

**Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County**

Equity Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 22, 2024.

3:00 – 4:00pm

Zoom Video Conference

**Present:**

Mohamed Alfash  
Jonathan Banks  
Becky Degendorfer  
Yolanda McIntosh  
Lauren Hunter-Reynolds  
Mary Russell  
Tanya Velishek

**Absent:**

Michelle Belitz-EA  
Karen Gerdin  
Aalayha Traub  
Tracy Wilson-EA

**Staff/Guests:**

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions  
Mariann Macalus, Workforce Solutions  
Rebecca Milbrandt, Workforce Solutions

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**Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement**

Becker called the meeting to order at 3:02pm and read the land acknowledgement aloud. All in attendance introduced themselves.

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**Approve July Minutes**

**Motion (Russell/Hunter-Reynolds) to approve the July 17, 2023, minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by chat vote.**

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**Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement**

Becker reviewed the Conflict of Interest Policy and reminded everyone that any WIB or committee member who has a conflict of interest should abstain from discussion and voting. The policy is reviewed by every committee and the WIB each year. In the past, committee members have been asked to sign an acknowledgement form, but the acknowledgement process is being simplified this year to instead ask members to read the policy and acknowledge their responsibility in abstaining as necessary.

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**Committee Work Plan/Project Updates**

Becker and Milbrandt provided updates on the following:

*Inclusive Workplaces Cohort:* Applications for the third cohort are open with a submission deadline of January 31. The WIB is partnering with ADR Consulting Group as facilitator this year. The cohort will meet monthly over nine months beginning in March, with the exception of July. Sessions will be in person at the Wilder Foundation with the exception of June and August which will be virtual. Banks, Russell and Degendorfer offered to be on the application review team. Anyone else interested in reviewing should contact Milbrandt. Members are also asked to share the opportunity to apply with others in their network.

*Inclusive Employer Toolkit:* The toolkit is now online and can be downloaded. Any feedback is welcome especially ideas for channels to share the tool. The next phase is to host Lunch & Learn events featuring each section of the toolkit around each of the phases of an employee's lifecycle.

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**Director's Updates**

Becker shared the following:

*Inclusive Hiring Connections Summit:* The Summit will be held January 24, 8:30am-1pm in the Metro Square Conference Center. It is an opportunity for employers to learn about, connect to, and access workforce tools and resources to increase diversity and inclusiveness in their organizations. Thank you to the committee and WIB members who have offered to help in a variety of ways. The plan is to build upon this for next year.

*Board Training:* There are funds to support training opportunities to deepen individual and collective understanding around diversity and to invest in the development and learning of the WIB members. There was discussion about whether to pursue this, the impact on the way the WIB functions, the opportunity that this type of idea presents and ways to incorporate the practices in the way the WIB functions as well as assessment of learning needs. A survey will go out to all members to determine if there is enough interest.

*Cannabis Workforce Update:* The legislation is creating the framework for adult-use cannabis in Minnesota and establishing a new Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). OCM will regulate cannabis and issue licenses and develop regulations outlining how and when businesses can participate in the industry. OCM is also looking at the expungement of low-level cannabis convictions and creating a Cannabis Expungement Board and social equity components. Saint Paul College has created a new short-term cannabis training program. The county worked with the college in conducting a community conversation resulting in ideas on program components to provide holistic support to students, reaching communities that have been impacted and helping students know if cannabis is a good career choice. Dr. Mohamed did a pre-study on this topic which he'll share with the committee. Workforce development could set up some best practices for training. There will be more to come once DEED releases the grant.

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### **Action Plan Update and 2024 Work Plan**

Becker provided an action plan update on what this committee has been doing and what still needs to be accomplished.

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### **Committee Chair Election**

Becker shared that Hunter-Reynolds has agreed to be the Chair of this committee. Hunter-Reynolds provided a brief background of her work experience and her current role at UnitedHealth Group.

**Motion (Degendorfer/Russell) to elect Hunter-Reynolds as Chair of this Committee. Motion carried unanimously by chat vote.**

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### **Other**

Becker shared:

- Velishek and her team are helping with Right Track to develop more opportunities for students to do internships in the health sciences.
- John O'Phelan, a Workforce Solutions staff person, received the Ally of the Year Award through Associated General Contractors of Minnesota and McIntosh received the National DEI Award.

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### **Adjourn**

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 18, 2023, 3:00-4:00pm. via Zoom