

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2019

3:00-4:30 pm

Present:

Sean Mullan
Sheila Olson
Shannon Watson

Absent:

Ryan Hauschild
James McClean
Greg Mellas

Staff/Guests:

Ling Becker, Ramsey County
Anne Kilzer, MAWB
Becky Milbrandt, WIB Staff
Kate Probert, Ramsey County

Call to Order

Chair Sean Mullan called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

Approve February Minutes

Motion (Olson/Watson) to approve the February 14, 2019 Policy Committee meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Legislative Update

Kilzer provided federal and state legislative updates. She distributed several handouts.

Federal: The first handout compared the FY2019 Budget, FY2020 Trump Budget proposal, WIOA authorized levels (funding guidelines recommended when WIOA was passed in 2014), and FY2020 House Budget. Overall, the funding levels proposed by the House are slightly higher than the President's proposal but there were no substantial differences since employment and training budgets are generally bipartisan. The Senate's proposal has not come out yet but Kilzer anticipates that it will likely fall between the President and the House proposals. The federal budget must be in place by October. If not, there will have to be a continuing resolution or a government shutdown.

State: Kilzer stated that the Workforce Development Fund (WDF) is funded by a fee paid by employers. She provided a graphic showing what happened with those funds in 2018-2019. In the past, all the money collected from employers was allocated to the State Dislocated Worker (DW) Program. Recently, the legislature has been directly appropriating some WDF money to select organizations/programs and the balance goes to fund the DW Program. Fifty percent of the DW money goes to the local Workforce Development Areas, 11 percent goes to a group of community-based organizations, and DEED keeps the remainder for mass layoffs. Kilzer explained that every dollar the legislature spends out of the WDF is a 50 percent cut to the local areas. Some of the concerns expressed by the MN Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) are lack of assurance that there will be enough DW funding to serve laid off people if/when there is a downturn in the economy and the direct appropriations may be duplicative to what the local areas are doing, may not be aligned with the identified high priority sectors, and are not based on a competitive process. Mullan suggested the WIB advocate for connecting these appropriations to the key sectors and/or alignment with the Regional or Local Plans. Kilzer stated that two years ago, there was an unsuccessful legislative initiative that would have pushed all the WDFs down to the local boards and required them to give some of the money to community-based organizations. Mullan asked Kilzer to share the language from that initiative so this committee can look into it closer this fall. Kilzer indicated that the legislative chairs and the new DEED Commissioner are interested in revisiting the conversation on the initiative once the budget process is done. Kilzer also provided a handout comparing the State House, Senate and Governor's WDF budget proposals. Of note:

- Significant difference in the lists of grants/programs/organizations being funded.
- The House puts large sums of money in two funds that the DEED Commissioner has allocation authority over but doesn't fund the MN Youth Program. This creates uncertainty.

- None of the proposals comes close to the \$30 million target for DW funding.
- The WDF revenue projection is \$58 million which is high because businesses are doing well right now. This should mean more money for the DW program but the legislature is spending it on other things.
- Local areas can use WDF funds for incumbent worker training.
- CBOs are lobbying for funding. It is hard for legislators to say no.
- The session ends May 20.
- Rep. Mahoney supports preserving the WDF.

There was discussion about how the local areas can have more influence. Suggestions included:

- Have businesses lobby for using WDF money for incumbent worker training.
- Ask the legislature to make decisions based on data gathered through the required reporting.
- Also use the data to determine which training entities are successful in connecting people to employment upon completion. Develop recommendations for future funding using the information.
- Push for alignment with Local, Regional, and State Plans and WIOA – this needs to happen during a non-budget year. This committee will work on creating a recommendation.
- Encourage MAWB to host a convening of policy folks from WIBs across the state to collaborate around these issues, especially the business members. Work on a coordinated advocacy strategy.
- Employers know there is a need to fund the WDF, but they want it used for the right purposes and greater accountability. Get more employers talking about this.

Next Steps:

- Consider having a Policy Committee meeting this summer, if needed.
- Provide an update to the WIB's Executive Committee.
- Once MAWB's new executive director is in place, work with that person to collect past grant reporting data, analyze the data and use it as the basis for a discussion/recommendation.
- Work with MAWB to convene meetings with other WIB's policy committees. Unify the messages to strengthen the voice of business.
- Develop a stronger relationship with Rep. Mahoney – meet with him to express concerns over the direction of WDF usage and consider asking him to submit a request to the legislative audit commission review it. Establish the WIB as his first contact – be his resource.

WIB Day at the Capitol Recap and Next Step

Mullan provided a summary of the day. Everyone agreed that the visits were successful and all four legislators were engaged in the conversations. The next meetings should be earlier in the session and during the off season. Connecting in the interim is a great opportunity to build relationships and advocate for specific legislation. Becker suggested bringing disparity data into the WDF discussion to support Ramsey County's unique situation. She would also like to provide all legislators with a list of WIB member's names and affiliations. Kilzer recommended adding the member information to the WIB's letterhead. Olson suggested inviting legislators to a committee or full WIB meeting. The WIB's relationship with Jennifer O'Rourke, county lobbyist, should also be strengthened. The committee could invite her to attend some committee meetings and ask for her help with messaging on specific legislation. Kilzer stated that MAWB is also a resource for background information and talking points.

SNAP Update

Probert provided an overview and update on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Employment and Training (SNAP E&T). She explained that Minnesota officially changed SNAP to be a voluntary program, meaning that participation in the employment and training component is no longer mandatory. Probert explained several elements of the program:

- There is very little funding for training. Minnesota received \$1.6 million to distribute among 87 counties. Ramsey County's portion was \$148,000; \$6,500 of that is to be used for participant services and the rest goes to pay for staff that supports the 150-200 participants.
- The 50/50 match provides the potential to leverage non-federal resources to offset the cost of serving eligible participants who typically have low skills and high needs.
- Data tracking and accounting requirements are onerous. Initially there was a lot of confusion and conflicting information on the accounting; however, the state has been sending more information and has set up a support unit.
- SNAP E&T benefits can be extended for a longer time but it is now difficult to find participants.
- Outreach efforts are limited due to federal regulations prohibiting recruitment.
- Ramsey County is committed to the program and is working collaboratively with local community-based organizations.

Other

Becker announced that Dunn Yoshitani resigned as WIOA Manager effective last week.

Mullan encouraged all members to attend the June WIB strategic planning meeting. Becker plans to send a survey to gather input from those who cannot be present.

Becker encouraged members to share information about things that are happening within their organizations. She will share them with the full WIB to help increase connections among members.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 pm.