

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

**Present:**

Michelle Belitz  
Cindy Larson  
Tony Lusiba  
Elisa Rasmussen  
Ramona Wilson  
Tracy Wilson

**Absent:**

Elena Gaarder-EA  
Kristin Guild

**Staff/Guests:**

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions  
Karin McCabe, WIB Chair

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**Call to Order**

Chair Ramona Wilson called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

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**Approve January Minutes**

**Motion (Larson/T. Wilson) to approve the March 2, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.**

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**Partnership Updates**

Workforce Solutions is finishing out the EMS Academy in partnership with the City of Saint Paul and the CNA cohort with CLUES via virtual training. Plans are to launch additional CNA cohorts before June. Becker also reported that Ramsey and Hennepin Counties received a direct CARES Act allocation of \$96 million. The funds are being prioritized into financial assistance, small business assistance and workforce. These dollars are more flexible but they have to be spent on COVID response, they can't supplant existing programs and they must be spent by the end of December. Becker would like to use the CARES money strategically to build capacity in the community. Tech equity and gap services for youth are two priority areas for using these funds. Temporary Career Labs and virtual career coaching will also be needed to support job seekers and connect them to programs.

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**Understanding Disparity Data**

Becker shared COVID related unemployment data. The retail/hospitality industry has been significantly impacted, causing disproportionate job losses and economic hardships for people of color, women, younger people and those already considered low income. Due to the favorable Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, the number of people seeking employment and training services is fairly low but will increase as benefits run out. The true impact may not be felt until November or December. The future of work and the impact of automation on jobs post-COVID will require more digital skills. People of color are already behind in digital literacy than their white counterparts and are less likely to have devices and internet access.

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**Inclusive Hiring Work Plan Projects**

*Inclusive Hiring Practices – WIB Survey Results:* Due to the COVID crisis, the committee decided to pause on the inclusive hiring practices work temporarily and pivot their focus to two primary areas that will help people get back to work: tech equity and connecting young people to work experiences. The committee discussed taking on several possible actions including:

- offering a series of training events (in person or virtual) and video tours for youth. Rasmussen offered to reach out to the Right Track coordinator to learn about their plans. A survey of students whose Right Track experiences were cancelled could also be done to find out what training topics they feel are needed. One suggestion was to provide tips on virtual and/or phone interviewing.

- offering a virtual work experience or business mentorship for a limited number of youth with a stipend or incentive attached. Also consider recruiting tech savvy youth to help small businesses increase their online strategies. Lusiba will look into some virtual training platforms.
- creating a landing page with an inventory of spaces that offer free computer use.
- creating a one-sheeter outlining what is happening in our community around race and how the WIB can have an impact. Becker and Belitz will create a draft.
- partner with other organizations to support and expand their reach to advance tech equity. This includes access to devices and internet service. McCabe and Lusiba will draft a document outlining the problem and develop a list of ways the WIB can help with solutions.

*New Ramsey County Job Connect:* No discussion.

*Employer Focus Groups/Outreach:* No discussion.

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### **Committee Dashboard Review**

A review of the dashboard resulted in the following updates:

- pause on the scan of inclusive hiring practices
- continue elevating disparity data, especially around COVID, and consider sharing it out
- add - connection to youth services this summer
- add - develop strategies to reduce the tech equity gap

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### **Other**

The committee will add a meeting on June 1.

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### **Adjourn**

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

**Next meeting:** Monday, June 1, 3:00-4:30pm via Zoom.