

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Partnership & Equity Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 2, 2020, 3:00 – 4:30pm

Present:

Mohamed Alfash
Michelle Belitz
Becky Degendorfer
Kristin Guild
Lauren Hunter
Cindy Larson
Tony Lusiba
Karin McCabe
Elisa Rasmussen

Absent:

Ramona Wilson
Tracy Wilson

Staff/Guests:

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions
Yolanda Burckhardt, U of M Student
Emma Woo, U of M Student
Mike Richardson, City of Saint Paul

Call to Order

Chair Elisa Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Introduction of U of M Students – Resilient Communities Project

Guild introduced Woo and Burckhardt, University of Minnesota students working on a project to gain a better understanding of the challenges and barriers job seekers are having as a result of the pandemic, especially BIPOC job seekers. For this project, the students will be interviewing job seekers. They agreed to bring their findings back to this committee at the end of their study.

Approve September Minutes

Motion (Lusiba/McCabe) to approve the September 14, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.
Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Director's Updates

CARES Efforts:

- Becker shared updated information on the disproportionate unemployment impacts on young people, those with less education and the BIPOC community. 63% of Blacks who were part of the labor force in 2019 have filed for unemployment. Most of these lost jobs are in the hospitality and retail sectors. There is an unusual paradox right now of high unemployment and yet not many people are looking for work. Reasons for this include the need to care for family members and homeschool children and for fear of increased infection risk.
- Next week, the county will be sending out 17,000 postcards promoting county workforce and financial assistance services. The cards will be mailed to people who are still owing 2020 property taxes and to renters in certain census blocks. The cards will also be distributed at food distribution sites and schools. Targeted ads are being run on culturally specific radio stations, streaming platforms and social media. Guild stated that the city is evaluating whether/what types of job support services could be offered at a new day services center along West 7th Street.
- A special allocation of TechPaks has been targeted toward young people ages 18-24. The refurbished computers are being distributed through community organizations to get them to COVID impacted youth. Although a navigator isn't connected to these TechPaks, recipients will get support through the community organizations and receive a flash drive with job search resources.
- Student Support Kits are being given to students at Metro State, Century College and Saint Paul College to encourage them to stay enrolled in school. The 1,500 kits include bookstore gift cards, bus or gas cards, headphones, etc.

- Guild suggested some of CDBG funds that have a longer time horizon could be used to continue some of these services. Becker plans to bring a CARES evaluation report back to this group after the funding ends in December.
- Alfash invited members of this committee and the WIB to attend a labor market information discussion the Racial Equity Action Team is having on November 19. He will send the details to Becker.
- The county is hosting a community conversation with youth on December 1. This is the type of event the WIB could co-sponsor.

2021 Committee Restructuring and Schedule: Becker explained that county is still working on the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan. It is hoped that it will be approved in March. Until then, Becker is proposing the WIB develop a 6-9-month action plan. It includes hiring a planner to staff the WIB as part of their work, adjusting the meeting schedule, and realigning some of the committees, including adding a Tech Ad Hoc Committee and shifting this committee to be the Equity Committee. The focus for this group will primarily be on developing the toolkit. The action plan will have three primary elements: metrics/data, opportunities for impact and partnerships.

Inclusive Employer Effort: This was covered as part of the toolkit discussion.

Inclusive Employer Tool Kit Updates and Next Steps

The goal of the toolkit is to support more inclusive hiring and retention efforts, especially for small and mid-sized businesses. It should align with other initiatives that are happening, such as the I-WE program and DEEDs series on hidden bias. Becker will forward the email from DEED with information on how to subscribe for more information. The committee reviewed the toolkit elements: Hiring, Metrics and Retention. There was discussion about each element and the following suggestions/steps were made:

- Add a list of resources on each element
- Hunter will provide information on DHS's anti-racist framework, scoring model, hiring manager guide and job posting sites.
- Use the SMART framework for measurement.
- Determine ways to measure whether a business is doing a good job with inclusive hiring. The OFCCP has metrics they use to assess federal contractors. Karin will send that information to Ling.
- See if the Saint Paul Chamber has done business surveys that include inclusive hiring questions. Elisa and Karin will ask within their organizations to see if these types of surveys/questions have been asked.
- DHS has identified the metrics they want to track. Hunter will send the list to Becker.
- MNSCU, large employers, non-profits and trade organizations could also be sources of information.
- Small organizations need the metrics but also a method that's easy to follow because they don't have the HR resources to do it for them.
- Becker will work with Lusiba, Alfash and Belitz to set up a meeting on the metrics.
- Becker and Rasmussen will work on the retention piece. DEED is doing listening session that have been successful. The chambers also have some good data on retention.
- A one-pager on the business case for equity and inclusion targeted to small and mid-sized businesses could be developed. It could include the cost of turnover and the value of better ideas and dynamic teams. Guild will do some research on these topics. We need to capture the changing demographics of the labor market.
- The elements of the toolkit fit nicely into the elements of the action plan (data, action and partnerships).

Committee Dashboard Review and Reset

Becker and Rasmussen will work together to reset the dashboard.

Other

Becker shared some information about a new county program being run through Workforce Solutions to get program participants hired into the county as temps.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 4:21 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, January 11, 2021 3:00-4:30pm.