



## Workforce Development Board

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## Meeting Minutes

**Monday, March 20, 2023; 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

**CareerForce Room 226**

### Present:

Maria Bellamy, Supervisor, Talent and Workforce Planning, Allele  
Emily Edison, Executive Director, SOAR Career Solutions  
Chiamaka Enemuoh, President, Lifestone Health Care  
Claire Farmer-Lies, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Residential Services Inc.  
Angie Frank, Manager, Duluth Adult Education  
Susie Gilbertson, Sr. Recruiter, Maurices Corporation  
Lindsey Growette Stingle, Human Resources Director, National Bank of Commerce  
Marla Halvorson, HR Director, St. Luke's  
Monica Haynes, Director, UMD Bureau of Business & Economic Research  
Shawn Herhusky, Workforce Development Manager, Essentia Health  
Chaquana McEntyre, President, Family Rise Together  
Vance Okstad, Director of Outreach, Cirrus Aircraft  
Paul Pedersen, Director of Outreach, MAC-V  
Rick Revoir, Dean of Strategic Development, College of St. Scholastica  
Scott Vezina, Director of Communications & Marketing, Goodwill  
Sonia Vinnes, Rehab Manager, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
Amanda Yates, Assistant Director Economic Services and Supports, St. Louis County  
Shayla Drake, Workforce Strategy Consultant, DEED  
Elena Foshay, Director, Duluth Workforce Development  
Carson Gorecki, Northeast Regional Labor Market Analyst, DEED

**Meeting called to order at 2:02 p.m.** The Workforce Development Board successfully established a quorum.

### Welcome and Introductions

- Scott Vezina returned to position at Goodwill and re-joined the board
- Susie Gilbertson, Sr. Recruiter at Maurices Corporation
- Maria Bellamy, Allele

**Public Comment:** None

### Action Items:

- January 23, 2023 meeting minutes were approved by board members in attendance
- Oath of Office was completed by those for whom it was required

- Governance proposal to create a student/client seat on the board
  - A category would be created in bylaws
  - Term would be one year
  - Since it's a bylaw revision, a vote will occur at the next board meeting
  - Goal to have seat filled by September 2023 meeting

### **The Equity Lens: The Benefits Cliff**

- Tension between wanting to work and support family but not wanting to lose benefits
- Monica Haynes shared next phase of the project
  - Visualization created in 2016 or 2017. After showing it to Amanda Yates with St. Louis County, edits were made.
  - Visualization is helpful but does not tell individuals how a job will impact their benefits
  - Monica Haynes is working with St. Louis County to create a tool for staff working with clients to see how working will affect benefits. Also working with job counselors in focus groups.
  - Is there an existing tool that can be used or does it need to be created from scratch?
  - There is no one resource that people can go to, to learn or is accurate enough to use
  - Working with Atlanta Reserve that has one of the best tools
  - A monthly meeting is held with job counselors and Public Health and Human Services if you're interested in attending.
- Insight from those working with clients
- Has anyone turned down raise, promotion, or additional hours due to benefits cliff?
  - Yes, several board members indicated they had employees who had done so
  - Psychologic aspect of losing benefits – fear of losing stability
  - Paperwork associated with accepting extra work hours/income that is not permanent, if client becomes ineligible and it's so much work to get reenrolled
  - Losing housing benefits is one of the greatest fears
  - In some cases healthcare costs at new job are unaffordable, so employees leave jobs to go back to state healthcare
  - Can paperwork be changed/streamlined? Would require statute changes, and changes to state/federal requirements
  - Thank you to ChaQuana McEntyre for sharing personal story of losing benefits
- From an employer standpoint, they don't have the expertise to discuss
- What is it that employers can do?
  - Could an employee assistance program help with financial planning?
  - Taking a close look at the cost of your health plan
  - Being open about resources in community that can help, and easily accessible
  - Sharing stories of employees that have transitioned off benefits (with permission)
  - Making it easy to verify employment (let employee know when first paycheck will arrive, give them paper copies of pay stubs)
  - Raise awareness with management to carefully discuss the topic with employees
  - This is most impactful for those in \$18-\$24 wage range. How are you doing promotions and career pathways for those wage ranges?
  - Have "moving up the ladder" bonus (like a sign on bonus)

