



City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Annual Forum

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

Meeting Minutes

Location: Online via GoToWebinar Platform

Date: November 9, 2021

Time: 6:02 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Jesse Clingan, Lisa Cook, Silvana Dinka, Tom Galligani, Colleen Moran, Anika Van Eaton, Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancina, William Blackmer
- Guests: Members of the public

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome

A Van Eaton- Welcome attendees, session will be recorded, a public record.

- Roll Call attendance vote: all 9 Board members in attendance
- Forum Purpose: Report to public on JCRT investments over past year & get feedback from public on investment ideas the board has prioritized for the upcoming year
- William, Workforce Development Coordinator, City of Somerville next with agenda overview

2. Annual Report Presentation

W Blackmer- Presentation agenda: Who is the Job Creation and Retention Trust Board?, What is jobs linkage funding?, Investment prioritization process, Overview of 2020-2021 investments, Allocations and potential future investments, Address questions on our investments to-date, Public input on investment ideas for 2022

- Introduced JCRT website, location of annual report, and enabling legislation
- **9-member board:** (explanation of seat breakdown); each member introduces themselves and what seat they represent.
 - Tom Galligani, Mayor Designee
 - Jesse Clingan, Council President's Designee
 - Lisa Cook, Superintendent Rep
 - Vickie Choitz, Resident
 - Silvana Dinka, Resident
 - Anika Van Eaton, Non-Profit
 - Rand Wilson, Non-Profit
 - Colleen Moran, Business
 - Tom Bent, Business
- Jobs Linkage Funding/Fee:

- Approved by City Council via a Zoning Amendment in December 2017 applied to commercial developments over 15,000 square feet to provide and enhance employment opportunities for Somerville residents.
- The fee was initially set @ \$2.46/sq ft. Over 15,000 sq ft and since March 2021, the fee is \$2.60.
- Board is entrusted with managing these funds
 - Can be spent on:
 - Skill development for Somerville residents
 - Job quality programs and training for employees and employers
 - Professional development for training providers
 - Equipment and software expenses
 - Research, planning, and evaluation
 - Revenue to date:
 - = 1.36M from 5 projects in 2020.
 - No funds generated in FY21, but we are anticipating additional funds in the coming months
 - Acknowledge Developer Reps in the room:
 - Olivia Paolano from DLJ
 - Makyshia Brathwaite, DivCo West
 - Alexandra Phillips, CV Properties
 - Gregory Karczewski, USQ
 - Ryan Souls, Greystar
 - Investments:
 - Through FY21, the Trust has allocated \$1.35M.
 - In FY21 alone, the Trust invested \$254,000 in contextualized ESL and experiential learning opportunities.
 - Waiting on additional funds

V Choitz- Investment Prioritization Process

- Board prioritizes prompt and strategic spending
 - Board processed the input from the last public meeting on October 13, 2020 (some of you may remember using a jamboard, a new tool some of us started using when many of us transitioned to online during the pandemic).
 - We used that input, combined with the interim reports on last year's grantees to vote on a set of priority investments for this year. We held that vote on March 9, 2021. You can see those priorities reflected in the 2020-2021 annual report.
 - We are holding public meeting today and seeking public input on specific ways to optimize our investments in these priorities.
 - As funds start becoming available again as we get a handle on the pandemic, we are making investments in-line with the investment priorities the board vote on for this year, the talent equity playbook strategies, public input, and grantee performance
 - We anticipate RFPs to be released in Spring 2022
 - Brief overview of TEP strategies:
 - 1) Coordinated system of education and training services ensure Somerville youth and adults achieve career goals
 - 2) Position Somerville as a national leader in employee engagement practices
 - 3) Full suite of experiential learning opportunities for residents
 - 4) Developing resiliency responses to the future of work

