal year 23. Motion seconded by T. Bent. Since this is a distribution vote, we will need 6 votes for it to be approved.
 - Roll Call Vote: Motion approved 8-0.

6. W. Blackmer: Contextualized ESOL and Adult Education Grantee Updates and Renewal Process
SCALE's contract with the JCRT to provide contextualized ESOL and Adult Education concluded in March. BHCC's renewed contract to provide contextualized ESOL will conclude on July 1. Both organizations have expressed interest in continuing to deliver these services for the upcoming year. Under the grant services agreement

process there is no guarantee for renewal of funding from year-to-year. Renewal is dependent on:

- a. Availability of JCRT funds
- b. grantee's performance during previous contract(s)/agreement(s), if applicable) and desire and capacity to continue offering services
- c. quality and alignment of grantee's proposal with Talent Equity Playbook and JCRT's ranked priority investment list

While we are awaiting the availability of adequate funds for both programs, and a June 30 report from BHCC on year-end learning gains, City Staff have begun conversations with both organizations about capacity and scope of services to inform a future RFP program track.

Generally speaking, for programming to be run again the JCRT would need to:

- 1) Identify it as a priority during the generation of the next ranked investment priority list along with an estimated funding amount.
- 2) As funding arrives and as priorities are deliberated, there would be discussion of potential revisions to scope and estimated grant size before release of RFP.
- 3) After RFP bid window closes, review committee would propose a recommendation for funding and a vote for distribution would go in front of the Board.

BHCC was renewed since the last ranked investment vote

SCALE has not been renewed since

- V. Choitz: I want to make a small clarification that when voting on ranked investment priorities, we are voting on the investment idea and not necessarily on a particular organization.
- W. Blackmer: Since the last ranked investment priority we can see that \$250,000 has been spent on Contextualized ESOL through the Bunker Hill contract. We can see which grantees have already received renewed funding.
- V. Choitz: Over the next few months we will need to review our investment priority list.
- L. Cook: Do you have an idea when voting might happen on these renewals?
- V. Choitz: As soon as there is money available.
- L. Cook: No suggestion. In terms of SCALE operation there are jobs tied to that grant. There is a process for people not working on our end that we would need to go through.
- V. Choitz: While there are no guarantees, it may be possible next month. If there are amendments to programming, the Board would need to have time to see and review them. We would need to see a month in advance.
- W. Blackmer: the figures on how much an additional year of ESOL and ABE funding would cost are a combination of conversations with grantees but are also estimating what kind of capacity might be needed to serve Somerville residents. BHCC consistently has more interest than seats available. As

Vickie mentioned there would need to be a formal proposal submitted for grantees renewing.

- L. Cook: The SCALE proposal was submitted. Are we waiting for something?
- W. Blackmer: I was under the impression that an additional update needed to be made before the proposal was shared with the Board.
- L. Cook: Let's meet to discuss this.

7. V. Choitz: Workforce Development Practitioner Professional Development Grants Scope Discussion

Idea is to have a pilot year for organization to apply for staff to attend conferences and/or trainings.

- W. Blackmer: organization will apply to receive funds from City staff.
- T. Bent: Is this to train the trainer?
- V. Choitz: We are buying training for the trainers. One pretty serious issue in workforce development is that there aren't many training funds and resources.
- W. Blackmer: This is ensuring that we are keeping the practitioners, teachers, and coaches updated to new skills in their field. Making sure they are able to deliver the best services to residents.

V. Choitz: While there is no vote on this item tonight, we wanted to make sure we had a chance to explore the concept, add any changes or ask any questions. We would vote to obligate *and* distribute the funds when funds are available.

8. V. Choitz: Job Training Scholarship Grant Pilot Scope Discussion

This idea is a similar vehicle in terms of distributing the fund, but the focus would be to pay for training for an individual. There are other training opportunities available outside of the opportunities that the JCRT has funded, but the participant doesn't always have access to funding opportunities. There are a lot of gaps in the system. The goal is to fill that gap. It would be a pilot program. A third party organization would administer the fund. Amendments? Suggestions?

