

**Employer Engagement Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2019**

The Employer Engagement Committee Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Cary Robbins.

NAME	PRESENT (Oglesby)	PRESENT (Sterling)	ABSENT	NAME	PRESENT (Oglesby)	PRESENT (Sterling)	ABSENT
Jim Andreoni	X			Barbara Majeski			X
Mary Boogemans			X	Lisa McCarthy			X
Linda Burt			X	Dave Mennie			X
Debbie Clausen	X			Kris Noble		X	
Jerry Corcoran	x			Cary Robbins		X	
Mike Dean		x		Amy Strawn			x
Patty Head		X		James Weed			X
Deana Jones			X	Robert White			x
Kevin Lindeman	x						

OTHERS PRESENT (IVCC): Pam Furlan

OTHERS PRESENT (Sterling): Dianna Schuler, Roger Anderson, and Tammy Nehrkorn

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes

Jim Andreoni made the motion to approve the December 4, 2018 meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Jerry Corcoran. Motion carried.

Overview of RTPI

Dianna provided an overview of the Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative for committee members. She began with some background for those that may not have been present at previous updates by Tim Harmon. In general, Dianna stated, the project is to create a process in which to respond more quickly and efficiently to the needs of area businesses. Dianna went on to state that the project has 2 phases and that right now we are getting ready to bring Phase 1 to a close. She stated that the first part of Phase 1 was for the contractor, Workforce Enterprise Services, Inc., to interview and collect information from area stakeholders including businesses, economic development, chambers, educations and others. They interviewed 32 individuals and learned that most of those they spoke with are already doing something. These individuals also identified their key challenges which are those that we have historically heard are common: an aging/retiring workforce, youth flight, and lack of positive work habits. The second part of Phase 1, Dianna stated, was to develop a process and a tool that the NCI Works Business Services Team could begin using when meeting with area companies. Dianna informed the group that training on the process and assessment tool is scheduled for April 16th. Dianna stated that the Core Team for the project is made up of those that have been active on the Business Services Team along with Kris Noble from Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and Dan Payette and Andy Shaw from Blackhawk Hills Regional Council.

Dianna stated that the training will focus the process by which information will be gathered during the Phase 2 pilot project, how that information will be shared amongst the Core Team, and how to develop a “rapid talent pipeline” strategy, if appropriate. During the piloting of this project, Dianna stated that the Team will be meeting with area businesses, gathering information on their needs, bring that information back for a conversation with the full Team, develop a plan of action for presenting back to the company

which may, or may not, be a rapid talent pipeline solutions. Dianna stated that if the company needs are determined to be out of the scope of the “rapid” pipeline solution that companies will still be referred to appropriate services. She stated that Phase 2 will also include an assessment of how the process and assessment tool are working out and any changes will be made to improve deficiencies. The project with Workforce Enterprise Services, Inc. is expected to conclude by December 31, 2019 with the RTPI framework continuing as a standard operating procedure.

Business Services Report

Dianna reviewed portions of the report with committee members. She reminded them that IDES can only report numbers on contacts by the local office and not by county. Therefore, IDES numbers are reported on the lines for LaSalle Co. and Whiteside Co. because that is where their local offices are for our area. She went on to state that the IJL registrations and job orders are also reported as a whole for the area and not by county.

Dianna reported that BEST has been doing a great deal of incumbent worker training and that over the last 3 years has spent or obligated over \$300,000 in IWT training. Pam added that we are limited in how much we can spend in incumbent worker training. She informed the committee that we can spend up to 20% of the combined Adult and Dislocated Workers funds during any given years and might actually reach that amount this year.

Finding and/or Enhancing Solution to Recruiting Qualified Candidates

Pam informed the committee that she had asked Dianna to find out what the Business Relations Representatives heard from businesses when it came to issues/concerns they have about their workforce. Pam stated that she wanted to utilize the committee’s insights to help us better serve the business community as a whole. She stated that at each meeting we will bring the business community’s concerns to get committee members’ input.