T. Bent- Industry Specific Training investments

- In the fall of 2020, the Board voted to fund 3 industry-specific training programs, in alignment with Talent Equity Playbook Strategies 1 & 3. Two of the three programs received short extensions due to pandemic-related disruptions, and all 3 are finishing up their training programs within the next few weeks and months. The Board will evaluate final program outcomes and determine future funding investments. The 3 grantees are:
 - The Asian American Civic Association (AACA) was awarded \$200,000 to provide job training and placement services to 20 Somerville residents through their Careers in Banking and Finance, Alternative Fuels and Emissions, EPIC software, and Building Energy Efficient Maintenance Skills programs. In the coming months, AACA looks forward to launching a new Offshore Wind Technician training.
Today we have are pleased to have AACA's Executive Director Mary Chin in attendance.
 - Just-A-Start who was awarded \$113,523 to provide job training and placement services to 6 Somerville residents, via their Biomedical Careers and IT Careers programs. Thank you to Just-A-Start's Director of Education & Training, Miriam Ortiz, for joining us today, and
 - Per Scholas who was awarded \$66,706 to provide job training and placement services to 15 Somerville residents in technology training programs including Software Engineer, Cloud DevOps, IT Support, Amazon Web Services re/Start and End User Desktop Support.

L. Cook - ESL and Adult Basic Education Investments

- Last year, in alignment with Talent Equity Playbook Strategy 1, the Trust awarded SCALE, the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences, \$118,933 to provide remote career readiness (Cisco IT and Healthcare IT) and digital literacy classes to 60 students in its English language learner and adult basic education programs. SCALE will complete these training programs by March 31, 2022.
- Also last year, the Trust also awarded Bunker Hill Community College \$250,000 to provide 100 low-income Somerville adults with multiple levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, a specially designed ESL course contextualized to teach essential customer service training concepts. BHCC completed this program on June 30, 2021, exceeding program goals.
- Given the success rate of the BHCC program, in July 2021, the Trust voted to award BHCC \$250,000 to provide the same programming for a second year.
- Today we are pleased to have Laura Reiman in attendance representing Bunker Hill Community College.

R. Wilson - Workers' Rights/Employee Engagement

- Last year, in alignment with Strategy 2, the Trust awarded \$119,000 to the Welcome Project, Brazilian Worker Center, and Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Health and Safety to develop and implement workers' rights and wage theft education for immigrant workers in Somerville. \$30,000 of this funding was to develop a worker rights and wage theft curriculum that could be used in future trainings, and \$89,000 was allocated to provide the training for the first year.
- The Welcome Project and its partners met their training goals, and so, last month, the Trust awarded the Welcome Project \$89,000, to provide another year's worth of worker rights and wage theft training. The Board is planning on revisiting the grant amount in December as more funds become available in the Trust.

- Though she couldn't attend tonight, I want to recognize Francisca Sepulveda Diaz for her work on this programming.

S. Dinka – Additional JCRT Investments

- Workforce Development Coordinator – William Blackmer: working as a bridge connecting the Board with the community needs of Somerville residents
- Lastly, the Trust invested \$4,000 in the Forsyth Student Scholars Program to sponsor an experiential learning opportunity for a Somerville High School student.

J. Mancia – Rapid Response Plan

- Developing a Rapid Response Plan, to support workers displaced from their worksite, was an investment priority identified by the Trust in Year One.
It is not anticipated that any funds will be needed for this category as a variety of mechanisms are already in place at the City level and through outside organizations, such as MassHire Department of Career Services, to assist such workers. City staff are currently working on streamlining efforts and creating a set of standard operating procedures in alignment with Strategy 4 of the Talent Equity Playbook.

C. Moran – Allocated, but not obligated funds

- During Spring 2021, the Trust discussed funding priorities for the coming year. In addition to the previously authorized allocations for the Staff role, Forsyth Program, Bunker Hill Community College, and the Welcome Project
 - The Trust allocated \$81,000 for Quality Job HR Training for Somerville Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs
 - The Trust allocated \$381,000 to industry specific trainings, and has the option to renew contracts with AACA, Just-A-Start and Per Scholas following the conclusion of their no cost extensions,
 - Funding to support childcare career development
 - An additional \$119,000 to contextualized ESOL to account for the option to renew SCALE's contract
 - As additional linkage fees become available, the Trust is also interested in revisiting the following funding proposals:
 - Welcome Project's request to receive additional \$30,000 for their Leadership Institute/Train-the-Trainer program
 - A municipal apprenticeship training program

3. A Van Eaton – Public Discussion

- Are there any clarifying questions about the investments we have presented on?

