

South Central WorkForce Council

September 13, 2023

706 N. Victory Drive

Mankato, MN

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Brent Christopherson at 3:00 p.m.

I. Roll Call

Members Present: Alejandra Bejarano, Brent Christopherson, Amanda Mackie, Christine Olson, Mary Shumski, Nate Warden, Tim Wenzel, and Renae Wolf

Members Excused: Karla Balbuena, Val Bentdahl, Jim Hanson, Jon Nowak, and Nicole Raelyn

Members Absent: DeAnn Boney, Rachel Evers, Stacey Karels, Deb Barnes, Ann Miller and Ashley Leivermann

Guests Present: Kristin Underwood, South Central College; Amanda O'Connell, DEED; Laura Attenberger, South Central College

Staff Present: Heather Gleason, Sara Carrigan, and Abby Flantz

II. Approval of the Agenda

Vice Chair Brent Christopherson called for approval of the agenda. A motion was made by Nate Warden and seconded by Tim Wenzel to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

III. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Brent Christopherson called for approval of the June meeting minutes. A motion was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Nate Warden to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

IV. Endorsement of Workforce Council Members

Vice Chair Brent Christopherson reported that the following nominations were received.

- Keith Bauer, Mankato Clinic
- Lauren Oliver, Coloplast

Letters of recommendation will be distributed to Council members and recommendations will be made via email.

V. Uniquely Abled Academy – Kristin Underwood

Kristen Underwood provided an overview of the Uniquely Abled Academy. The academy provides training for individuals on the Autism spectrum to gain training for in demand occupations. The current program at South Central College focuses on CNC training and is looking to expand to IT in the future. In the first summer the program ran

it had 11 students participate and 9 completed the program with a CNC certificate. In 2023, 6 students participated with 5 completing the program. An overview of the timeline and daily schedule was given, including incorporating training in soft skills with the technical courses. The support that students receive through a Success Coach was highlighted. The program cost \$10,000 per student and received \$38,000 of DHS funding and \$2,700 of DEED funding, leaving no cost to families. Looking towards future years, a tour for high school students and counselors will be hosted, partnership with Taylor Corporation is being discussed, and for sustainability, consistent funding is needed.

VI. History of Workforce Development – Heather Gleason

Heather Gleason presented an overview of the history of workforce development. Workforce Development legislation has been in existence for 161 years. The presentation reviewed the following legislation associated with workforce development: Morrill Act, The New Deal, Wagner-Peyser Act, Manpower Development and Training Act, Economic Opportunity Act, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, Jobs Training Partnership (JTPA), Workforce Innovation Act (WIA), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Correlating historical events were highlighted as they affected the workforce development legislation passed at the time.

VII. Discussion: Please share your top three areas of concern for your business.

Mary Shumski: Changes in leadership vacancies at upper levels, budgets, AFS being short staffed.

Amanda O’Connell: Money being distributed to programs and being able to utilize the funding with the low unemployment rate.

Nate Warden: Staffing, legislation regarding teachers joining K-12 union and its effect on wages, and uncertain legislation.

Christine Olson: Application for programs down, partners for contracting services are short staffed, keeping staff and keeping up with rising wages.

Rena Wolf: Finding licensed nurses with the expansion and need for more RNs and LPNs, COVID pushing nurses to retire early.

Brent Christopherson: Hiring enough employees to cover retiring workforce, being able to partner with student interns, upscaling current employees, and looking at nontraditional labor and talent pools.

Alejandra Bejarano: Building capacity to hire more staff with upcoming funding, looking at robotics training, effects of cannabis regulations for local governments and businesses.

Amanda Mackie: Several retirements of knowledge rich employees, potential government shutdown.

Laura Attenberger: The recruitment and retention of faculty, lower enrollment of students, looking at how to emphasize the value of higher education.

Tim Wenzel: Seeing customers going overseas to cover wage increases, regulatory paid time off and medical leave being implemented, employee wellness and engagement, and early retirement.

VIII. Reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee reviewed the Regional DW Eligibility Policy and recommends it for approval. A motion to approve the Regional DW Eligibility Policy was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Amanda Mackie. The motion carried. The Subsequent Designation Letter was reviewed, and all criteria have been met to continue to operate as a local area. A motion to accept and submit the letter was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Renae Wolf. The motion carried.

Career Pathways

Classes at Adult Basic Education have resumed, and Career Pathways are finishing up. No other updates at this time.

Operations

Construction at the Mankato Careerforce location is almost complete, and the office is open. An EO assessment found that braille signage is needed at some locations and obtaining correct signage is in process. Updating the Occupations in Demand list has been started and will be presented to the Council when ready for review and input.

Service Providers

Mary Shumski shared that today was the first day of the Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) On-Ramp class for the 2023-2024 school year. The Fairmont location has hired two MFIP counselors and are now fully staffed. Interviews are being held on Friday for the open position at the Mankato location. In Mankato, the P2P staff will be at Adult Basic and South Central College one day a week.

LMI Update

Amanda O'Connell indicated that the new job vacancy report has been released. The Southwest region has 14,128 vacancies and 4,896 unemployed. There is a 1.4% increase in the labor force expected from 2025-2035. The largest industries in the area are manufacturing, healthcare/social service, and retail/trade.

Staff Updates

Sara Carrigan shared that Youth RFP will be released this year and asked for volunteers for the taskforce to review responses. The Partners In Career Exploration (PICE) program has 6 interns that have applied and schools are being recruited to host the interns. Construct Tomorrow will take place November 15th with union construction trades participating to provide hands-on activities for high school students.

Abby Flantz shared that Tour of Manufacturing took place on October 5th and there were approximately 600 students that participated with 15 tour sites available. The first Career

Passport video is in the process of being filmed and edited, which features the industry of agriculture.

Heather Gleason reported that Southwest and South Central jointly applied for six different grants equaling 1.2 million dollars for programming for the region. The grants are three different Pathways to Prosperity grants, a WESA grant, a SNAP Support Services grant, and a transportation assistance grant. A Workforce Summit will be held to discuss the state and regional WIOA plans.

IX. Careers That Pay

The Council viewed Cynthia's Story in the Career That Pay video series. Cynthia overcame many obstacles to complete a degree in healthcare.

X. Other Business

Minnesota's Inaugural Workforce Summit: September 20, 2023
Tour of Manufacturing: October 5, 2023

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. December 6, 2023.

The meeting adjourned.

Signed by: Val Bentdahl
Val Bentdahl, Chair