

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Partnership & Equity Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 1, 2020, 3:00 – 4:30pm

Present:

Michelle Belitz
Becky Degendorfer
Elena Gaarder
Kristin Guild
Cindy Larson
Tony Lusiba
Elisa Rasmussen
Ramona Wilson

Absent:

Tracy Wilson

Staff/Guests:

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions
Karin McCabe, WIB Chair

Call to Order

Chair Ramona Wilson called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

Approve May Minutes

Motion (McCabe/Larson) to approve the May 4, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Committee Member Updates

Each committee member was given the opportunity to share about their experiences in surrounding the death of George Floyd and the unrest in our community over the weekend. Themes from the discussion:

- Tough conversations are starting to open up where they normally would not have
- Black and brown communities are devastated
- White communities are reacting now that this is impacting them. Talking about racial equity is more critical now than ever
- This is an experience that changes people forever
- Pick up the phone and reach out to people of color. Genuine communication needs to happen
- Sadness for small businesses that have been devastated
- Staff is struggling. We all have a role
- Ramsey is the most diverse county in MN. Disparities are getting worse. We are part of the broken system
- It's important for us to be vulnerable. It helps us understand the emotions we are sharing
- Feeling of helplessness, limited power and influence
- Changes start with ourselves and expands to others in our area of influence
- The impact of reaching out to black friends or co-workers is important

Partnership Updates

Becker reported that the EMS Academy cohort completed their training and are now supporting Saint Paul Fire. Some graduates have described this opportunity as life changing. Recruiting is underway for a CNA cohort starting on June 8 in partnership with Saint Paul College. The training will consist of basic customer service, healthcare core curriculum and then two weeks of CNA training.

Understanding Disparity Data

CARES Update: Becker shared several slides containing unemployment statistics. Most impacted across the state and in Ramsey County are people of color, women, young people and people with less education. The most vulnerable jobs are in accommodations/food service, healthcare, retail, manufacturing and construction. Key goals during COVID are to not allow the disparities gap to widen,

promote short term training, emphasize careers rather than jobs, and understand needed remedies through the relief, restart, recover, reimagine phases. The restart and recovery phases will likely be delayed in the Midway and Lake Street areas. Becker shared information on the use and restrictions of the CARES funding. Key action areas include:

- Employment services access (in person and virtual)
- Youth and young adult gap services
- Community-based services focusing on key impacted populations
- Digital equity
- Increasing digital training opportunities (access and support)
- Community driven innovation

The first RFQ for Learn Earn Lead, a youth employment initiative, was released last week. The release of other RFQs were scheduled for this week but have been delayed to allow the community to heal. Becker would like to see most of the \$15M get out into the community. All of the initiatives focus on groups most impacted by the pandemic. The outreach plan includes connecting with over 200 organizations and a website containing details for submitting quotes. CARES funds have been divided into several buckets:

- Increasing workforce services in the community (libraries, community organizations, etc.), \$3M
- Digital literacy (tech packs), \$750,000
- Youth and young adult, \$1M each
- Adult/Justice Involved, \$2M
- Community innovation fund \$2M

Strategic Funding

With the large influx of CARES funding, Becker suggested the WIB's strategic priorities not be used for workforce initiatives but could be used on diversity education for businesses and/or a partnership with the chambers on a COVID response project.

Employer Equity Training: There was discussion about the WIB's role in connecting businesses to trainings that go beyond basic diversity/inclusion and resources to address internal policies, hiring practices, accountability and unconscious bias. It was decided that a facilitated session for WIB members should take place first to ensure we are ready to lead before rolling out resources to the business community. A small group of committee members will meet in the next couple of weeks to develop a proposal to bring to the Executive Committee. Gaarder and others will share information about trainers that do this work. A list of trainers could be posted on the WIB website as a resource for businesses. McCabe suggested the WIB offer scholarships to businesses who want to offer training but can't afford it. She would also like to see mental health offerings for our workforce partners. These would be funded out of partner event funding rather than WIB strategic priority funds.

Employer COVID-19 Response Project: Becker suggested using some of the WIB's strategic funds to reach out to business to learn what skills and training they need to keep their employees as they adapt to a post-COVID work model. A facilitator could be hired to organize conversations with businesses through partnerships with the chambers. Rasmussen agreed to work with Becker, Chad Kulas and Shannon Watson on this effort.

Committee Dashboard Review

Becker will update the dashboard based on today's discussion.

Other

No other items were discussed.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, Wilson adjourned the meeting at 4:29 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, September 14, 3:00-4:30pm.