

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board  
**Market-Driven Workforce System Committee**

**March 6, 2008**  
**Minutes**

**Members Present**

Craig Anderson  
Joe Crowe  
Gerry Flannery  
Bev Fritz  
Butch Howard  
Mary McKee  
Mary Russell  
Cynthia Yongvang

**Members Absent**

Kirk Hayes  
Lorrie Louder EA  
Rob McKenzie  
Jane Sanem  
Mark Sorenson  
Lori Stone

**Staff/Guests Present**

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB CEO  
Janet Ludden, Employer Solutions, Inc.  
Kate Raleigh, WIB Staff  
Jim Zentner, Workforce Solutions

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**Call to Order**

Craig Anderson called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

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**Approve Minutes**

**Motion** made by Joe Crowe with seconded by Butch Howard to accept the minutes from the January 3 meeting as presented.

**Motion carried**

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**Update on Metro Manufacturing Sector Initiative**

Craig Anderson gave an update on the Metropolitan Manufacturing Sector Initiative. The training is going well, with positive feedback coming from the employers. The on-the-job training phase will start shortly and there will be a meeting soon to discuss the employee and employer expectations of this phase. Funding is still being sought for Phase III training. Saint Paul College will be submitting a MN Job Skills Partnership Grant in May to fund this phase. Eleven employers will be involved in this application, as well as Anoka Technical College; the high interest in getting more funding is credited to the value employers are finding in the program.

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**WorkKeys Pilot Project**

Jim Zentner, Workforce Solutions, presented on the WorkKeys pilot project at the Ramsey County WorkForce Center in North Saint Paul, running from April 2008-June 2009. WorkKeys is a program out of ACT that assesses the objective work skills of an individual. This tool, in combination with the Career Readiness Certificate that indicates the certificate holder's competence in three basic subjects, could provide job seekers with a concrete credential when job seeking. While this is not the only credential for job seekers, Workforce Solutions is impressed with the possibilities this credential can provide, as well as its connection to job profiling. The MN Department of Education and the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development are using WIA incentive dollars to collaborate on a series of projects around the state that will look at using this credential as an option for businesses and job seekers. While Workforce Solutions has purchased a license to utilize this tool for their program participants, they have applied, in partnership with East Metro Adult Basic Education, for funds to use this tool with the WorkForce Center's universal customer.

Costs associated with this project are testing and marketing costs to advertise/explain the assessment and credential to job seekers and businesses. It is important that job seekers know why they should obtain this credential, and for businesses to know the value of the credential for potential employees.

Another aspect of this tool is job profiling. Employers wanting to do careful job skills analysis of positions in their organization can utilize WorkKeys certified individuals to complete this analysis. After an analysis is done, job seekers can take the WorkKeys assessment and have their proficiencies connect directly with the proficiencies needed for a specific position within a company. Ideally Workforce Solutions would like the WIB and other business and economic development organizations to join this project to help bring the employers in.

ABE will have curriculum that can be used with individuals who do not have the required skills for a position they are interested in.

The group was made aware of another credential and assessment similar to WorkKeys called the National Work Readiness Credential, which is being piloted by the United States Chamber of Commerce. Workforce Solutions has more interest in the WorkKeys assessment and credential because they feel it has a wider use, as it connects directly with jobs, and that it can assess individuals on a higher level than the National Work Readiness Credential. The WorkKeys assessment is also EEOC compliant, which is very important to companies filling positions. While the Saint Paul Chamber supports the other readiness credential, Bev Fritz has volunteered to let the Chamber businesses know about the pilot at the workforce center in North Saint Paul if the incentive funds are received.

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### **Update on Employer Seminars**

Mary Jo gave the group background information on the employer seminars that were held for businesses in 2006 and 2007 focusing on the increasingly multicultural workforce employed at area businesses. The group was asked what types of employer seminars the WIB should partner on in the future, if any.

In general, members were not entirely supportive of the WIB utilizing their time in this manner. There were a few ideas for seminars suggested; including employment law, the Family and Medical Leave Act and costs of energy prices, and others suggested the WIB act as a clearinghouse for all other events happening for employers. This could be done by utilizing the business calendars printed in local newspapers, SHRM, ASTD or by having individuals contact the WIB when an event is occurring.

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### **Labor Market**

Every year the WIB looks at the labor market situation for Ramsey County to assist in providing strategic direction for workforce in Ramsey County. In the past, the WIB has selected healthcare, manufacturing and construction as priority industries on which to focus resources. Mary Jo inquired about the interest level of the committee to receive an update in May on the labor market. All agreed an update would be helpful. There was discussion on reviewing information for the whole metro area, as well as addressing retail and job trends for individuals over the age of 55.

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### **Other**

Janet Ludden had a panel presentation in December that focused on connecting corrections and workforce development, highlighting business needs of employees and the job needs and training of convicts. The group was interested in having Janet present this information to the full WIB and will plan to do so at the next full board meeting.

Century College submitted a grant to the American Association of Community Colleges to connect with their efforts of running programming for the enrichment and employment of older adults. Five mentor colleges will be picked across the country to act as mentors for local schools that would like to operate as a center for training older adults. Additionally, the college received a contract to train medical residency coordinators, a trainings program that is the first in this county.

Bev Fritz told the group the about the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Academy that works with mid- and high-level leaders in small businesses. Nonprofits will receive a 25% discount of off the class fee.

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### **Adjourn**

Craig Anderson adjourned the meeting at 2:43p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 1, 2008