



## Workforce Development Board

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Duluth, Minnesota 55802



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### Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 17, 2025

Duluth City Hall, Room 330, 411 West First Street, Duluth, MN 55802

#### Present:

Andrea Chartier, Workforce Development Specialist, Essentia Health  
Nicole Christiansen, Human Resources Manager, Aspirus/St. Luke's  
Corey Cusick, Community Services Director, United Way  
Kayla Dietzmann, Director of HR & Marketing, SCS Interiors  
Brian Durand, Project Executive, McGough  
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  
Monica Haynes, Director, UMD Bureau of Business & Economic Research  
Duane Hill, District Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Kathy Koch, Manager of Human Resources, Allele  
Jennifer Oakes, DEED Job Service Site Supervisor, Duluth CareerForce  
Vance Okstad, Director of Outreach, Cirrus Aircraft  
Paul Pedersen, Director of Outreach, MAC-V  
Rick Revoir, Dean of Strategic Development, College of St. Scholastica  
Ian Vincent, Director of Business Services, True North Goodwill  
Faith Wickenhauser, Associate Human Resources Consultant, Terch & Associates  
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 2:04 p.m.**

**Public Comment:** None

**Welcome:** Brittany Plachecki, Director of Workforce Programs, Community Action Duluth

**Action items:**

- January 2025 Duluth Workforce Development board meeting minutes were approved by all in attendance
- Membership updates
  - Let Elena Foshay know if your contact information needs editing
  - A board position is open for someone in the business/private sector. Online application link can be found here: [Duluth Workforce Development Board | Home](#)

#### **Updates & Announcements:**

- Youth entrepreneur fair
  - The YESDuluth staff team and library staff collaborated to host 14 youth vendors to sell handmade items
  - 120 people attended
  - Staff coached vendors before, during and after the event.
  - Plans to host future events are in the works
- Construct Tomorrow
  - Just under 200 attended the evening open house
  - About 1000 students attended from around a dozen schools
  - Great coverage by the press and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan attended
  - Thanks to all who helped and sponsored
  - NOTE: Improve promotion of evening event
  - 90,000 views on social media posts
- Mentoring Day
  - Event hosted by Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and Duluth Public Schools
  - All day event at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
  - Great resources for parents, especially those transitioning between youth and adult services
- Duluth Promise
  - Partnership between Duluth Public Schools, Duluth Workforce Development, Chamber, APEX, colleges
  - Connecting youth to career pathways, making services more integrated
  - In “big idea stage”, funding being pursued
- Career Pathway Training
  - Wrapping up our last state funded career pathway training--CNA class
  - Hosting another CNA class using state dislocated worker funds
  - If you have ideas about career pathways training you think we should offer, please reach out to Elena Foshay.
- Customer survey
  - Asking for input on how people want to be served
  - We may have to make some changes on how to staff and serve clients

- Please share surveys with your networks
- Community ed class in April
  - Class on job search and resume writing
  - Cost is \$5, scholarships are available

## **Legislative Updates**

- State
  - We've got two bills that MAWB has been working on
    - Youth Formula Grant
      - Seeking to keep funding level maintained
      - Authors in house and senate, invited to testify next week
    - Workforce Development Fund
      - It is a small payroll tax that employers pay that goes into the fund supporting MN youth program, state dislocated worker, and other workforce programs
        - It is not likely to be heard as it's a policy change not a funding change. They would like to focus on it next year.
- Federal
  - Elena Foshay has been doing a lot of budget modeling and looking at different scenarios
    - Our federal WIOA funding has decreased an average of 12% a year since 2020. In total, it is half of what it was in 2020.
  - We are already looking at a 10% decrease this year due to low unemployment rates
  - Minnesota was one of five states selected to be a part of a pilot program tied to MFIP/TANF. The project was cancelled by the current administration, however it may be revised to align with administration priorities.
  - Duluth LISC lost a large portion of their funding when HUD Section Four was eliminated. Workforce Development signed a letter of support advocating for that program to be reinstated.
  - Northern Bedrock, who has a program doing historic restoration projects with young adults, often in state and federal parks, had a large portion of their funding cut.
  - Americorps members were not allowed to attend a local DEI event that was hosted by the Chamber, or they would lose their stipend.
  - We are watching how federal cuts are affecting us locally, and these examples are some of the first ways it is happening.

