

Northeast Minnesota
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD MEETING
Iron Range Resources – Eveleth MN
Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Regular scheduled meeting was called to order by Chair Stone at 10:10 a.m.

WIB members present:

Bud Stone, Allen Rasmussen, Jill Anderson, Dave Ulrich, Betsy Harmon,
Paul Carlson, Kelly Zink, Jason Quiggin, Darik Carlson, Mike Valentine

Excused: Sue Collins, Dave Hart, Barb Hilde, Tom Jamar, Jeff Lee, Terri Nystrom,
Stan Paczynski, Craig Pagel, Roland Root, Al Rudeck

Guests: Beth Peterson, AEOA; Erik White, DEED; Russ Wallner, DEED;
Kathy Joblinske, Manpower; Roy Smith, IRRRB

Motion was made by Rasmussen, supported by Valentine to approve the February 25, 2015 minutes as written; motion carried unanimously.

WIOA Regional Planning

Michelle Ufford

Ufford updated the board on the changes taking place under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA requires Workforce Investment Boards to be agile and well positioned to meet local and regional employers' workforce needs and to assist in the achievement of the State and regional strategic workforce system vision and goals. The purpose of the WIB is to provide strategic and operational oversight in collaboration with the required and additional partners and workforce stakeholders to help develop a comprehensive and high-quality workforce development system in the local area and larger planning region.

Under WIOA, workforce service areas must complete a regional plan in conjunction with contiguous workforce services areas between where there are important commonalities, such as a shared labor pool, interdependent industries, or economic dependencies. The Northeast region will likely be paired with the Duluth Workforce Board to ensure both service areas develop a regional workforce strategy that coordinates the efforts of both regions. Ufford informed the board that at a service and program level, we are already working regularly with Duluth Workforce Development, the city's workforce program department and partner in the Duluth Workforce Center. All Workforce Center partner management (AEOA, DEED Job Service/Vets/Rehab/Services for the Blind, NEMOJT, and Duluth) meet monthly to discuss Workforce Center operations, grant and program opportunities, and sharing costs associated with operating a Workforce Center. The Northeast and Duluth WIBs will be expected to convene a meeting of stakeholders yet this year to begin the process of collaborative regional planning.

Northeast Minnesota Workforce Development System Overview

Michelle Ufford

With the advent of WIOA approaching, Boards will have considerations to make on membership and composition, adopting stronger career pathway and sector partnership strategies, as well as programmatic and operational changes. The Board entered into a discussion about the current workforce development system to benchmark where we are today. Minnesota's Workforce Development System is comprised of a large community of stakeholders, including economic development, education, service providers, and community leaders. Each plays a vital role in ensuring that employers of all sizes have access to a prepared workforce and job seekers have access to services and resources that will enable them to obtain and keep good jobs.

Two organizations play a vital role in Minnesota's workforce system, the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA). The GWDC is the state board that oversees the entire system, including local WIBs, and makes policy recommendations to the governor and legislature about improving the workforce development system in the state. The Northeast region is fortunate to have direct representation on the GWDC through members David Ulrich with Twin Metals, Roy Smith with IRRRB and the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), and AEOA's Director of Planning, Lorrie Janatopoulos. Ufford is the current chair of the Operations Committee of the MWCA, consisting of the Director from each service area in the state, as well as other stakeholders including Paul Carlson from AEOA. The MWCA, led by Director Anne Kilzer, represents the interests of WIBs across the state, coordinates communication and collaboration between workforce service areas, and lobbies on behalf of workforce programs and services as well as the system as a whole.

Under WIOA and as under WIA, the majority of WIB members must be representatives from business in the local area. WIOA takes WIB composition a step further by also requiring at least 20% of members must be workforce representatives to include labor organizations, trade apprenticeship coordinators, community-based organizations, educational institutions, economic and community development entities, providers of services to individuals with disabilities, youth service providers, and Adult Basic Education. The role of the WIB is to ensure the workforce system is strategically able to build links, identify training service providers, designate, certify, and oversee Workforce Centers. Additionally, WIBs should form strategic alliances, negotiate relationships and broker resources to enhance the workforce service delivery system. Much of these roles remain unchanged but there are a few key changes for the WIB to consider over the coming year. Further discussion about new Board expectations and program and operational alterations under the new WIOA will be the focus of upcoming meetings.

Local Workforce Center Partners

Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training, Michelle Ufford

The NE MN Office of Job Training is a MN Workforce Center partner specializing in providing personalized workforce development services to workers and employers throughout Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis counties. They are the regional administrators of federal and state workforce development funding through WIA/WIOA for dislocated workers, adults, and youth, and the state Dislocated Worker and Minnesota Youth programs. NEMOJT also provides

Employment and Training services to recipients of the state's public assistance program (MFIP, the Minnesota Family Investment Program).

