

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Workforce Recovery Workshop
October 28, 2020, 7:30-8:30am
Zoom Video Conference

Committee Members Present

Karin McCabe
Chad Kulas
Jim McDonough
Paul Nikstad
Elisa Rasmussen
Mary Russell
Chris Tolbert
Ramona Wilson

Members Absent

Sean Mullan-EA

Staff/Guests Present

Ling Becker, Ramsey County

Call to Order

Chair Chad Kulas called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

2021 WIB and Committee Meeting Cadence

Becker provided a preview of the proposed 2021 WIB and committee meeting schedule. She is proposing the committees meet during the same week (except the Youth Committee). She would also like to pull the “Partnership” component out of the Equity Committee and put it with the Communications and Outreach Committee. Becker is also recommending the WIB add a Technology Ad Hoc Committee for a year. Tony Lusiba is willing to serve as chair. There was agreement on the shift of the Partnership work, although McCabe would like more intentionality on business partnerships. Becker agreed that more services to the business community are needed. She plans to talk to county leadership about funding for those efforts because Workforce Solutions’ (WFS) funding is so closely tied to grants. Becker would like to place the new members on committees based on their skills and interests.

Director Update

Becker shared unemployment data for September which shows that youth, those with less education and BIPOC individuals continue to be unemployed at much higher rates. She feels data should be a big part of the WIB’s work over the next few months. Russell suggested the Communications and Outreach Committee help share data with employers and others in the community. Becker would like to do a town hall event with businesses or residents about labor market impacts. She also reported on the county’s targeted outreach efforts. Over 17,000 postcards were sent to residents who are behind on their property taxes or have been identified as low income to let them know about financial assistance and workforce programming. Radio ads are also being used to get the word out. McCabe suggested doing more outreach through school counselors. Tolbert would like social media ready information with links that can be shared out. Becker explained that Emergency Assistance is available to people who have exhausted other forms of assistance.

CARES Act Funding: Becker reported on some funding pivots, including an expansion of the TechPak program, the creation of student support kits (hotspots, gift cards and bus cards to encourage students to stay enrolled in college), launch of the Resiliency Fund (grants for workforce organizations – Ling will send a link to a list of workforce partners), DEED jobseeker kits (while the CareerForce Centers remain closed), and Tech4Future Paks (TechPaks for young BIPOC people aged 18-24).

Partnership Updates: Becker provided a brief update on inter-county efforts, including a temporary worker program, work with CBOs, and two new training programs in Coding and CNA.

Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan: The Plan will be reviewed by the County Board before a summit with elected officials in January and hopefully approved in March. This work will impact the WIB's strategic efforts going forward. Becker will be working with the committee chairs to develop a 6-9 month action plan to get through the crisis and lead into a more strategic effort tied to the Inclusion Plan.

H1B Grant/NEG Grant: Becker shared plans to partner with the cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis on a federal H1B Grant to leverage the MSPTechHire program to reach deeper into the BIPOC community. Minnesota is also part of a National Emergency Grant (NEG) which provides funds to help recover from the crisis. More information should be coming from DEED soon.

Real Time Talent Reports: Becker shared a snapshot report on Tech jobs in Ramsey County. These reports can be run for any industry. She would like to develop a system for sharing the information out to the community.

Regional Virtual Services: WFS is part of a regional virtual platform with other Workforce Development Areas in the metro area. The first event is on November 9, during National Apprentice Week, with future events happening at least monthly. The county will be doing a weeklong Level Up event at the end of the year to help transition youth from CARES funded programs and a County Job Seeker event in December.

Customer Service Survey: A customer service survey is being planned to go out to all WFS customers and vendors in January. Russell is assisting with this work. Becker hopes surveys will go out three times per year. This will also be an opportunity to engage MFIP families on ways to help them stay focused.

Recovery Tactics

Becker will come back at the next meeting with a 6-9 month work plan. Components of Becker's work include holding 1:1 meeting with WIB members annually, expanding the Admin role and realigning the committees. She outlined several strategies for the WIB to pursue. She emphasized the need to support the black creative community as a way to harness entrepreneurship and build wealth. She will work with the committee chairs on the plan.

Other

Becker explained that more administrative support for the WIB is needed. She proposed hiring a planner level position that would be split between WFS and the WIB. Using this model, the WIB's financial obligation won't increase but there will have someone able to follow up on work coming out of the committees.

The Job Connect site is being used by businesses. The next step is to work with the chambers to create an advisory committee.

Becker will send out a video on Local Linkz, a website that uses a textbot through Facebook Messenger to engage young adults. It will be discussed more at the next meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 am.

Next meetings:

Executive Committee Meeting – Wednesday, November 18, 7:30-9:00am

Executive Committee Workforce Recovery Taskforce –Wednesday, December 23, 7:30-8:30