- A sign on bonus could be detrimental to those receiving benefits
- Could there be a choice for additional contribution from employers to retirement accounts, etc.
- Does the county have employment counselors that could speak to employers? Currently the county isn't funded for any kind of outreach events. County trying to empower financial workers to talk with clients.
- Programs are not designed to provide information or project
- Trainings could be done for agencies to learn more about the benefits cliff and tools
- Projected timeline for project – end of summer or calendar year

## Updates & Announcements

- State legislative update
  - MAWB introduced a bill to triple funding to MN Youth Program
  - Letters going out without entire board seeing it, not just a committee
    - If time sensitive, it can go out from executive committee
    - Elena, please send letter to board with clear request for approval (and deadline)
    - Monica proposed online form to vote on letters
  - Cash Simplification bill (MFIP)
- Library project update
  - City contracted with firms in the cities to gather community input on needs and design
  - Architects and community engagement firm
  - By October have plans ready, submit for bonding in 2024
- Mall employees
  - Trying to get word out to employees about workforce services
  - Most of mall reopening in phases in next week
- SOAR Re-Entry Pilot Grant
  - MN DEED grant, SOAR is lead recipient with multiple partners
  - Will serve those returning to workforce after incarceration
  - Target number is 23 clients
  - Entrepreneur training
- MNDOT CDL and Highway Heavy training, community liaisons
  - SOAR received MNDOT grant to support highway-heavy CDL training
  - Will be enrolling for CDL class A, ideally working with city, state, or construction sites.
  - Highway Heavy training starting in 2024
  - Community liaisons helping with outreach and recruitment
- WEES Working Group
  - Network of community consultants and agencies
  - Workforce committee and Entrepreneurship committee
  - Field trip, took a group of 10 individuals and 1 city officials to tour incubator sites in the Twin Cities
    - Looking to build an incubator site in Duluth, 20,000 square feet
    - Examples, art, food,
    - Support businesses and revitalize downtown
    - Trying to breakdown the silos of entrepreneurship and workforce development
    - Has a space, 117 Superior St, old Maurices, has a goal to have tours

- Basement (art space, gallery), five commercial kitchens, Building 117 Brand, products could be sold there
  - Owner wants to see a computer lab, teach coding
- Employer Champions Initiative
  - Lunch and learns taking place every other month
- Occupational Demand and Industry Growth-Carson Gorecki
  - Largest Industries-Duluth
    - Healthcare, retail, and accommodation services account for over half of all jobs
    - Another 26% in educational services, public administration, manufacturing, and professional and technical services
  - Industry Concentration-Duluth
    - Utilities are most concentrated but only 688 jobs
    - Healthcare is second-most concentrated and the largest industry by employment
    - Public administration, leisure and hospitality, other and educational services also more concentrated than across MN
  - Fastest Growing-Duluth
    - Professional, scientific, and technical services
    - Transportation and warehousing
    - Manufacturing
  - Highest Wages-Duluth
    - Utilities
    - Management of companies and enterprises
    - Finance and insurance
- Discussion – Industries of focus for 2023-2024
  - Next meeting, presentation on career pathways by Betsy Hill, how are we putting this data into action?
  - What should we prioritize?
    - Retail, lower pay, not many opportunities to advance.
    - Hospitality, important role in our region, lower wage, not many opportunities to advance.
      - Not all tipped roles
      - Not all 40 hours a week
    - Is our attention better spent on construction, manufacturing, green jobs?
    - Industry clusters, Harvard tool, are there any we'd like to focus on? Aviation, water transportation, port (construction, transportation-trucks, railroad, etc.)
    - Who are the employers in those sectors, do they want our help?
    - What can we do?
    - Technology and IT
    - Digital literacy, technology moving so fast
- U of M, survey of needed skills

**Meeting adjourned 3:57 p.m.**

**Next meeting is Monday, May 15, 2023; 2:00-4:00 p.m.**