Dianna reported that she had surveyed the Business Relations Representatives on what they heard most often from businesses when it comes to challenges they face. She stated that recruiting qualified candidates was the unanimous response and this is something that we have heard from business for a very long time. Dianna went on to share an email from Roger Anderson, BRR for Ogle and Lee Counties, with a suggestion on helping businesses begin to address their workforce needs. Roger’s email stated that Incumbent Worker Training has to lead the solutions list. We’ve had many successes with a very small number businesses when you look at the total numbers. He suggested placing the focus on the current employees to upskills them. He stated that common objections to training current employees to replace those exiting the workforce includes: it means someone (or more than one) would have to go back to school and that means losing a good worker to training, they will leave for a better opportunity, we don’t have the funds to pay for that kind of training, we have to train half of our workforce and that is not feasible to send them to an off-site training facility, the training will probably be from some source that does not understand what we do and what we need, it is just too expensive in time and money. Therefore, utilizing alternative training formats/schedules along with the Incumbent Worker Training funds would be a good start in addressing those objections. He also recommended maybe using a term other than “incumbent” such as Strategic Training when referring to our grant funds.

On the subject of losing those for whom a company invested in training, Dianna asked Patty Head if she has lost anyone that has been through incumbent worker training. Patty stated that while it does leave you short on the days the employee is in training the training always enhances their skills and the benefit outweighs the risk. Dianna also asked Mike Dean and he responded by saying that over the years he’s lost 4 or 5 once they’ve reached journeyman status. However, Mike said that if you don’t train you

won't grow. Dianna commented that for years workforce development has encouraged companies to grow their own talent. Cary mention that previously many companies didn't take advantage of Incumbent Worker funding because of restrictions, which have recently loosened up considerably.

Kris inquired as to what industries can take advantage of the funding. Dianna responded that any industry can make use of the funds. She went on to inform the members that it is the type of training that has to be eligible. She mentioned that off the shelf training along with supervisory, leadership, regular updating of OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 are not allowable training. Dianna also mentioned that employees are not enrolled in WIOA services but that the state does track their retention to the overall workforce. Therefore there is some information that we have to collect to enter into the state's tracking system.

Cary mentioned that looking within is just 1 piece of the puzzle to having a sufficient workforce. He went on to state that it is very difficult to recruit people to the area itself. He stated that many lose employees to the Chicago area which is booming. He said that you have to look at the area itself and why someone would want to come here to live. Patty stated that the cost of living alone should be attractive compared to the Chicago area.

Kris stated that the Sauk Valley Chamber of Commerce has a millennial group and they believe that there is a bigger payoff focusing on retention of talent rather than attraction of talent to the area. She stated that kids that grew up in the area, have families in the area, are over 50% more likely to return home. The other thing the group has found is that cost of living and student loan debt is important to include in the conversation. Kris went on to state that a recent survey of 13 employers, of which 7 responded, showed that there are 149 jobs available in the immediate area of Whiteside and Lee Counties. Dianna asked how they were publicizing those openings. Kris said that most of them are through Indeed, or through family members that have shared them. Patty added that employers in this area are trying to figure out the best way to communicate that they have these openings. Kevin added that internships are also a good way to get the word out about opportunities in the area and keep youth in the area.

Pam stated that she and Dianna have been discussing the next series of podcasts and suggested that perhaps we do one on all the positives and advantages of working in a small business. She suggested that we could put together a list of those with fewer than 100 employees and the types of jobs they have within the company. Jim suggested including an economic analysis/comparison of how much it would cost to get basic skills sets at the community college versus how long it would take to get out of debt with student loans for a higher degree. Pam stated that Cary has a video that does this from a previous manufacturing day event. Pam suggested we begin compiling reasons to stay in the area and include that as a podcast as well. Pam said that the Business Services Team can organize the ideas from this meeting and present a plan of action at the next meeting in June.

Other Business

Podcast topics for May and June will be as follows:

May – Positives of Working for a Small Business

June – “No Place Like Home”, Advantages of Remaining in the Area to Live and Work

Pam informed the committee that going forward we will be asking the members of the committee to bring forward an issue to discuss and for the members to let us know what they want out of the committee and what they want us doing for the community and business.

Pam also informed the committee that, based on what we heard at the 2019 NAWB Conference, we will be calling our “soft skills” training Foundation Skills. It was felt that this better represents what the skills are. We will be working on how to incorporate these in more of what we do.

Pam informed the committee that the Chrysler plant in Belvidere is laying off over 1,300 employees and some of them will be from our area. She told members that staff will be onsite beginning April 9th for the workshops that are scheduled. She also indicated that there are plans for a hiring event for these employees and we will be reaching out to our businesses to see if they would be interested in participating in it. The layoff could also become a TRADE event but it is still evolving at this time.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

With there being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Jim Andreoni. Motion was seconded by Jerry Corcoran and carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Dianna Schuler