

Workforce Development Board

Monday, January 25, 2021, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Virtual Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Present:

Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent, ISD 709
Kim Burke, Workforce Development & Sourcing Specialist, Essentia Health
Andy Campeau, Business Manager, UA Local 11
Andrea Chartier, Career Services, College of St. Scholastica
Shayla Drake, HR/Payroll Coordinator, Aftenro
Brian Durand, Project Executive, McGough
Emily Edison, Executive Director, SOAR Career Solutions
Claire Farmer-Lies, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Residential Services Inc.
Patty Fleege, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Manager, Adult Learning Center
Marla Halvorson, HR Director, St. Luke's
Monica Haynes, Director, UMD Bureau of Business & Economic Research
Duane Hill, District Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Julie Johnson Atkinson, Vice President of Sales, Visit Duluth
Pam Kramer, Executive Director, Duluth LISC
Laura Krollman, Manager, Minnesota Power
Paul Pedersen, Director of Outreach, MAC-V
Julie Sachs, Field Operations Area Manager, DEED
Erica Hanson, Continuing Education and Customized Training, Lake Superior College
Ian Vincent, Senior Business Developer, APEX
Amanda Yates, Financial Services Manager, St. Louis County
Renee Van Nett, Community Services Director, AFL-CIO/United Way
Elena Foshay, Director, Duluth Workforce Development
Carson Gorecki, Northeast Regional Labor Market Analyst, DEED
Shawn Herhusky, Workforce Strategy Consultant, DEED
Carol Turner, Operations Manager, Duluth Workforce Development

Meeting called to order at 2:03 p.m.

- The Diversity & Inclusion Tool Kit training session was a success. 175 people participated. Thank you to the Equity Committee for everything that was done to put that together.

Action Items:

- Minutes from November 16, 2020 meeting approved by all in attendance.
- Membership announcements:
 - Erik Simonson has stepped down from his position at Lake Superior College. Erica Hanson, Education Industry Partnership Coordinator is filling in.
 - Welcome new board member, Liz Holden. She is with the talent acquisition department at Cirrus and is new to Duluth from Indiana.

- Chiamaka Enemuoh will be joining the board. Her background is with assisted living and attracting and retaining diverse employees.
 - Additional applications have been received and interviews are being conducted.
 - Jay Ott has transitioned off the board.
- To be in compliance with the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act, the Workforce Board selects a One Stop Operator to oversee the workforce center and system in our area. Currently it is a consortium of agencies housed at Duluth CareerForce. The RFP process is happening again. Elena is finalizing the details of the RFP. It will have to be posted publicly in two places for 30 days in February. Respondents will submit letters of intent to apply. An application will need to be submitted. The Governance Committee will review the applications. It will also be reviewed by the Executive Committee and then brought to the Workforce Board for approval. It will need to be done by the end of June.
 - Chair/Vice Chair election. Ian Vincent was re-elected as Chair and Laura Krollman was re-elected as Vice Chair by all in attendance.

Updates & Announcements

- CareerForce data report by Julie Sachs. The report provided covers January-end of September 2020, and reflects how many people come into a CareerForce location over the course of a year and what services they are receiving, including virtual workshops. Overall number served is down slightly from the year before but still not bad considering CareerForce was closed to in person services for most of the year. A lower number of individuals came in for face-to-face services, and in-person workshops were paused. In a normal year, those receiving unemployment benefits are required to attend an in-person workshop. We get a huge number of program enrollments from those workshops. Since we are closed, and those workshops have not restarted, that is a big challenge for us. There are not currently any workshop requirements for unemployment recipients. MFIP participants have also had requirements to attend workshops waived. While a large number of people have attended virtual workshops, part of the population still isn't being served—particularly those without computer skills or high-speed internet.
- ISD 709 We Can Northland campaign and attendance campaign announcement by Anthony Bonds. The district has been concerned by a lack of attendance, students not checking in, not completing assignments, and failing courses. As a district they are adopting an attendance campaign to increase student engagement, and are reaching out to families at each school. The We Can Northland campaign was also created to encourage people to wear masks to help the community keep COVID numbers down to help get kids back into school, get parents back to work, and help students stay on track to graduate on time. If you are interested in posters for your business, let Elena know. Jacob Laurent ISD 709 Climate Coordinator, contact for attendance campaign, Jacob.laurent@isd709.org.

