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Special Populations Subcommittee Meeting

Date: Thursday, October 5, 2023

Time: 1:30 pm MST

Location: Workforce Solutions Borderplex, Inc.
304 Texas Avenue, 1st Floor Conference Room El Paso, Texas 79901

Subcommittee Members Present:

Robert Alcala
Manuel Arias
Bob Gear
Maria E. Lopez
Nena Rios
Adam Tirres
Rosalie Yañez

Subcommittee Members Absent:

Chrystal Davis, Chair
Bruce Biegel
Maricruz Chavez
Oscar Lozoya
Leah Wood

Staff Members Present

Abigail Ruiz
Alma Aranda
Dezeree Fraga

Esther Becerra
Louis Castillo
Marisela Correa

Nicholas Muniz
Odette Flores-Ruiz

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER AND NOTE OF QUORUM

(Chrystal Davis, Special Populations Subcommittee Chair)

Board Member Robert Alcala called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm MST. Quorum was cited.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A: Student HireAbility Activity and Program Updates (*Dezeree Fraga, Program Specialist*)

- Partner Collaborations and Activities
- Year-Round & Summer Earn and Learn
- HireAbility Month Events

Ms. Dezeree Fraga, Program Specialist, discussed the partner collaborations and activities with SISD, the Pride Center, Fort Bliss EFMP Special Needs Awareness Event, Project Search, and Project HIGHER. Regarding Year-Round Work Experience FY23, the target was 75 participants, out of which 75 completed the program and were paid \$12 an hour. The

target of Summer Earn and Learn FY23 was 95 participants; 77 completed the program and were paid \$12 an hour. Ms. Fraga discussed the HireAbility Events and mentioned the Lunch and Learn Disability Awareness Featuring Howdy's Homemade Ice Cream on October 4th. The Untapped Talent Employer Forum and Award Ceremony will be held on October 11th; the UTEP Ability Awareness Week will be held October 24th -26th.

B: Updates and activities regarding Military Initiatives (*Michael Velez, Program Specialist*)

- Military Spouse Program
- Fort Bliss CSP's (Transitioning Service Members)
- Hiring Red, White, and YOU!
- Pathway for Heroes

Ms. Alma Aranda, Director of Innovation and Development, discussed the Pathway for Heros grant that serves transitioning service members with services connected to a disability. Mr. Nicholas Muniz, Operations Manager, discussed the military spouse program and stated that military spouses are offered LinkedIn Learning/Google Professional Certifications Licenses. The Hiring Red, White, and YOU! job fair will be held November 14th at the El Paso County Coliseum.

C: Updates and activities regarding Foster Youth (*Janell Valles, Nextforce Program Manager*)

- Focus Group at the Pride Center

Ms. Fraga discussed that Ms. Janell Valles, Nextforce Program Manager, conducted a youth focus group on outreach strategies at the Pride Center.

D: Updates and activities regarding Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (*Odette Flores-Ruiz, Rural Development Project Manager*)

Ms. Odette Flores-Ruiz, Rural Development Project Manager, discussed the different activities happening with Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers in Van Horn and the Farmworker Appreciation Day.

E: Updates and activities regarding Justice-Involved Individuals (*Louis Castillo, Industry Project Manager*)

- Re-Entry Activities
- UTEP Aerospace Center

Mr. Louis Castillo, Industry Project Manager, discussed the pilot programs with the El Paso Juvenile Probation Department, including work-based learning and welding experience.

F: Report on the number of customers with disabilities served, employment for customers with disabilities, foster youth, MSFW, justice-involved and veterans served (*Dezeree Fraga, Program Specialist*)

Ms. Fraga provided a report on the number of customers served from October 2022 to September 2023. Ms. Fraga mentioned there were 477 individuals with disabilities, 56 foster youth, 100 migrant seasonal farmworkers, 995 veterans, and 460 justice-involved individuals served.

G: Area for discussion and feedback (*Dezeree Fraga, Program Specialist*)

3. ADJOURN

A: Committee Announcements

B: Discussion on items of interest for next agenda – February 1, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm. MST.