

Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce

Communications Committee Meeting

Monday, September 11, 2017 – 1:00 am – 3:00 am

Attendees

In-Person: Brandon Butler, Mike DiGiacomo, Mac MacLure, LiLi Taylor, Alan Crawley

Via Conference Call: Theresa Blaner, Kim Bohnet, Jody Boone, Shomare Braxton, Mark Millspaugh, Sue Page, Ann Flagg

Handouts

- Agenda
- 8/17 Meeting Minutes
- Recruiting info for Executive Steering Committee
- Committee Member Contact Information
- Draft Committee Charter
- System-wide Letter from Agency Leaders introducing Benchmarks

Minutes

I. Meeting Overview

Brandon opened the meeting and welcomed new committee members Alan Crawley and Mark Millspaugh. To level set the group for the discussion, Brandon briefly reviewed the Benchmarks initiative.

II. Membership Issues

Executive Steering Committee

One of the “next steps” identified at the August 17th meeting was to recruit members for an Executive Steering Committee, with the goal of holding the first meeting of this new group immediately following the September 13 GWDB meeting. All of the individuals targeted for recruitment have been notified of the request and have agreed to participate. Sue Page has submitted the request for Dr. Salmon, but it is still moving through channels. For this and other reasons, members of the Communications Committee agreed to postpone the first Executive Steering Committee meeting. LiLi will set up an alternative meeting date for this group in October, and will draft an agenda.

Committee Charter

The Committee reviewed a draft Committee Charter and provided feedback. Mike expressed the importance of clearly including business as an external stakeholder and agreed to provide the desired language, where necessary. The Charter will be adopted as the template for all Committees.

III. Branding Discussion

At the August meeting the Committee decided to develop a letter introducing the benchmarks to stakeholders. The major goal of the letter was to have the leadership of the four WIOA core partner organizations endorse the Benchmarks as a first step in a longer-term roll-out process. A draft was developed and presented to the Committee that infuses a “roadmap” metaphor. The roadmap twist was developed in response to concerns voiced by some committee members that using the term “benchmarks” could elicit negative reactions from compliance-fatigued local area management and staff. In addition to mitigating objections related to compliance fatigue, the roadmap metaphor also creates opportunities to use themed graphics to support brand recognition. While some people in the system are already aware of the Benchmarks as the Benchmarks, the initiative is new enough that a small window of opportunity still exists for rebranding, if the Communications Committee decides to take this path.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of rebranding. The Roadmap term was seen as too vague. The sentiment of the group was summed up in Mark's comment: "What gets measured gets done!" Committee members were unanimously in favor of keeping the original "Benchmarks of Success" project title. LiLi will redraft the letter, removing roadmap references.

IV. Plan for System-wide Roll-out

The group discussed options for educating system partners/stakeholders about the Benchmarks beyond the introductory letter from the Executive Steering Committee. One idea the group briefly explored at the end of the August meeting was to sequentially roll-out the Benchmarks, one strategic goal at a time. An incremental rollout leverages a best practice from an MDH initiative in which information was released in digestible chunks, over time. The group ultimately leaned more toward releasing the benchmarks together, all at once, citing the benefits that 1) a one-time release of all of the Benchmarks allows stakeholders to consider each individual goal/benchmark within the context of the whole; and 2) the all-at-one approach gives managers the freedom to focus on goals/benchmarks that are aligned with work in their local area.

Mac observed that the Communications Committee is currently the only group focused exclusively on the Benchmarks. Other committees planned as part of the larger project (e.g., Policy, Data and Dashboard, Professional Development, Executive Steering, WIOA Alignment), either have not yet been established or are not currently focused on the Benchmarks project. He wondered whether it is possible to make decisions about communications plans in that vacuum. The committee may need to coordinate activities with other committees, and may even be able to benefit from the work of other committees.

The group agreed that the wisest next step is to answer some basic questions. The entirety of the next meeting will be dedicated to laying out a plan to answer (minimally) the following questions:

- Who are the audiences who need information about the Benchmarks?
- What is/are the best method(s) to communicate effectively with each audience?
- What information does each audience need to have? What do we want them to do with it?
- When should each audience receive information?
- What deliverables are needed?
- What is our timeline?

Action Items

LiLi will:

- Integrate feedback into Committee Charter and send out for Committee's review/approval.
- Re-work letter from Executive Steering Committee, removing references to Roadmap.
- Set up meeting of the Executive Steering Committee in October.
- Develop an agenda for the Executive Steering Committee that provides a refresher of the Benchmarks initiative, describes the current status, presents the letter developed for their signatures, and seeks guidance on next steps.
- Send out follow-up questionnaire to Communications Committee members seeking input on elements on the Communications Plan