Next Steps:

- The Jobs Trust Board has used public input from last year's meeting to shape our investment priorities for this year and next year, as funding becomes available. In tonight's meeting, we would like to receive your input on how we can ensure that these investments are as strong as possible. We will use a JAM board like last year and then have opportunities for verbal questions, comments, or expansions on their JAM board comment. (William put link into the chat)

Therefore, our questions to you are:

- What are two or three components or expectations we should build into Requests for Proposals, into the grants, for contextualized adult and English Language Learning and industry-specific training programs to ensure these programs are useful to participants?
- We have not received any strong proposals for providing small businesses with HR training that supports good quality jobs. This is a priority for the Jobs Trust Board and an important corollary to the worker rights training. What are your thoughts on how we might bring this training or support to fruition in Somerville?
- As you ponder all the various investments the Jobs Trust Board has made and is planning to make, do you have any advice for us as we make these investments over the coming months?

W. Blackmer - Jam Board Overview

- Link in chat will take you to this page with the prompts. Click to add a sticky. Once you've commented on all 3, you can close the browser tab and it will bring you back to the GoToWebinar window. We will give about 10 minutes for this portion and are here for your questions.
 - You can make a comment via the Jamboard, but also you can post ideas in the chat, and we will have time for verbal comments as well.

A. Van Eaton - Public Discussion

- Thank you everyone for participating and putting forth your ideas. The Board is looking forward to reviewing these comments ahead of our next Board meeting.
- With that, raise your virtual hands to share a comment or expand on a sticky you wrote
- M. Goldstein-Gelb: Longtime resident, involved in worker protection and workforce development. Your support of the worker center has had a huge impact, so thank you for this. I feel that the funding has been very focused on wage theft – we need workers to have safe work environments. I recommend broadening both the funding and the content of the training to give the Welcome Project the flexibility to look holistically at the workplace.
- W. Blackmer: We are excited to see the Welcome Project's successes after year one. They have made some curriculum updates to include the safety topic of heat stress. We are open to continuing to talk with them about ways to broaden their curriculum.
- M. Walles: A big issue is an apprenticeship program for municipal workers in Somerville. There is a high turnover rate due to high cost of living in Somerville. We need to invest in training and certificates for them. Over the summer three workers temporarily lost jobs due to lack of certificates. We need to focus on retaining skilled workers in our community.
- W. Blackmer: One of the priorities of the Trust is to diversify the investments made including additional types of trainings, how to support experiential learning and less traditional education pathways. Our focus is not just on job creation but also retention.
- R. Wilson: I wanted to appreciate Marianne's comment that we've discussed the apprenticeship concept for municipal workers and say that Jennifer has been researching models that other

- cities are using. We should make sure there is a way for people living in the City if get jobs working for the city.
- A Van Eaton: We are going to give the link for the annual report in the chat. We meet just about monthly for public meetings, you are always invited to join us for those meetings.
 - P. Corbett: I was talking to a neighbor looking for work and he was told if he had a CDL, he would be a good candidate for City positions. There are many trainings like this as well others like Hoisting and Hydraulics that residents could benefit from to get better jobs, and there is a great demand for workers in these industries.
 - W. Blackmer: The next monthly meeting open to the public is on December 14th @ 6PM. It will be posted in the events section of the City website in compliance with Open Meeting Law. We are not seeing other hands raised at this time, but I am sharing my email address: wblackmer@somervillema.gov where comments to the three posed questions can be received by November 18th.
 - D. Najmi: I wanted to speak to question 2 about investment in quality jobs. Here at FirstSource, we are working on a job board that will be available on our website as well as a portal for small businesses to make posts. We continue to push accessibility and quality of job opportunities in Somerville.
 - A Van Eaton: We will link in the annual report to the chat. If you have other thoughts, please email William. Thank everyone for joining and we look forward to reflecting on your comments. Public input is so crucial to the work of this Board.
 - Motion to Adjourn made by R. Wilson, V. Choitz seconds the motion. W. Blackmer performed the roll call. 8-0 vote to adjourn, J. Clingan was no longer present to vote.

Meeting Documents

- 2021 JCRT PowerPoint
- JCRT Annual Report 2020-2021
- [JCRT 2021 Public Discussion Jamboard](#)

Meeting minutes approved on 12.14.2021