NEMOJT employs 28 Career Counselors at 7 Workforce Center locations, including Virginia, Hibbing, Grand Rapids, Aitkin, Carlton, International Falls, and Duluth. Their administrative offices are in Virginia. Informational materials, including an organizational chart and list of programs and services were distributed.

Professional, degreed Career Counselors provide career-building services for low-income and unemployed youths and adults in need of skills, training and resources to secure self-sufficient employment. Assistance is available to workers who have been dislocated from employment due to lay-offs, company closures or downsizing. NEMOJT is currently working with dislocated workers from Boise, Magnetation and the soon to be laid off workers at US Steel. All participants work individually with an experienced and professional Career Counselor who manages each case using an electronic case management system, Workforce One. Each program has its own performance measures that must be achieved each year. Ufford outlined the PY'13 Performance Measures for WIA Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth.

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), Paul Carlson

AEOA is a non-profit organization servicing the Arrowhead. Their mission is to strengthen communities by providing opportunities for people experiencing social and economic challenges. They employ over 300 full and part time staff and utilize more than a thousand volunteers divided among five major departments: Arrowhead Transit, Head Start, Housing, Employment and Training, and Senior Services. Various programs available through the Employment and Training Department include Career Pathways Programming, Adult Scholarship Program, Community Offender Re-entry Program, Lives in Transition, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, MFIP and DWP, and YouthBuild. Many of these programs are delivered through regional Workforce Centers.

Beth Peterson explained the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program for people who want to review or improve basic academic and life skills. To enroll in ABE classes, you must be 17 years of age or older, not be enrolled in public school, and have educational needs below the 12th grade completion level. The program prepares individuals for the high school equivalency exam, transition to college, increases math and reading skills to get or keep a job, and can include career assessment and job seeking skills. Under WIOA, there are new requirements of ABE programs including new program performance measures similar to existing measures for NEMOJT WIA programs. How these changes will affect local programming has yet to be seen but will be shared with the Board as things unfold.

Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Betsy Harmon – Job Service

DEED is the state agency that receives federal funding through the Department of Labor (DOL) and the state legislature. They allocate funding to local areas such as NEMOJT to operate the programs referenced today. In addition, they maintain certain aspects of Minnesota Workforce Centers, the heart of the state's workforce development system, such as accessible computers and assistive technology, facilitate workshops like Creative Job Search, and coordinate business services and events. DEED also maintains the state's online job bank, MinnesotaWorks.net where job seekers can search for openings and employers can post positions. DEED is also responsible for delivering Veterans Services throughout the region, proving labor market expertise, and coordinating Unemployment Services, by facilitating weekly Re-Employment sessions for people receiving Unemployment Insurance.

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), Russ Wallner
State Services for the Blind (SSB)

Vocational Rehabilitation Services seeks to empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independent living and community integration. Eligible individuals who have a physical or mental disability receive vocational rehabilitation counseling, job training, job placement, services to keep a job, and assistive technology. Over 18,000 participants with disabilities received services from VRS in 2014, with 2,869 participants obtaining employment at \$7.25 to \$99.00 hourly wage.

A handout was distributed outlining the State Services for the Blind. This program ensures that persons who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind (including those who have additional physical or mental impairments) have the rehabilitation services they need to prepare for, seek, gain or retain employment. SSB provides vocational rehabilitation services through 16 rehabilitation counselors in 11 field offices, 10 of which are in Workforce Centers. Services are based on customer choice and mutually agreed-upon between customer and counselor and written in a service plan, which must be tied to the customer's obtainment of a vocational goal.

Miscellaneous

The Office of Job Training has been in contact with DEED and local union officials at US Steel facilities in Keewatin and Mt. Iron regarding the impending layoffs of approximately 1,100 people. The Agency will be receiving a \$20,000 Early Readjustment Assistance Grant (ERAG) to assist dislocated workers prior to the layoff and to the receipt of dislocated worker project funds. Preliminary meetings have been held with Rapid Response, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), UI, company and Union representatives to plan for a series of upcoming meetings with affected workers. If certified under TAA, US Steel dislocated workers would be eligible to receive up to two years of TAA services if they are attending post-secondary training, including the extension of unemployment benefits while in training. Once layoff lists are determined, staff will work with the state to schedule informational and enrollment meetings with affected worker and project funds will be applied for.

Meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m. Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 24, 2015 at Iron Range Resources in Eveleth.