- The Digital Inclusion Initiative group continues to meet. The group was recognized statewide as a promising practice by the MN Association of Workforce Boards. The work of getting computers into the hands of those who need them continues, however a computer alone is not enough. Also focusing on teaching computer literacy skills. More affordable and higher quality broadband access is a topic the City of Duluth is interested in working on. LISC is working with PCs for People and Community Action Duluth to get businesses to recycle computers to be reused.
- Duluth Workforce Development has been the beneficiary of several new grants:
 - From the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation we received two grants. One grant will help us give away 100 free computers to job seekers/CareerForce clients and to have a digital navigator housed at CareerForce to help with digital literacy skills. The other grant will help us work with a consultant to train staff on trauma informed care. Due to the pandemic, all of our clients have experienced some level of trauma.
 - We were also awarded an Opioid National Emergency grant. We are one of four local workforce areas and together we got \$800,000 to help address the Opioid Crisis, partner with organizations who address opioid crisis, provide targeted employment counselors, and support the Clean and Safe Team.
- Carson Gorecki, DEED Labor Market Analyst provided a brief update on the impact of COVID on our workforce and economy to date.

Committee Updates:

Emerging Workforce Committee: Their November meeting focused on committee goals, purpose, and planning for the future. At the next meeting they are looking at the local and regional work plan.

Healthcare Committee: They drafted the mental health portion of the pathways documents and have those out for review with those who work heavily in those areas. They now have a healthcare committee action plan focusing on strategic goals. They're looking in to how they will be doing that as a group to cover K-12, post-secondary, and employers as one collaborative.

Governance Committee: They are working on recruiting and interviewing new members, the rating of the one stop operator, and having interviews and conversations with new members.

Construction Working Group: They have been talking a lot with the Building Strong Committees in the cities, and how to bring their model to Duluth in 2021. The committee discussed what challenges are on the horizon for the construction industry and what we can do about that.

Equity Committee: They are excited to get the evaluations and survey results from DEI Toolkit launch because that will indicate if participants are interested in continuing conversations. They visited the Human Rights Commission, and will be attending the upcoming African Heritage, Disabilities, and Indigenous Commission meetings to update them about what Workforce Development and CareerForce have been doing, but also to ask a couple of strategic input questions for the strategic plan.

Executive Committee: Their last meeting covered the new board members who have joined us today. The MN Association of Workforce Boards legislative priorities for 2021 were discussed and how we feel our priorities synch with that. They worked on the RFP process for One Stop Operators and how they will get the ball rolling on the local and region plan. They have a tentative timeline for public input.

- **Legislative Engagement:** This is probably the most important year we've had in a while to get in front of state legislators and congressional delegation because workforce development is going to be front and center in any conversations about economic recovery. Does anyone on the board have some level of expertise or interest in legislative engagement? As president of the City Council, Renee Van Nett will be meeting with Congressman Stauber and will discuss workforce development where appropriate. Elena will follow up with Renee and will provide a one-page info sheet with general info.

Local/Regional Plan Discussion

We started the process last year, but have not finished due to the pandemic and it is time to pick it back up again. This is our strategic plan that governs how we will use federal and state workforce dollars. It also applies to how we will use MFIP employment services DHS funding. How will we use those dollars to meet the needs of employers and job seekers in our community? There is a lot of questions we need to answer. We will look at labor market data and gather input from stakeholders. A draft of the plan should be ready to review by March 1 before posting to public on March 15. Public comment is closed on April 15. The final draft should be to DEED by April 30. Sections are divided among committees.

What are the greatest challenges faced by employers in the community right now?

