

**NORTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICE OF JOB TRAINING
ELECTED OFFICIAL BOARD**

Thursday, December 10, 2015
Virginia Workforce Center

Chair Eichorn called a regularly scheduled meeting of the Local Elected Official Board to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Rusty Eichorn	Garry Gamble	Brian Napstad	Pete Walsh
Tom Rukavina	Kevin Adee		

Excused: Tom Proulx

Guests: Trish Harren, Itasca County Administrator; Erik White, NE Regional DEED Analyst

Staff: Michelle Ufford, Randy Lampton, Renee' Marconett

Motion was made by Adee, supported by Napstad to approve the December 10, 2015 agenda as written, with no additions; motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Walsh, supported by Gamble to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2015 meeting with no additions or corrections; motion carried unanimously.

Handout #1 – October 2015 Funding Summary was reviewed. All current grants and expenditures are in place. Ufford explained the new Fast-Trac Grant (\$70,000) with Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College. They are offering a program to train 35 individuals with experience and understanding of the Corrections field. Successful completers of the program will gain employment in the Corrections field, including correctional officers in institutional settings and security counselors in adult and youth residential treatment settings.

Trish Harren, Itasca County Administrator gave a presentation on the Pathways to Prosperity Program. The pilot program will serve 65 Itasca County residents without dependents during the two year grant period, with an estimated cost of \$3,700 per participant. Some of the barriers these participants face include unreliable (if any) transportation, unstable living arrangements (many described as homeless), DWI or felony charges that limit employment options, and current chemical dependency issues. The program will focus on high growth/high demand industries: healthcare, transportation, and trades. The goals are to increase career awareness, provide for the acquisition of basic skills education, and facilitate placement into positions in high-growth/high-demand industries capable of long-term employment at wages permitting self-sufficiency.

Erik White, NE Regional Analyst for DEED, gave a presentation of the 2015 Northeast Regional Data Profile, along with the changing economic environment and cost of living. The Northeast planning region has consistently reported higher unemployment rates than Minnesota, typically hovering at least 1.0% above the state rate. The region's unemployment rate reached its peak in 2009 at 9.3% and then steadily declined to an annual rate of 5.4% in 2014.

Northeast Minnesota has a considerably older population than the state. Over one third of the population in the region is 55 years of age or older, compared to just one fourth of the state's population. This is a challenge for the decreasing labor force along with a need for replacement and growth of health care opportunities. Health Care is the leading industry (23.2% of all jobs) for

Northeast Minnesota. About 80% of all projected job growth in the Arrowhead region will be in Health Care. Construction, retail trade, and accommodation and food services are also industries that are creating significant demand for workers in the region.

White concluded with explaining wages and cost of living expenses. The basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of two adults and one child, with one full time and one part time worker) was \$50,988 in 2015. The cost of living for a similar family in Northeast Minnesota was \$43,560 – which was the second lowest of the six planning regions in the state. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food and housing; but the region's housing, child care, taxes, and transportation costs were significantly lower than the rest of the state. In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers would need to earn \$13.96 per hour.

Ufford updated the board on the Minnesota Mining Grant Project. The Office of Job Training submitted a modification and has received an additional \$661,000 to serve dislocated workers from area mining companies and mining related industries. Currently, 580 individuals have been enrolled, with a projected target of 825 total enrollments. Rapid response meetings and orientations were recently held for Northshore dislocated workers from Silver Bay and Babbitt. A part time/temporary mining liaison will be hired within the next few weeks to assist with the enrollment of dislocated workers. Additional updates will be given at the next meeting.

Career Counselor John Haugen will be retiring from the Office of Job Training in March 2016. Ufford will be conducting interviews next week and hopes to have someone in place by January 2016 so they can receive the necessary training prior to Haugen's retirement.

A handout was distributed of the NE Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position description. The Regional Career Counseling Coordinator will work to understand the needs of the regional business community and align these needs with the resources and expertise of the NE MN Office of Job Training and Advance MN, the customized training enterprise of the Northeast Higher Education District. Additionally, the Coordinator will work to support regional sector strategies identified by the Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) of the Northeast and Duluth workforce service areas. Ufford plans to start advertising the position next week and start interviews in January 2016.

Interim Fiscal Director Lampton distributed a handout outlining the 900 Fund expenses in detail from 7/1/09 through 6/30/16. The county commissioners had requested a breakout of these funds at the October meeting. Lampton fielded questions/answers from commissioners.

Next LEO meeting scheduled for February 11, 2016, with the election of officers for 2016.

Meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.