

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board  
Market-Driven Workforce System Committee

September 14, 2006

Minutes

**Members Present**

Craig Anderson  
Jesse Bethke Gomez  
John Evans  
Gerry Flannery  
Kirk Hayes

**Members Absent**

Nancy Hendrickson EA  
Lorrie Louder  
Jerry McElroy EA  
Mary McKee

**Staff/Guests Present**

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB CEO  
Kate Bates, WIB Staff  
Chris Stoehr, DEED Business Services

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**Call to Order**

Craig Anderson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:28 p.m.

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**Approve Minutes**

**Motion** made by Kirk Hayes and seconded by Mary McKee to approve the meeting minutes from May 11, 2006 as presented.

**Motion carried**

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**Update on Joint Powers Agreement**

The City and County signed a Joint Powers Agreement in 2000 that consolidated all workforce programs. Our WIB was created from this agreement, which gives the City and County equal control over the consolidated programs, as half of our board is appointed by the City and half by the County. As of September 1, 2006, the County issued a letter to the City to dissolve the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for the Consolidated Ramsey County-City of Saint Paul Workforce Investment Program or work through the issues in discussion. As a result of this action, the WIB's future status as an organization will be determined. At this time, the City and County are planning to meet.

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**Update Business Services Next Steps**

The Business Services/MnSCU collaboration meeting has been planned and scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-12:30 at Century College. This meeting will allow the staffs of all DEED, MnSCU and Workforce Solutions departments that work with businesses to better understand the other departments and foster collaboration and referrals. There will be a broader metro wide meeting in January along these same lines, which may also lead to future meetings focusing on specific issues the specialists face.

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**Update on ELL Funding**

Discussions on ELL funding from the last meeting continued. The WIB will seek funds in partnership with the ELL providers, grant writers, project managers, fiscal agent and other key partners. ESI will help to make contact with businesses in need of services. One of the next steps is to meet with the service providers in the area to see if they are interested in being a part of this grant. In 2004, there were 10,000 workers in Ramsey County in need of ELL services. Estimating the cost of service at \$1,000/client, the project budget of \$1 million makes sense. The group agreed that with the influx of immigrants and refugees, the estimation of 10,000 is probably very conservative. The grants will be structured much like the WIA Incentive Grants last year, but will not require as large of a match from the employer-probably something like releasing employees from work for training. Members felt this match would still be hard to obtain from the small and medium sized employers this grant is going to target. WIB staff will move forward with this plan under the guides and assumptions discussed today. Jesse Bethke Gomez may have a more recent estimation of those in the workforce needing English language training.

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**Business Services Update**

DEED restructured their Business Services team, and there are now 2.5 FTEs serving Ramsey County's businesses. Chris Stoehr, one of DEED's Business Service Specialists (BSS), was present to discuss what they do and how they can provide this committee with updates. The BSS visit companies in Ramsey County and get an understanding of the issues the companies face, and the BSS makes them aware of the resources available to them to assist with their challenges. The BSS will report to this committee quarterly on how many and the types of businesses they have contacted, general trends in the issues they face, and the resources offered to the businesses. The committee also requested that the BSS outline emerging issues within specific industries. This will then go to the full WIB on the consent agenda to keep the larger board aware of their efforts.

Chris gave an update on what they have been doing this year, giving stats from January 1-June 30. They have made 140 visits, with 129 of them in one of the three industries targeted by our WIB; for 132 of the 140, it was the first time they were contacted in this manner. Many had hiring and retention needs, and the BSS found that diversity, and the lack of understanding other cultures, is a huge factor in these visits.

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### **Discuss Next Meeting Date**

Mary Jo is involved in a program through the Humphrey Institute that will conflict with our next meeting date. The group agreed to move it up to November 2, at the same time and location.

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### **2007 Strategic Planning**

In a discussion on the strategic plan for 2007, the committee decided it will take a look at the current strategic plan and measure successes so far, and update from there. Kate will email the plan out for the committee to review.

Some questions raised were- how are we impacting the community; what progress has been made; how have businesses been affected by ELL service. Members are encouraged to call/email Mary Jo with any additions to our 2007 foci.

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### **Open Forum**

Mary Jo recently met with Jim Schultz, DEED Job Service, Jody Pepinski, DEED Business Services, and John O'Phelan, Workforce Solutions Business Services, to discuss the issue of diversity for employers. From this meeting they decided to host a seminar to discuss the cultural barriers found in the workplace. The seminar will have five panelists from various cultures, and a moderator from St. Paul Foundation. There will be a significant amount of time for questions from the audience, and will be limited to 70 people, targeted to HR professionals. Hiway Federal Credit Union has offered to give the meeting space free of charge for this session, though there will be a fee to cover the other costs associated with the seminar.

The moderator for this session is the Project Manager of the "Facing Race" project at the Saint Paul Foundation. This program provides CD ROMs and other materials to interested parties who want to foster an open conversation about race in the workplace. The CD ROMs portray scenes that put race issue in the front and center, and create an environment for these issues to be discussed. If anyone is interested in getting these materials, they are free of charge from the Saint Paul Foundation.

The Metro WIB has been working on a Metro labor market assessment that will take a broader perspective on the same kind of information this committee reviews annually. WIB staff will distribute this when it is complete.

The new Workforce Center lease is signed, and a move-in date has been set for February 1, 2007.

Craig gave an update on the Ford plant. The plant is trying to accelerate the depopulation of their workforce and there is a sense that the facility may not stay open until 2008. There has been another six week layoff, and service providers are planning on starting training there in January.

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### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** November 2