- COVID spread, keeping employees safe.
- Lack of workers trained in specific skills needed.
- Lack of work in general.
- Finance, budget, loss of income.
- Workers leaving the labor force, distance learning parent needs.
- Onboarding, training new employers, lack of over the shoulder coaching and training.
- Unpredictability.
- Competition with big box like Amazon, worse during pandemic, hard to compete with other companies in large cities now that many jobs have become remote.
- Hard to think strategically when you're so focused on putting out fires day to day.
- Hard to attract diverse employees in virtual work environment.
- Remote working, flex time, working from home. Pandemic is accelerating new ways of working/doing business. Both good and challenging.
- People being left behind.

From the perspective of employers in our community, what is CareerForce in Duluth doing well?

- Attempting to find new ways to connect with the community, such as drive through job fair.
- Pivoting dramatically on how services are delivered.
- Trying to address barrier issues like digital access.
- Providing services in new innovative ways. Getting more involved in the community.

What could we be doing better?

- More ways of spreading retraining opportunities that can be accessed while home with children.
- Become more visible in the community. Still a lot of businesses and job seekers that don't utilize.
- Keep working to reach the most disconnected and disadvantaged workers.
- Support employer needs.
- Promoting resources like MJSP and JTIP.
- More directly connect jobseekers to jobs, less "hoping" more "actual connecting".
- Actually "moving the needle" on equity and inclusion.
- Involving more businesses outside of those on the board.
- Allocate more resources (additional staff) to employer engagement.

How can we better engage employers in our local and regional workforce development system?

- Build awareness of resources.
- Dedicated employer specialist at the workforce center. There isn't one in Duluth.
- Building ownership through participation in regional/local planning process.
- Need additional staff to engage employers. Do you survey employers across the region to determine if you can match unmet needs?
- Social media outlets to push specific messages.
- Build awareness of resources.
- Continue to have events in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce or with industry groups.
- More industry survey work?
- Having the healthcare and construction committees is great. Add more industry focused committee work.

What should be the workforce board's strategic focus over the next three years?

- Continuing to work on sector initiatives in healthcare and construction.
- Educating the employers on shifting demographics and how the labor force is going to change moving forward.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion.
- Employer relationships to help better connect job seekers with employers.
- Particularly underrepresented populations.
- Manufacturing career pathway program.
- Digital literacy/digital navigation.
- Transportation and shipping sector, need for CDL operatives.
- Retaining students in the region.
- Career pathways tied to the business/professional services category.
- Pathways for those who don't have college degrees. Degree completion.
- Increasing wages.

How can Duluth and NE MN workforce system better serve small businesses?

- Economic recovery after the pandemic.

- Connect them to funding opportunities.
- Small business day? Free classes?
- Work with Northland SBDC to promote entrepreneurship as an option and to see what services we offer that could be valuable to them.
- Workshops to address HR issues that impact them but are hard to understand.
- Come up with ways to engage and get feedback that are not burdensome on the businesses themselves.
- Focused work to support BIPOC businesses.
- Shared intern cohorts.
- Work more closely with PED.
- Launch MN?
- Business plan development oversight and support—budget/finance planning help.
- Have events specifically for employers under 50 employees.
- Continue development of informational tool kits like the equity document.
- Come up with ways to engage and get feedback that are not burdensome on the businesses themselves.
- Incubator for minority-owned business owners.
- More CLIMB.
- Training for small businesses as they transition from sole proprietor to having employees—legalities, cost benefit.

What's the need that we can uniquely fill?

- Know how to appropriately refer-better understanding of who is providing what entrepreneur services, and who to ask what questions.
- Investigate-what business resources/services are available, where are the gaps that workforce development can uniquely fill.
- Deeper integration of workforce into SBDC—make sure businesses they work with are being referred to our services at the right time.
- Partnership with Chamber-every time a new member comes on, meet with workforce development as part of onboarding.
- All of this could be someone's full time job.
- Resource guides for employers as they grow.
- Networking amongst small businesses/organizations.

Meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Next meeting is Monday, March 15, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.