

Workforce Development Board

January 29, 2024

I. Call to Order and Welcome to New Members

II. Public Comment: No public comments

III. Action Items

A. Board voted to approve November 18, 2023, Meeting Minutes

B. Board voted to approve continued advocacy by Director Elena Foshay on concerns related to the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) re-authorization proposal Stronger Workforce for America Act.

Prior to vote, Foshay highlighted three concerns as outlined in a letter to Representative Stauber: (1) mandate to allocate 50% of their funding for training; (2) increased Governor's Set-aside for "Critical Industries Fund"; and (3) Re-designation of Local Workforce Development Areas.

Foshay advised that these provisions will reduce funds resources available locally, duplicate services already delivered at the local level, and reduce local control and accountability.

C. Board voted to approve slate of officers:

Chair: Kayla Dietzmann, Director of HR & Marketing, SCS Interiors

Vice Chair: Calire Farmer-Lies, Marketing & Communication Specialist, Residential Services, Inc.

Secretary: Monica Haynes, Director, UMD Bureau of Business & Economic Research

IV. Updates & Announcements

A. Elected Officials Open House is scheduled for Feb. 28th at 5PM with the goal of explaining the role of the Workforce Development Board and sharing upcoming opportunities and current challenges.

B. MOU/IFA Negotiations are not done yet. Drafts are being reviewed.

C. City Bonding Priorities as approved by the City Council does not include the proposed library redevelopment to include CareerForce. This project is "off the table" in favor of exploring a public/private option.

The approved City Bonding Priorities includes a Spirit Valley Wellness Center project which may include satellite workforce offices along with a focus on serving youth with indoor recreation, meeting spaces, playground, and in coordination with community services provided by Laura MacArthur Elementary School.

D. NOAA Grant Application will be submitted to fund a five-year project to assess the Maritime Workforce and identify necessary training in light of the effects of climate change.

V. Strategic Planning Discussion

A. Board voted to revise and approve Mission and Goals.

Mission: The Duluth Workforce Development Board (Duluth WDB) convenes and collaborates with partners to assess workforce demand, support employers in accessing the workforce they need to fill available jobs and ensure that people of all backgrounds can achieve meaningful employment and a family-sustaining wage.

B. Presentation by Carson Gorecki, Northeast Regional Labor Market Analyst, DEED
Gorecki shared the following trends related to the Duluth-Superior MSA (2019-2023)
About 4,700 Northeastern Minnesotans are out of the labor force but want jobs
Key barriers include: (1) discouraged about job prospects; (2) lack of reliable childcare and transportation; (3) in school and/or training; (4) other familial responsibilities.
The regional population (particularly surrounding Duluth) is growing slowly and aging.
Labor force recovery has stalled.

C. Visit by Mayor Reinert

Reinert shared his professional background and history of service. He expressed his interest in and appreciation for the work of the Board.

D. Small Group Discussion including following questions:

How can we ensure we are creating a workforce system that is responsive to local workforce needs?

How can we better ensure we are meeting the needs of businesses in the areas of recruiting, hiring, and retention?

Key themes from discussion: (1) increase communication between key stakeholders; (2) promote and share existing tools and resources related to retention; (3) calculate costs related to attrition to promote retention practices.

E. Identification of current best practices and areas of strength:

Youth representation on the Board

[DEI Toolkit](#) – planned post-COVID updates

[Employer Champions](#) Lunch n Learn Series

Equity Dashboard

Participation in [Good Jobs, Great Cities](#) Initiative

Involvement of Tribal Employment Rights Offices (TEROs)

No Wrong Door approach for job seekers

Collaboration with Northspan for [Workforce Solutions Series](#)

High-functioning Board with up-to-date bylaws, annual assessment, mentorship program, robust document repository, and high committee engagement.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50PM.

Submitted by Mary Faulkner