- T. Bent: What happens to the money if the student drops out?
 - V. Choitz: We spent a lot of time trying to get the basic parameters and that is one aspect we overlooked.
 - W. Blackmer: I don't think it's common for the City to take back money that been sent out.
 - V. Choitz: we may need to have the student submit the budget.
 - T. Bent: for RFP need to put in the expectation of the service provider. Need to figure out something to address that potential issue. Really like this idea, it would be great if we had a list of these opportunities from businesses to help people focus on opportunities in Somerville.
 - V. Choitz: We need to build in those details. If there is a potential for tuition refund if a student drops out of the training, then the refund needs to go back to the fund. The other thing that we should be tracking is the referring organizations to see if there are concerning patterns about individuals from certain referring organizations that are not "training ready" and how to address this.

- T. Bent: the organization should be able to evaluate the student's ability to complete the training.
- V. Choitz: And the organization must have the ability to support students
- S. Dinka: Thanks Tom for catching this detail. If we don't have a third party to follow these steps it makes it more of a challenge for the students. Does it say that the individual must apply via a third party?
- V. Choitz: Yes, the person would need to connect to the third party to apply. Also, we need to make sure that one third party does not monopolize this opportunity. We wrote that no more than 40% could be used by the administering agency.
- L. Cook: There's an attrition rate of 25 to 35% of students at SCALE. I wonder if there is a second layer to have providers sign on as a network and have a sliding pay scale, almost like the college courses. It is tricky. It needs to be an organization that has a strong financial background.
- C. Moran: Another idea is to see if a student who cannot complete the training can be added via one more slot in the next class or once the person gets hired can look at the next person to fill in that slot. The vetting is helpful as well as wrap around services.
- W. Blackmer: One perspective we have are the student stipends we have embedded in certain contracts. Just A Start and PerScholas models hand out the stipends at certain milestones or in increments to ensure that disbursement can be adjusted if a student drops out of the training early on.
- V. Choitz: William and Jenn will return with a revised draft.

9. V. Choitz: Good Municipal Jobs Training RFP Discussion.

Community members had raised concerned that residents didn't have access to good city jobs. Invest in programs where community partners come together to ensure that Somerville residents get access to integrated training and City jobs. Goal is that all participants interview with the City of Somerville. Any questions or concerns?

T. Bent: Like the technical training programs. Would this be a third party or a service provider?

V. Choitz: This would a partnership with one lead provider. The draft said that \$150,000 would be available, but would like to suggest that we obligate something closer to \$300,000 to \$500,000. That way if we get multiple proposals we could fund a couple of good providers.

T. Bent: I like the idea of dedicating more money to this.

L. Cook: I wonder about how the JCRT is supporting the infrastructure of some of the things that the City is already doing. For example there was an initiative to expand digital literacy footprint Somerville via placing the Northstar platform in SCALE, the libraries, and SCC. When I see this RFP it makes me wonder how we are supporting city initiatives that have previously been launched. We should recognize how the City is already supporting digital literacy for its residents.

V Choitz: A differentiating feature of this RFP is that digital literacy is being combined with ESL, adult basic education, and connection to employment opportunities.

L Cook: Maybe there needs to be better marketing about resources that are already available.

W Blackmer: This RFP does also speak to priority 11 which was about digital literacy and training resources and has not been funded. This RFP could be a way to address both priorities.

V Choitz: Please send edits or drafts to Jenn and William for consideration once additional funds arrive.

10. Interesting Articles, Reports, or Workforce Development Trends

- A. Job Training Deficit Article from Rand Wilson: [‘This is a crisis point’: Job training deficit leaves critical jobs unfilled - POLITICO](#)
 - V Choitz: R Wilson did you have anything you wanted to discuss more specifically in relation to this article?
 - R Wilson: No

B. Stipend Feedback and RFP Reminder

W Blackmer: We’ve received positive feedback from multiple sources about the JCRT’s inclusion of stipend supports in industry-specific training programs. Separately our RFP including the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative is now out to bid. Please direct interested parties to complete a proposal by July 1.

11. Additional Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

12. Adjournment

- Motion: R Wilson makes motion to adjourn. T Bent seconds the motion.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes unanimously.

Meeting Documents

- Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 5.17.2022
- JCRT Estimated Linkage Fees
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- Workforce Development Practitioner Professional Development Grants scope
- Job Training Scholarship Grant Pilot Scope
- Good Municipal Jobs Training RFP
- Schedule for Establishing and Implementing Jobs Trust Board Funding Priorities
- Proposed Amendment – Process for Voting on Funding Investments

Minutes Approved 7/19/22.