



Workforce Development Board

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Duluth, Minnesota 55802



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Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 18, 2024

Duluth Public Library, Green Room, 520 W. Superior St., Duluth, MN 55802

Present:

Andrea Chirhart, Rehab Manager, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Kayla Dietzmann, Director of HR & Marketing, SCS Interiors
Brian Durand, Project Executive, McGough
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
Duane Hill, District Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Julie Johnson Atkinson, Vice President of Sales, Visit Duluth
Chaquana McEntyre, President, Family Rise Together
Jennifer Oakes, DEED Job Service Site Supervisor, Duluth CareerForce
Vance Okstad, Director of Outreach, Cirrus Aircraft
Alex Ren, Youth Representative
Rick Revoir, Dean of Strategic Development, College of St. Scholastica
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
Carol Turner, Operations Manager, Duluth Workforce Development

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

Welcome new members:

- Sonia Vinnes is retiring from DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Andrea Chirhart is the new Rehab Manager for VRS. Welcome Andrea!

Public Comment: None

Icebreaker

Action items:

- January 29, 2024 meeting minutes approved by all members in attendance.

Updates & Announcements:

- Grant funding update
 - Launched Pathways to Prosperity
 - Awarded three Pathways to Prosperity grants, totaling \$875,000, supports career pathway training
 - Partnering with SOAR, Duluth Adult Education, Lake Superior College, and Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
 - Folks who test at or below a 7th grade level in reading or math, or who need additional work readiness help can enter through On Ramp through SOAR
 - Short term certificates may be earned, such as OSHA 10, Jump Into Childcare, digital literacy, etc.
 - They may also transition into Bridge (traditional career path trainings)
 - CNA class started today, eight participants
 - Intro to Medical Office starts in May
 - A new Intro to Human Services class starts in September in partnership with Fon du Lac Tribal and Community College
 - An additional CNA class will be offered in Spring 2025
 - There is a pathway for those working towards a 2-4 year degree on an in-demand field in healthcare and human services, construction, manufacturing and IT. Tuition support for MN schools, paid internships and help with job placement will be available.
 - Drive for Five grant awarded
 - DEED, set aside funds to support high demand jobs with five industries in the state that are experiencing workforce shortages—construction, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and technology.
 - Tuition assistance and paid internships will be available
 - Grant written to specifically partner with ISD 709 and other school districts to help provide funding to staff that would like to earn a teaching degree.
 - We will be able to provide funding to make student teaching a paid work experience for participants.
 - There is a high demand for special education staff so that will be an area of focus as well.
 - Funding will be available for folks to earn a Class B Commercial driver’s license (buses, propane trucks, dump trucks, etc.).
 - Applied to Youthprise grant
 - Part of pilot program
 - Cash assistance for homeless youth 18-24
 - Monthly cash payment every month for two years. No strings attached. No requirements. Wrap around services available.

- The goal is that participants obtain stable housing, and employment and/or education.
 - How can board members support grants?
 - Board members can help support grants by getting the word out. Elena will send flyers to board members.
 - Hiring graduates of training programs.
 - Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Visit our social media sites and share posts.
 - If you have things you'd like us to share, send emails to workforcedevelopment@duluthmn.gov or to Elena Foshay efoshay@duluthmn.gov.
- Elected Officials open house recap
 - Thank you to board members who attended
 - Happy that elected officials asked a lot of questions and showed a lot of interest in workforce development
 - Conversation was centered around youth
 - Follow up was sent to those invited
- MOU/IFA negotiations update
 - It is done and signed!
- Youth Apprenticeship Week
 - May be too late to participate this year, but we would like to keep it on our radar
 - The MN Department of Education is applying for a federal grant to increase the amount of registered apprenticeships (structured, on-the job training program)
 - They are hoping to identify local workforce boards who want to be empowered to certify registered apprenticeships in their areas.
 - Would the board be interested in sending a letter of support?
 - One barrier is that college partners may not be interested or prepared to take on the training component.
 - What's our opportunity in a city the size of Duluth? Healthcare, teaching and manufacturing have a large potential for registered apprenticeships.
 - Apprenticeships can improve talent attraction.
 - A letter to support the state's application to this grant was approved by all members in attendance.
 - Elena will follow up with board if and when the state receives the grant.
- Construct Tomorrow Recap
 - More than 1000 high school students attended
 - 300 people attended evening event/job fair, some attendees have job offers
 - Construct Tomorrow is a state non-profit and a local committee puts it together
- Hiring Now! Monthly Job Fairs
 - April focus on summer jobs
 - If you're an employer who hires for summer jobs, please join us!

Benefits Cliff presentation, Monica Haynes

- Navigating the Benefits Cliff: Resources for Employment Service Providers in MN
- What is benefits cliff?
 - When career advancement puts a family above the income eligibility threshold for public assistance and they end up losing money.

- Where do these cliffs exist in the area and how can we know when a person or jobseeker might experience one of these situations?
- Impacts of Benefits Cliff
 - Taxpayers-pay for public assistance
 - Employers- one third of businesses said some employees were unwilling to accept jobs, increased hours, etc.
- Purpose of this project
 - St. Louis County did not know where benefits cliffs occurred.
 - St. Louis County funded this project. Amanda Yates and Monica Haynes worked on it.
 - Were there data sources available that were accessible to the public. Could we build a tool or calculator that could be used by staff, job seekers, or job counselors? Are there existing tools that already exist that we can tap into or modify?
 - The problem is that there's a lot of public assistance programs, and they all have very complex rules, and varied eligibility criteria. Some phase out gradually. Some have cliffs. They don't necessarily share data on these programs publicly. There isn't one place where you can find the calculations or formulas for these programs.
 - They talked to job counselors, searched for existing tools, evaluated the accuracy and usefulness of the tools, and conducted trainings with counselors on their preferred tool.
 - They did focus groups with job counselors. They said that they are familiar with the benefits cliff, it's difficult to navigate, and difficult to advise clients. They want a simple calculator, and also want a handout they can use in advising clients.
 - A handout was created and is available. It provides a positive outlook for clients.
- Existing tools
 - Atlanta Fed's CLIFF Tool (Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster)
 - Amanda and Monica worked with the Atlanta Fed to make sure this tool is as accurate as possible.
 - Tools available on their website:
 - Snapshot-Identify an immediate path to financial stability
 - Dashboard-Explore the potential financial returns of different careers
 - Planner-How additional income from job, programs, taxes affects someone
 - Employers can use Snapshot or Dashboard could compare two positions that exist as a career pathway within your organization and see whether a person moving from an entry level position into the next natural position will lose money. You may need to increase wages or build in an additional financial support for recruiting.
 - Atlanta Fed has learning opportunities available.
- Post session meeting with legislators is a goal, this is a benefit to everyone.
- This tool helps clients know what their wage goals should be.

Strategic Planning

- Timeline update
 - First, rough draft is written
 - Updated timeline included in agenda
 - Draft to board by Monday, March 25
 - April 8 - 30-day public comment initiates

- Submit to state by May 31
- Key themes/highlights
- Metrics and monitoring

Adjourn 3:48 p.m.

Next full board meeting: Monday, May 20, 2024, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Duluth Public Library, Green Room, 520 W. Superior St., Duluth, MN 55802