

**Employer Engagement Committee
Meeting Summary
February 2, 2021**

The Employer Engagement Committee Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by acting Chair Amy Strawn.

NAME	ABSENT	PRESENT	NAME	ABSENT	PRESENT
Jim Andreoni	X		Emily Legel	X	
Mary Boogemans	X		Dave Mennie	X	
Linda Burt	X		Kris Noble		X
Jerry Corcoran		X	Amy Strawn		X
Mike Dean		X	James Weed	X	
Patty Head		X	Robert White	X	
Deana Jones		X	Cary Robbins	X	
Kevin Lindeman	x				

OTHERS PRESENT: Carrie Folken, Dianna Schuler, Rhonda Krueger, Sara Escatel, Michele Velez

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes

Without a quorum the June, 2, 2020 minutes could not be approved. They will be presented at the April meeting.

Business Services Report

Dianna mentioned that the report is still only reflecting efforts by BEST staff. She reminded everyone that since CoVid 19 began IDES has not been able to provide outreach numbers for the report.

Apprenticeship Expansion Grant

Dianna reported that, to date, outreach had been conducted with 117 companies/individuals, 4 events had been held with an event scheduled for February 10th with the Ag/Agri-Business Sector. She also reported that they had reported to DCEO the completion of 16 first year apprentices at Allegion in Princeton who have received their training through the BEST Incumbent Worker Training grant.

Dianna went on to report that, during the last quarterly meeting with DCEO, BEST staff were informed that another round of grants should be released during Spring 2021. Dianna stated that she and Nikelle had been encouraged to apply for both a navigator grant and an intermediary grant. She stated that she had talked with both Nikelle and Carrie about the intermediary grant and that one idea they were discussing was that of a youth registered apprenticeship program. She stated that Nikelle and she had been on a call with River Bend High School and that they were pursuing an opportunity to participate in such a program through an Iowa high school and their program.

Concern about being able to attract youth into manufacturing occupations was expressed by a couple of committee members. Dianna stated that she and Nikelle were planning to bring educators and company representative into a discussion about registered youth apprenticeship prior to the application being written. It is her hope that they will assist in outlining what would and wouldn't work for the entire area.

Manufacturing Academy

Jerry reported that the State of Illinois was looking to establish 2 downstate manufacturing academies and had set aside \$15 million to do so. Illinois Central College (ICC) reached out to IVCC, Spoon River Community College and Lincoln Land Community College to create a consortium of schools to apply for the grant with ICC taking the lead. Jerry went on to inform the committee that data obtained through EMSI showed that in the 4 community college districts there was a projected increase in jobs in manufacturing of 6.2% by the year 2025. The consortium felt this data, along with information from companies stating they would make use of the academy, justified the need for an academy that was centrally located for the 4 partnering community college district as well as those districts surrounding the consortium. In addition to the funds from the grant, each of the 3 satellite colleges (IVCC, Spoon River, and Lincoln Land) will contribute \$40,000 per year for 3 years toward the academy. Jerry went on to report that the consortium was able to submit the grant application by the deadline, that ICC was already able to acquire a build from CAT and repurpose it for the academy's needs, and that the grant recipients will be announced in March. He went on to say that the 4 colleges will share curriculum, instructors, internships, etc. as a result of their partnership in this initiative.

Committee Initiative for PY20

Dianna reviewed the points from the August email she had sent out with recommendations for PY20 (copy of email was in the meeting packet). Those recommendations included focusing on the apprenticeship effort and identifying efforts currently being made to service businesses. She dated that between the chambers, economic development entities, other grant businesses focused groups and the NCI Works Business Services Team that assessments of needs are currently being done. That further surveying of those needs would be a duplication. To illustrate the point, Dianna pointed to the length of time and low response it took to do a Survey Monkey for CoVid 19 needs. The third recommendation was to identify what NCI Works members believe to be the business of the board. She stated that she and Carrie had talked about having a short board meeting followed by a "retreat" to work on identifying what the business of the board should be as defined by the members. Carrie stated that the business members of the board are who we rely on to inform us of the business needs. She went on to say that once identified then everyone needs to work on how those needs will be addressed.

Kris stated that in all the conversations she has had, no matter the group assembled, 2 issues repeatedly come up: the lack of people in the area (dwindling population) and child care for 2nd shift manufacturing. She says that the conversation are held repeatedly but there hasn't been any strategy yet to solve those issues.

Dianna stated that not all companies are open about what their needs are. She recommended using a Talent Pipeline Management strategy to design an assessment to gauge those needs as well as to pose the question about how flexible businesses can be in accommodating applicant needs for such things as child care. She mentioned that, not only has the area lost population, younger people have a different culture and mindset. The assessment could be designed to measure the ability of the business sector to be flexible to those preferences/culture of the younger generation(s) in order to attract them to their employment as well as to the area and in being proactive in meeting their own needs. Carrie suggested that there could be an overlapping of committees, between Employer Engagement and the Youth Committee, to identify those generational needs/attitudes toward work.

The question was asked if the "retreat" would be for the committee or the full board. Dianna responded that it would be for the full board. The committee agreed that this would be a good idea to do. Dianna will get with Carrie and JoAnn to help organize the format.

Other Business

Carrie asked the partners that were present for the meeting if any of them had anything they wanted to bring to the committee's attention. She informed the committee that going forward the partners will be invited to all committee meetings since the board is their board as well and she believed that they should have an opportunity to be involved if they wanted to be. There was partner business to discuss.

Public Comment

Randy Freeman commented that, as a county board member, he know how much the county depends on the success of business. Business and education both need to succeed for the county to succeed. If there is anything the county can do to help they want to pitch in and help.

Carrie thanked everyone for coming.

Adjournment

The meeting came to an end at 3:03pm

Dianna Schuler