

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Youth Committee Meeting
May 21, 2020, 2:30-4:00pm

Members Present

Tom Aasheim
Jennifer Germain
Larry Gilbertson
Hyon Kim
Gaye Adams Massey
Camila Mercado Michelli
Robert Morse
Paul Nikstad

Members Absent

Karen Gerdin
Breanna Galuska-EA
Sheri Riemers-EA

Staff/Guests Present

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions
Kathy Kittel, St. Paul Public Schools
Rachael Molenaar, Workforce Solutions
CJ Stanton, Workforce Solutions

Call to Order

Chair Paul Nikstad called the meeting to order at 2:32 pm.

Approve March Youth Committee Minutes

Motion (Gilbertson/Kim) to approve the March 19, 2020 Youth Committee minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by roll call. Morse and Aasheim were not in attendance for this vote.

COVID-19 Response

Becker shared several slides containing unemployment statistics. Most impacted across Minnesota and in Ramsey County are people of color, women, those with less education, and young people. Over 40% of the state's unemployment applicants are under age 34. The most vulnerable jobs are in accommodations/food service, healthcare, retail, manufacturing and construction. Stanton explained that all youth counselors are working with participants virtually. Enrollments are down.

CARES Act Youth Funding

Becker reported that Ramsey County received \$96M in CARES funds which can only be used for pandemic response between March 27 and December 30, 2020. These funds cannot supplant any existing programming. COVID relief programs will be funded as follows:

- \$26M – financial assistance
- \$15M – small business assistance
- \$15M – workforce assistance

Becker plans to contract most of the funds out to the community. Informal Requests for Quotes will be released soon with the expectation of entering into 60-80 contracts. Training will be critical to getting people upskilled and ready for new careers. 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
- Virtual training opportunities (access and support)
- Community driven innovation

Organizations interested in requesting funds can contact Molenaar. Becker will send contact information on the small business assistance to Michelli.

Updates

Ramsey County Youth Works! Initiative: Molenaar explained that this group came together this year to do some community messaging and business engagement around youth employment. Since COVID, the environment has changed drastically but they are still working. A virtual Youth Voice Event in June will allow young people ages 16-24 to talk about how they have been impacted and how they can use their skills to give back to the community. Anyone interested in joining this group should send their information to Molenaar.

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

Outreach to Schools Program: Molenaar reported that the three interns had to stop working when the schools closed. She will provide a final report for the next meeting. One of the interns was scheduled to be at today's meeting but he is ill. She will ask him to attend the July meeting to share about his internship experience.

PY20 Local Youth Plan Budget: Molenaar explained that Workforce Solutions (WFS) received its PY20 WIOA Youth Budget. The allocation dropped for the second year in a row. The 3% budget cut necessitated a reduction in the total number served. WFS also received its MN Youth allocation from the state which is unchanged from last year. The total budget is \$764,223. Typically, 75% of WIOA Youth funds must be spent serving out of school youth. Through a state waiver, WFS can reduce that to 60% so that more funds can be used to serve homeless and foster care in-school youth.

Summer Youth Employment Program: Stanton reported that COVID and its impact on employers have caused WFS to take a different approach to the summer program. Overall, the program will be smaller this year. Safety precautions will be taken at all worksites. Eight virtual leadership training options will be available to all youth.

Youth Homelessness

Molenaar shared statistics on youth homelessness in Ramsey County from 2015, which is the most current data available. These figures are likely conservative due to challenges collecting the information. It is also believed that the situation is much worse now. During the pandemic, Ramsey County is providing shelter for homeless youth in hotels and is working on a more coordinated long-term response.

WIOA Youth Dashboard

Molenaar shared highlights on the youth served in the WIOA Youth program for January through March 2020. A partnership with CLUES graduated 15 CNA students. Most have already been hired into CNA jobs. Fairview Health has been flexible with certifications due to high demand in this field. Thirteen EMS Academy participants recently graduated and are now provisionally certified EMTs. Both programs had to switch to virtual training midstream. The Public Sector Academy had six participants nearly complete the full rotation through the county departments before COVID. Vendors have recently enrolled over 70 new participants.

Committee Dashboard Review

Nikstad reviewed the current dashboard and noted the progress made on each goal.

Committee Member Updates

Workforce Solutions (WFS): Molenaar reported that another CNA training will start June 8 in partnership with Saint Paul College. Details will be sent to the committee to share with those interested in healthcare. Molenaar also pointed out that MN is the only state that prohibits youth who are in school from collecting unemployment. A proposal to adjust this may be considered during the special legislative session.

Ironworkers 512: Gilbertson explained that the MN Trades Academy has been shut down this summer due to the pandemic. They are developing a Building Strong Communities plan working with six CBOs to focus on people of color and women in the trades. He will continue to give updates as the plan develops.

Finishing Trades: Virtual classes are now being offered. A COVID class is starting to help members better understand how to be safe when working in hospital settings.

MN Best Inc.: Kim stressed the importance of connecting with organizations that haven't considered offering diversity training in the past and linking them to WFS and the WIB. She is willing to be a mentor.

CLUES: Michelli shared information about free IT training being offered online. She asked the committee to help promote this opportunity.

Other

No other items were discussed.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 4:02 pm.

Next Meeting: July 16, 2:30-4:00, Job Corps – Building 1, 1480 N. Snelling Ave., St. Paul or virtually