



**Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System**  
Policy Committee  
April 15, 2021 1:30 – 3:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting

**Attendees:** Lauren Gilwee, Tina Turner, Brit Ayers, Bruce England, Charles Hunt, Erin Inman, Grace Kelly, Janice Stauffer, John Kashuba, Kara Fritz, Ken Lemberg, Kim Sansone, Lloyd Day, Lura Bozarth, Matt Jackson, Matt Bernardy, Patti Morfe, and Natalie Clements

**Handouts:** Agenda

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**Minutes**

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**I. Welcome and Meeting Overview**

- The Policy Committee is excited to host its first panel on Intake and Assessments!
- The committee has invited the following speakers:
  - Kim Sansone, Director of Literacy Programs, Community College of Baltimore County;
  - Kara Fritz, Manager of Youth Programs and Talent Pipeline Development, Frederick County; and
  - Janice Stauffer, Transitioning Youth Counselor, MSDE DORS.

**II. Panel Discussion: Intake and Assessments**

- Flexibility and options are key to meet the diverse needs of organizations that differ by size and geography. There is no one solution that fits all. The path to meeting all participant needs may be a hybrid with virtual and in-person options.
- Processing electronic documents, maintaining electronic files, and conducting virtual referrals are efficient (e.g. screenshots of eligibility documentation; can refer to service providers anywhere in the State if programming is offered virtually).
- Virtual programming in some cases removes barriers to participation (e.g. transportation, need for child care) but adds barriers in other cases (need for technology, wifi, and digital literacy; "zoom fatigue"). Programs need to be mindful to not add too many extra steps in virtual enrollment/programming because these act as barriers, and students may opt to wait until services are in-person. Participants may cycle through responses: weariness to working virtually, acceptance, and embracing the virtual environment. The focus should be to minimize barriers.

- Preparing an individual who is not familiar with technology for a virtual session may require four-times the amount of time as the actual virtual meeting. Virtual information sessions offered through live stream can alleviate some of this work.
- Programs see more success when they have initiatives to bridge the digital divide: e.g. loan equipment, partner with the public library system, etc. Partnership is key! Local Areas should have resource lists of where customers can go to get access to technology/wifi.
- It can be more difficult to develop a rapport with case managers virtually. Consistent follow-up can help (e.g. asking participants how often they would like to receive follow-up and in what form; how would they like staff to react if they start to drop-off in engagement?). There are more distractions when meeting virtually from home - these can help rapport building sometimes or just distract from the meeting.
- Flexibility in scheduling helps keep participant engagement high and may allow service providers to see more participants per day when participants are schooling/working from home.
- Getting signatures is a challenge. Allowing electronic signatures speeds up the process.
- Conducting assessments virtually is a challenge. CCBC had more success with social distanced small group in-person assessments. Smaller Title II grantees have had some success with virtual assessments if they were already conducting virtual assessments prior to the pandemic. Other organizations have not all been able to conduct assessments and have had to use proxies (e.g. rely on program prerequisites, creating shorter vocational interest evaluations versus ability). Challenges to virtual assessments include: access to required equipment. Self-assessments can provide more information where official assessments are not possible.
- Maryland should explore other options for approved assessments that are not currently in DWDAL's policy.
- Self-Attestation has been a benefit and reduces staff and customer stress.
- ESOL classes are benefitting from the virtual environment because they can see each other and the teacher's faces up close for pronunciation.
- There is concern for performance - organizations hope to see flexibility in the future. It is unknown what the implications are for if organizations are unable to conduct assessments to prove performance gains.
- When it is time to go back to "normal" and in-person, organizations need time to adjust and thoughtfully and intentionally change procedure. The move to virtual was sudden, but the move back does not have to be.

### **III. News and Notes**

- At the last meeting, the committee settled on a plan for 2021 to investigate policy changes during virtual programming. Next month, the committee plans to focus on the topic "Access and Participation". There are not any confirmed panelists yet but considering: PCs for People, JARC, DWDAL staff, and perhaps a program participant – maybe someone that the DWDAL communications team have highlighted in the past. Members can email Natalie if they have someone they would like to suggest for the June panel.
- At the last WIOA Alignment Group meeting, the 2021 Global Work Plan was approved for all committees.

- The Communications Committee continues to issue a newsletter every month – members should let Natalie know if they have not been receiving those, and she can make sure they get added to the distribution list.
- The Data and Dashboard Committee is currently collecting PY19 data for the Benchmarks of Success and are available to fulfill inter-agency data requests of the committees.
- The Professional Development and Technical Assistance Committee launched their first training module in the Hub. Their second module should come out next week. Members should let Natalie know if they are having trouble accessing these, and she can connect them to John Feaster for technical assistance.

#### **IV. Next Steps and Action Items**

- Members should let Natalie know if they have not been receiving the Benchmarks newsletters, and she can make sure they get added to the distribution list.
- Members should let Natalie know if they are having trouble accessing the Benchmarks modules in the Hub, and she can connect them to John Feaster for technical assistance.
- Members can email Natalie if they have someone they would like to suggest for the June panel on Access and Participation.
- The committee did not have time to debrief from the panel discussion. Committee leaders will brainstorm how to conduct debriefs in the future.