## **Unemployment and federal worker layoffs update, Carson Gorecki, Northeast Regional Labor Market Analyst, DEED**

- Federal cuts are not showing an impact in MN unemployment numbers yet, but may show in February data
- Week ending 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, statewide total claims are down, NE MN up a little
- Initial claims for first time applicants, down in January

- Most federal employees won't show up in state numbers for a while due to severance packages, federal unemployment claims have their own system
- We are just starting to hear from federal workers who are reaching out for job search help at CareerForce
- A lot of federal workers' education and expertise centered around their federal jobs, and federal workers need help with career change
- Some federal workers live here, but work remotely, headquarters/regional offices are elsewhere
- Federal prison camp in Duluth, decision made under Biden administration to close. Trump administration may have reversed the decision, about 90 jobs. Programming for inmates paused.
- Youngest and oldest workers are struggling to enter job market
- Many employers are holding off on hiring or under hiring freezes
- Request from Carson Gorecki
  - DEED is gathering insights and qualitative feedback from employers. If there is anything you would like to share, please email Carson.

#### **Strategic planning update**

- Living draft, updating as we go
- Puts measures onto strategic priorities
- More to come via email

#### **Presentation of annual report data**

- 2024 Annual Report CareerForce Duluth
- Includes data gathered from most CareerForce Duluth partners
- Covers calendar year 2024
  - Some performance measures use program years instead of calendar years
- 3,521 served by all agencies at CareerForce (does not include those served virtually)
- DWD served 980 participants in 2024
- Hiring Now! Job Fairs served 80 employers representing a wide variety of industries and occupations, with an average of 35 attendees at each job fair

#### **Equity Lens/success stories:**

- An adult education referral in their 20s, English language learner, and YESDuluth participant participated in work experience with the city streets maintenance department. They were able to help him get a commercial drivers' license and he is now working full-time for the City of Duluth.
- An unhoused 18-year-old dropped out of high school, reengaged in school through the Area Learning Center, and met YesDuluth staff there. He worked on completing his high school diploma and participated in work experience with an after-school program. He wanted to work

there so he can see siblings who are in foster care. It is a great opportunity to get work readiness skills and also see family.

- An ALC student attended a YESDuluth field trip to Northwoods Technical College to learn about HVAC careers. He was very inspired by the work HVAC technicians do for energy conservation. On his own after the event, applied for financial aid and classes to become an HVAC technician.
- A participant in our Intro to Human Services training class had been working in healthcare during pandemic. She left due to trauma from that experience, got laid off from her next job and enrolled in Intro to Human Services. She found purpose and direction in class, graduated and got a job at a hospital in a human service role making over \$25 an hour.

If employers are looking for resources to help employees that are immigrants:

- State office for refugee resettlement office, help line available for immigrants
- Push for Prosperity

### **Committee updates:**

#### Governance

- No new applicants, working on recruitment

#### Executive

- Planning meetings and constructive content
- Reach out Kayla or Elena to add to meeting agendas
- Sent letter to Stauber about WIOA

#### Equity

- Planning lunch and learn events, next event mid-April
- Legislative updates and capturing changes as they're happening

#### Construction Working Group

- Construct Tomorrow
- Building Strong Communities

#### Healthcare Working Group

- Discussing jobs in demand

#### Manufacturing Working Group

- Apprenticeship development
- How are tariffs affecting supply chains?
- Housing

#### Emerging Workforce

- Annual work plan for youth program

**Update:** New group coming to work in partnership with DVOPS DEED, very close to ending veteran homelessness in MN

**Meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.**

**Next meeting:** Monday, May 19, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Duluth City Hall, Room 330, 411 West First Street, Duluth, MN 55802