

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Market-Driven Workforce System Committee

March 8, 2007
Minutes

Members Present

John Evans
Kirk Hayes
Nancy Hendrickson
Jane Sanem
Rob McKenzie
Bob Morse
Cynthia Yongvang

Members Absent

Craig Anderson EA
Jesse Bethke Gomez
Gerry Flannery
Lorrie Louder
Jerry McElroy
Mary McKee

Staff/Guests Present

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB CEO
Kate Bates, WIB Staff
Chris Stoehr, DEED Business Services
Terry Zurn, Workforce Solutions

Call to Order

Mary Jo Gardner called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

New and existing committee members introduced themselves.

Approve Minutes

Motion made Kirk and seconded by John Evans to approve the meeting minutes from January 11 as presented.

Motion carried

Update on DEED Business Services

Chris Stoehr, DEED Business Services Specialist, was present to update the committee on the work of Ramsey County's 2.5 FTE Business Services Specialists. As identified by the WIB, they are focusing their efforts on contacting businesses from the manufacturing, construction, and healthcare sectors. They go into to each business they make contact with asking the employer what concerns they have, what is affecting their business, and what resources would help them function better. The concerns the employers have range from needing help developing an employee handbook to needing interpreters for the diverse clients the businesses serve. Chris has found that many of the employers are not aware of the MN Job Bank, which is a free site to post job openings, and for job seekers to search for leads.

Chris explained the structure in which the specialists work- the zip codes in Ramsey County are divided amongst the 2.5 specialists. They answer questions from any business that calls, but make contact with those in the WIB's priority industries. They will also work with any sized company, but enjoy helping the smaller companies that do not have the large Human Resources departments to find answers for them. Chris was asked if they do follow-up visits beyond their initial meeting- she indicated that they do come back for a second appointment, but that is all that is standard currently. It is still a new concept for DEED to have Business Services Specialists and the department is still evolving. Members suggested a tracking system to allow for follow-up a year (or more) later to see how the company is doing. Also recommended was a standard profile form so specialists are all collecting the same targeted info, in addition to asking the businesses what their concerns are. This is a project that this committee could work on. Additionally, the group was informed that the MN Job Bank is going to be revamped this summer and the updated site will be marketed to the community.

Update on Business Services Next Steps

Mary Jo gave background on the Business Services pilot, and discussed the work with Business Services since that pilot ended. Business Service Specialists from the state and county serving businesses in Ramsey County have been meeting with representatives from MnSCU serving businesses and representatives from Adult Basic Education (ABE). These meetings were initiated by the WIB to increase the collaboration between these

various entities, with the goal of creating a comprehensive and streamlined method with which to serve businesses. There have been two collaborations, and a third is scheduled for the end of March. This session will focus on employers' need for CNC machinists as a problem the attendees from various organizations can work on collaboratively. The attendees will be split into three groups and ideally come up with three different ways to solve this issue. If a solution is feasible, it may come back to this committee to work on implementation.

Update on WIB Diversity Seminar

Mary Jo gave background on the first diversity seminar held in October. Surveys collected from the 79 attendees indicated that many were interested in a follow-up to the October session, which is being planned for May. At this meeting the attendees will be able to sit down at a table and have a more interactive discussion on the issues they are facing in a small group of about eight people, as opposed to the large group panel discussion format at the last session. The meeting is planned for May 2nd in the morning at the North Saint Paul Community Center. Attendees will be charged \$20 to cover the cost of holding the meeting, with any remaining funds going to future sessions. One committee member suggested it may be helpful to have businesses who have been successful in their diverse workplace to talk about how they overcame the barriers sometimes found in the modern workplace.

Dollar General Grant

Terry Zurn talked about the grant the Friends of the WIB and Workforce Solutions applied for through the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. Dollar General has grants available, up to \$15k, for literacy programs. The Friends of the WIB applied to enhance an ELL program administered by Workforce Solutions, helping incumbent workers at local hospitals improve their English with voice recognition software, and classes during work time. Meetings with the hospitals are being arranged to see if they would like to expand the programs.

2007 Strategic Planning

The committee work plan was reviewed at the last meeting and the committee felt that most of the work was complete. The committee was asked what issues and initiatives they would like to focus on for the next work plan. Various demand-driven issues were discussed, such as the need for CNC machinists and construction workers to replace the retiring population, increased cultural diversity in the workplace and talking with school counselors to encourage youth to pursue high demand fields, outside of a four year university. It was also suggested that the committee review an updated report on Ramsey County's labor market. It may also be good to review the past predictions of where the workforce was heading and see if what was predicted actually occurred. Jane Sanem discussed an assessment that was done on the construction industry in the metro area- a power point with this information is available at www.agcmn.org and Kate will send it out to the full committee. The discussion on the work plan will resume at the next meeting.

Other

Nancy Hendrickson reminded the committee of the rescheduled Veterans Reintegration Workshop next Monday, March 12th from 2:00-4:00 at the North Saint Paul WorkForce Center.

WIB staff will be sending out announcements for the ribbon cutting at the new Saint Paul WorkForce Center- it will be on April 5 from 2-3:30 with the WIB meeting at 3:30-4:30.

The group discussed the possibility of having a discussion with secondary school guidance counselors to find out what they are doing with their students, and what issues they are facing.

Jane discussed a program with the trades for youth where they learn about the construction field hands and gain hands on experience.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 10, 2007