

**Employer Engagement Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 1, 2021**

The Employer Engagement Committee Meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m. by Cary Robbins, Committee Chair.

NAME	ABSENT	PRESENT	NAME	ABSENT	PRESENT
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	Emily Legel		X
Deana Jones		X	Cary Robbins		X
Kevin Lindeman		Proxy to Patty			

OTHERS PRESENT: Carrie Folken, Dianna Schuler, Maryann Rice, Michele Velez, and Randy Freeman

Business Meeting

Acceptance of the February 2, 2021 Meeting Summary

A quorum was not established long enough to accept the February summary.

Business Services Report

Dianna informed the committee that there are several things to keep in mind with the Business Service Report. She stated that when she first started doing the report that it was Jim Andreoni that wanted monthly and year to date numbers. She went on to inform the committee that there is a month lag in the numbers because she won't have may numbers until the end of the first week of June from her Business Relations staff. She also reminded the members that there have been no updates provided by IDES since February 2020. With that in mind she didn't believe that just presenting the numbers gives a full picture of what the staff are learning/encountering with area businesses. She suggested adding a narrative that would summarize what the Business Relations reps are actually encountering. She said she'd be able to continue to provide the numbers, but that is a great deal of workforce intelligence that is not necessarily being shared with the committee.

Dianna provided an example of the type of information that they are not getting with just numbers. She stated that while it is reported that there have been 5 Rapid Response events, two of those event were in neighboring workforce areas resulting in actual dislocation of employees. The other 3 events were all in Streator (La Salle Co). However, of those 3 only 1 resulted in the dislocation of all employees. One of the other events (First Student) resulted in employees being absorbed by a new bus system and the other resulted in a permanent work from home solution for all the employees except a few. This is the type of information that is not provided with just numbers.

Carrie asked if Dianna knew if the lack of numbers from IDES was because they aren't able to obtain the information or if they are busy helping with unemployment. Dianna responded that Tory (IDES) has not responded to any requests for the information.

Dianna asked the committee if they wanted to continue with the current report, add a narrative to it, or a hybrid that offered numbers and insights. Emily suggested that numbers and insights would be beneficial and Cary agreed. Going forward Dianna will offer such information: numbers and bullet points with insights.

Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Update/New NOFO

Dianna informed the committee that staff had recently learned that DCEO had applied for the newest round of US DOL Apprenticeship Grants and that they hope to know what they may get by late July. She went on to state that she, Nikelle and Carrie have discussed ideas for the next round of grant NOFOs from DCEO. She also stated that Pat Campbell with DCEO had encouraged them to apply for both the Navigator grant (which BEST currently has) and the Intermediary grant. Dianna cited the NCI Works CMA Apprenticeship as an example of a 3rd party entity (NCI Works) being the sponsor (Intermediary) of the apprenticeship with St. Margaret's as a participating employer. If another provider wanted to sign onto the apprenticeship they could. With the Intermediary grant BEST would be the sponsor, develop the standards and register the apprentices.

Dianna stated that one idea that has been considered for the Intermediary grant was to focus on Registered Youth Apprenticeships. She asked the committee for their thoughts. Emily was supportive of the idea. Kris agreed that something like this was needed. Both Emily and Kris said that their local career centers were in a good position to participate in this type of initiative.

Dianna informed the members that she and Nikelle were planning to convene the partnering sub-contractors to get their ideas for the next round. This is planned for June 17th. She said that they would like to also like to bring in businesses to participate as well, including members of the committee. The same planning process could be replicated for the Intermediary grant with schools and CTEs and the businesses they currently work with.

Discussion on Area Business Needs

Dianna began by letting the committee know that they are our leaders for input into what is needed to increase successful hires and address companies' talent needs. That we rely, in part, on them for a portion of our industry intelligence. She went on to ask what additional services/abilities are needed going forward: additional virtual capabilities, more career and technical education, robotics, etc.? And what can the system do to bridge any gap(s)? Deana shared that they are looking into automation more. They have also contracted with someone to offload some of their packaging and other things. And they are also using remote workers for office openings and bring them into Sterling on an as needed/necessary basis. Carrie inquired as to if those remote workers were from outside of Illinois. Deana said that in a lot of cases they are not Illinois residents. Some are from the suburbs and have no desire to relocate. Deana stated that she did think the labor market will change anytime soon. Automation and remote hiring are going to be the norm. Kris shared that it will 3 years before the US Chamber has the necessary data on remote working impacts productivity. Right now all that is available is data from CoVid accommodations. Carrie added that updated legislation to the open meetings act includes electronic means to meet for all meetings going forward.

Dianna went on to share that most of those that have left the workforce have been women due to their children spending the last year remote learning. Patty added that child care is an issue and that a larger realm of government need to address this need. Deana offered that Wahl has a day care subsidy, yet for some it isn't enough. Therefore, Wahl is looking at that subsidy to see what they can do to help. She also added that housing is another issue with attracting people and added to the need to do the remote hires.

Other Business

Dianna shared with the committee an update on the renewal of the NCI Works Getting to Work podcast. She and John Spencer had done a presentation with the contractor for the podcasts to the Illinois Workforce Partnership. As a result, BEST received a 50% discount on their renewal and, therefore, purchased an additional 6 episodes. She said that she will be asking board and committee members to participate in some of those episodes which will target all job seekers as well as youth and focus on what work is like in the real world.

Dianna also shared some information on a recent drive thru job fair that BEST was invited to assist with by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce. She reported that 38 chamber members participated. Those companies accounted for 98 different job descriptions and over 350 openings just in the Ottawa area. She also reported that there were 155 job seekers that attended. She informed the committee that staff would be interested in taking the concept to other areas and partnering with other chambers. Kris stated that the Sterling Chamber of Commerce would be interested in participating. Dianna stated that staff were thinking of mid-August to late August to do a repeat because the 4th of September is when the added unemployment benefit is set to expire.

Public Comment

Jerry mentioned that recently some of his staff met with Maryann Rice (DHS) and looks forward to furthering their relationship and partnering going forward.

Adjournment

With a quorum no long present the meeting ended at 3:05 p.m.

Dianna Schuler