



**Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County**  
Joint Business Services and Integration Committee Meeting Minutes  
March 19, 2018  
3:00-4:30 pm

**Present:**

Kristin Guild  
Chris Kondo  
Kate Probert  
Mary Russell  
Ramona Wilson

**Absent:**

Toni Carter-EA  
Don Mullin  
Tracy Wilson  
Anivuin Xiong

**Staff/Guests:**

Karyn Berg, Ramsey County  
Matt Hill, Ramsey County  
Becky Milbrandt, WIB Staff  
Elena Gaarden, Nexus  
Nikoli Shongwe, Nexus

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Michael Fondungallah  
Butch Howard  
Chad Kulas

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Jennifer Roettger-EA

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**Call to Order**

Integration Committee Chair Mary Russell called the joint meeting to order at 3:05 pm. All those in attendance introduced themselves.

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**Approve Meeting Minutes**

**Motion (Kondo/Wilson) to approve minutes from the January 8, 2018 Integration Committee meeting as presented. Motion carried.**

**Motion (Kulas/Howard) to approve minutes from the November 2, 2017 Business Services Committee meeting as presented. Motion carried.**

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**Nexus Presentation**

Gaarden explained that Nexus Community Partners is an intermediary working to build stronger and more engaged communities using a community wealth building framework, focused on local and broad-based ownership. She provided statistics on local businesses owned by baby boomers, noting that this generation owns nearly half of all privately-held businesses in the Twin Cities. As these business owners retire, many of their companies are at risk for closure due to lack of succession planning. While alarming, Gaarden indicated that this presents opportunities for communities of color to purchase businesses through worker cooperatives where employees use future profits to finance the purchase of shares in the company. Gaarden provided several examples of how this model is being successfully implemented in other areas, such as New York and Wisconsin. Benefits of worker cooperatives include:

- Addresses income and wealth gaps
- Better pay and benefits
- Gives workers a voice in key decisions
- Businesses have lower turnover, higher productivity, and improved longevity
- Higher civic engagement and voting levels
- Can act as a catalyst for other businesses in the community
- Allows people who would normally not be able to afford it access to own a business

There was discussion about the details of this model. Gaarden stated that the County Board and other local governmental bodies are interested in worker cooperatives. She asked the WIB to raise awareness about this model and consider partnering with Nexus to identify a business that could be assessed for potential conversion. Referrals should be sent to Gaarden.

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## **Updates**

*2-Gen Network:* Probert reported that Ramsey County was selected as one of four pilot sites. The County's program, called The People's Fellowship, in partnership with the Promise Neighborhood and NdCAD, will serve 25 families (53 children) who have been on MFIP for 36-48 months. The program will provide families with \$10,000 in additional household income through paid self-determined work experiences, literacy training, and wraparound services. Parents will participate in a nine-week Parent Power program that will transition into work experiences with employers. The outcomes will be looked at to see if this system shift decreases dependency on public assistance. The recruitment/application process is currently underway and the first cohort will start in May.

*Resilient Communities:* Probert explained that, if funded, Ramsey County will hire graduate level students from the U of M to research the transportation needs of workers and businesses. From this research, recommendations on a long-term action plan for addressing transportation barriers will be developed. It was noted that Commissioner Huffman is involved in this effort.

*Pathways to Prosperity:* Probert reported that WFS applied for another round of P2P funding. If funded, WFS plans to drill deeper into the targeted sectors and continue helping participants get the training needed to secure basic, entry level positions. Probert explained that there is a lot of competition for these funds. Although there was not time this round, applying collectively as a region was encouraged. This will be considered on future initiatives.

*TANF Youth Innovation Grant:* A summary containing program outcomes, demographics and budget information was reviewed. Probert reported that the program connected 18 youth and young parents to work experiences, career action plan development and support services.

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## **WIB Targeted Industry Sectors/Occupations**

Russell stated that the Integration Committee is charged with analyzing labor market data on a regular basis. At the last meeting, the committee identified two sectors that are uniquely important to Ramsey County; hospitality and educational services. There was discussion about what energy the WIB should put into these areas. Howard provided information about the competitive wages and career opportunities available at the airport and throughout the hospitality industry. There was agreement that the perception of the food service industry only providing low paying jobs is no longer true. More work is needed to raise awareness about the variety of career opportunities, especially among new immigrants and young people. Suggestions for outreach included advertising on message boards along the highway and working more closely with schools/colleges. Probert stated that training for clients interested in bartending and other cooking classes was not always approved in the past but could be in the future.

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## **Other**

No discussion.

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## **Adjourn**

Upon completion of the agenda, Russell adjourned the meeting at 4:37 pm.