

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Executive Committee

April 20, 2007
Minutes

WIB Members Present

Craig Anderson
Patricia Brady
Robert de la Vega
Kathleen Engesser
Kirk Hayes
Doug Hubbard
Paul Nelson

Members Absent

Vinod Kumar EA
Bill Lowe EA
Tom Macy

Staff/Guests Present

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB CEO
Kate Bates, WIB Staff
Amy Brenengen, WIB Member
Connie Catlin, Ramsey County
Manager's Office
Bonnie Elsey, DEED
Lee Helgen, WIB Member
Jim McDonough, WIB Member
Bob Morse, WIB Member

Call to Order

The Executive Committee meeting was called to order at 9:37 a.m.

Discuss Workforce Service Area Re-designation

Bonnie Elsey, Director, Workforce Development Division, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), was present to discuss the possible re-designation of the workforce service areas (WSAs) in Minnesota. This was in response to an item in the state's unified plan, stating that DEED will look into redistributing the WSAs in Minnesota during 2007. Ms. Elsey clarified that DEED had no preconceived idea on what alignments should be made if the WSAs were re-designated. She explained that recent statewide cuts to the workforce program have made it difficult to serve clients to the level desired. In working on regional WIRED grants it was clear that many economies extend beyond the current WSA boundaries, and it makes sense to reconsider how the resources are divided. The current WSAs were defined 25 years ago, and Minnesota has changed a lot since then. DEED would like to gather more information on this topic and find out how each local area feels about their WSA and the idea of re-designating some service areas. They will host open meetings to facilitate dialog amongst various community stakeholders, including local elected officials, economic developers, WIBs, business and education. Key issues are the declining, stretched resources and the best practices that exist around aligning like resources and economies, to best serve the primary customers.

The group began asking questions on this subject. There was interest in what the re-designation would look like at the end- while this is not clear, Ms. Elsey said the metro area would most likely not be as affected as greater Minnesota. The metro area would be too large and diverse in industries to make one WSA, though some counties in the metro may pick up bordering counties that are becoming more metropolitan. Ms. Elsey was asked what the timeline would be for this process- it will begin after the legislative session ends and will take the time necessary to find the best solution to this problem, though it would be nice to have it completed by July 1, 2008. It was clarified that this is not being brought up just to save money but to do what makes the most sense to the local areas. Each area will be consulted and able to express their thoughts on how their current set-up is working and what they would like to see improved. Though the law allows for DEED to re-designate areas under 200,000 people without consulting the areas, it is not DEED's intention to change anything without discussing it with the local areas first.

There was a discussion on the supply and use of administrative funds. At this time, there are several counties that give in-kind services to their workforce departments, and this may be interrupted if the workforce department is serving more than just one county; it is felt that counties would not want to contribute services to an entity that is serving people from other areas. Further discussion was around efficiencies that can be created in administration, and the concept of using extra administrative funds to serve clients.

The group asked about a defined process on how this is going to be pursued. This has not been set yet, as it requires the input from local areas. The state feels that its role right now is to stimulate these conversations in

local areas and see what comes of these discussions. Members indicated that they would feel more comfortable with this process if it were clearly defined from the onset- DEED is working on this now. It is also important to note that some changes may still occur, even if every area is satisfied with their situation and set up.

There was also discussion on a piece of legislation introduced by Representative Rukavina calling for 25% of funding to be spent on business services and 75% to be spent on job seeker services. This concerns Ms. Elsey because of the positive results that have come from the business services efforts. The Minnesota Workforce Council Association has made a statement that they will remain neutral on this issue, though Ms. Elsey felt that if the Association opposed the legislation, it would be rescinded. Members of the Association present at the meeting were unaware that this statement was made, and further discussion is needed.

Ms. Elsey was thanked for her time and assistance in learning about this effort.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.