

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Workforce Recovery Workshop
April 22, 2020, 7:30-8:30am
Zoom Video Conference

Committee Members Present

Butch Howard
Chad Kulas
Karin McCabe
Jim McDonough
Sean Mullan
Paul Nikstad
Mary Russell
Chris Tolbert
Ramona Wilson

Members Absent

Staff/Guests Present

Ling Becker, Ramsey County

Call to Order

Chair Karin McCabe called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

COVID-19 Program Impact Update

Program Updates: Becker provided an update on the service delivery changes.

- Staff are relying on video conferencing to connect with clients.
- Companies that are hiring are being highlighted.
- Virtual job fairs and workshops are taking place.
- DOL sent guidance on an emergency payout for youth work experiences. Some youth have retained employment but most experiences have ended.
- The EMS and CNA cohorts are finishing.
- The Local and Regional Plans have been postponed until April 2021 and will reference COVID.

Workforce Impacts Race/Disability Data and Information: There is a racial justice paradox where people of color are most likely to lose their jobs but also be the ones to keep working and risk contact. She shared Ramsey County disparity data for education, crime, disabilities, and income. The March unemployment rate was highest for Blacks and Latinx. McCabe highlighted the need to get people of color into career paths, not just a job. There could be opportunities to bring people back into the workforce at a higher level during the COVID era. Wilson expressed the need for employers to be more inclusive. Kulas shared information about the Economic First Responders program in Saint Paul. Russell mentioned past work done by the WIB around identifying specific livable wage jobs within the targeted sectors.

Technology Access: Becker explained that the pandemic is elevating technology gaps in both access and digital literacy. There could be an opportunity for the WIB to support efforts to get laptops, internet and training for people without technology access. McDonough suggested finding out what other groups are already working on this and identify potential partners. Kulas and Russell agreed to help with this effort. Russell suggested using a large venue to offer socially distanced training.

National Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG)

Disaster Recovery: Becker is working on the disaster recovery part of this grant. The grant would provide funding for Workforce Solutions to identify and pay dislocated workers to work providing humanitarian assistance. Market wages can be paid.

DEED Waivers

Becker is working on several programmatic waivers around cost categories, grant timelines, performance measures, training, and program flexibility. McDonough reported that the County is looking at several waivers and the impacts they have on the community. There will be discussions with the state about keeping them in place longer to measure success and prove that things can be done better. Becker would like to lobby for a change in the way MFIP funding is allocated.

Career Pathway Training

Becker asked for volunteers to help identify short, near-term and longer-term trainings in the following sectors. Follow up phone calls will be scheduled with:

- Healthcare - Russell
- Manufacturing - Dillon Donnelly and another contact at the MN Precision Manufacturing Assn.
- IT - Need to identify
- Construction - Wilson and McCabe
- Hospitality/Retail - Howard

Other

Mullan reported that Gerdau plans to idle the Saint Paul mill in June after 45 years. This will impact over 250 employees and will be a loss of revenue for the city.

Russell gave a shout out to the Ramsey County Open for Business group, the City of Saint Paul and City/County Credit Union for helping the daycare center she works with get a PPP loan.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 am.

Next meetings: Executive Committee meeting - May 27, 2020, 7:30-9:00am.
Workforce Recovery Workshop – June 24, 2020, 7:30-8:30am.