

## **South Central WorkForce Council**

June 12, 2024  
706 N. Victory Drive  
Mankato, MN

The meeting was called to order by Chair Val Bentsdahl at 3:05 p.m.

### **I. Roll Call & Welcome**

Members Present: Val Bentsdahl, Mary Shumski, Amanda Mackie, Nicole Raelyn, Nate Warden, Brent Christopherson, Renae Wolf, and Tim Wenzel

Members Excused: Alejandra Bejarano, Lauren Oliver, Christine Hendrickson, and Jon Nowak

Members Absent: Karla Balbuena, DeAnn Boney, Rachel Evers, Ashley Ewing, Stacey Karels, Ann Miller, and Andrea Montemayor

Guests Present: Margy Hendrickson, MVAC; Kim Walters, SCC; Amanda O'Connell, DEED

Staff Present: Heather Gleason, Sara Carrigan, and Sarah Longtin

### **II. Approval of the Agenda**

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

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Val Bentsdahl called for approval of the March meeting minutes. A motion was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Nate Warden to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

### **IV. Reappointment of Council Members**

Heather Gleason reported that members Deb Barnes, Brent Christopherson, Nicole Raelyn, and Amanda Mackie have completed their terms and are willing to serve on the Council for an additional term. A motion to reappoint the Council members was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Val Bentsdahl. The motion carried.

### **V. North Star Promise – Kim Walters, South Central College**

Kim Walters shared about the upcoming implementation of the North Star Promise Program. The program will be available to students from Minnesota attending public colleges and universities in Minnesota. The North Star Promise Program is a “last dollars in” program which means it will cover tuition and fees after all other gift aid has been applied. Students can apply for the North Star Promise by completing the FAFSA, which was highly encouraged for all students. Kim reported that the legislature is developing

language to determine the order of “last dollars in” programs. The North Star Promise Plus Program is available, with or without the North Star Promise, to also help with tuition and fees. This program is also available by completing the FAFSA.

**VI. Career Passport Videos – Sarah Longtin**

Sarah shared the products of the Career Passport project which include videos of local students going on tours of businesses in the area while listening to the stories of professionals in their field. The project is a way to explore careers in demand in the South-Central region. The videos will be posted on social media platforms and engagement is encouraged.

A link for reference is provided here: <https://linktr.ee/scworkforcecouncil>

**VII. South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp – Sara Carrigan & Sarah Longtin**

Sara shared the history of the South Central Construction Trades partnership and the pilot program with Mankato Area Public Schools this year. Sarah shared video content that was created from the afterschool Boot Camps and attendance results.

**VIII. Program Year 2024 WorkForce Budgets**

WIOA and State Budgets

Heather Gleason reviewed the WIOA and State Dislocated Worker budgets. The Adult program received an 18.9% decrease, the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program received a 5% decrease in funding, and the State Dislocated Worker program received a 7.7% decrease. The program funds were dispersed over the following categories:

- Administration: 10%
- Career Services/Staffing: 36%
- Support: 5%
- Training: 49%

Heather Gleason reviewed the WIOA Youth and MN Youth budgets. The WIOA Youth program received a 17.2% decrease, and the MN Youth program received level-funding from the year prior. The program funds were dispersed over the following categories:

- Administration: 10%
- Career Services/Staffing: 43%
- Outreach To Schools (OTS): 6%
- Support: 4%
- Training: 37%

Workforce Council Budget

Heather Gleason reviewed the projected revenues and expenditures. The budget reflects staff increases for Heather Gleason, Sara Carrigan, and Sarah Longtin resulting in adjustments to retirement, FICA, unemployment, and workers compensation. While health insurance and liability insurance rates increased for the coming year, there was a

slight decrease in overall insurance costs due to staffing changes. A decrease was made to office supplies, and increases were made to the audit fees, telephone, computer, and fiscal services. Other categories remained the same. The Executive Committee recommends budget approval.

A motion to approve the program budgets and the administrative budgets was made by Brent Christopherson and seconded by Tim Wenzel. The motion carried. Amanda Mackie and Mary Shumski abstain.

**IX. Council Member Discussion Question: Describe the current conditions in your industry. What changes are you seeing in your workforce?**

**Mary Shumski** stated that the increase in staff wages has resolved the issue with competitive wages in the private sector. This reflection was proven with the large number of applicants for the latest job posting. Job Services was asked to complete employee-led Individualized Development Plans, this is additional work but is seen as an opportunity for professional growth.

**Amanda Mackie** stated that HeadStart was losing employees to higher paying jobs. They are seeing more applicants that do not meet the listed requirements.

**Nicole Raelyn** stated that the industry has been slow, but they are seeing a pick-up in the amount of work. They are hiring to fill the gaps in the production team. She mentioned their solid training program for the facility and have seen good outcomes.

**Brent Christopherson** stated that the number of jobs is down from last year, but they are constantly hiring for production. There has been an increase in direct applicants. Taylor is looking to enroll 16 skilled operators in their Leadership Exploration and Development curriculum. This curriculum will develop an internal pipeline. Brent mentioned Taylor's continuation of investing time in the local schools by hosting a high school teacher for an externship this summer.

**Renae Wolf** mentioned that the new bed tower is opening, and Mayo feels that they are in a good position with staffing. Mayo has been approved for the pipeline grant and they plan to pursue LPN and Surgical Technician programs. They are partnering with South Central College for their Surgical Technician program. The applicant pool for licensed positions is slow but steady, the applicant pool for unlicensed positions is full of applicants.

**Tim Wenzel** shared that the workload has leveled off and Winegar is shifting employees the best they can to complete work. They are seeing a better pool of applicants now than before. There has been training and internships added, and they are going well. Eight employees attended training through South Central College, seven employees passed and received a National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) credential.

**Amanda O'Connell** shared that there is more funding for opportunities to learn. There are some state employees taking courses about Artificial Intelligence through St. Cloud. Regional Analysts are finding that connections to local partners can help increase awareness of wages, careers, and data tools.

**Laura Attenberger** shared that there have been challenges in hiring in higher education, especially in mechatronics. Professionals in the mechatronics fields, along with others, typically can earn more in wages working in their industry than in higher education. They are also finding that the number of student workers has decreased due to the wage competition of other entry level jobs. Laura mentioned a project that she is working on with HR to create a job bank of adjunct professors.

**Val Bentsdahl** shared that the workload for the industry is down right now. Jones Metal is not hiring at this time. They find challenges to find engineers and engineering interns. Accounting is another area where they find a small applicant pool. The applicant pool for welders is good, however, Jones Metal struggles to find employees to fill their 2<sup>nd</sup> shift positions.

## **X. Reports**

### **Executive Committee**

Tim Wenzel addressed the room to re-elect Val Bentsdahl as the Chair and Brent Christopherson as the Vice Chair. A motion to re-elect the officers was made by Tim Wenzel and seconded by Bill FitzSimmons. The motion carried.

### **Career Pathways Committee – Nate Warden**

Nate Warden shared that ACP Networking Day was a success. Additionally, ABE in Mankato is offering summer classes and 2-day GED Bootcamp.

### **Youth Council**

Sara Carrigan reported the committee learned about the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education plan, MVAC Youth Program process, Career Passport project, Boot Camp, and outreach to schools.

### **Operations Committee**

Mary Shumski shared that the committee discussed the new intake process, DEED leadership is coming to see the Mankato facility, and Waseca is looking at creating a Workforce Development Center.

### **Service Provider Updates – Mary Shumski & Margy Hendrickson**

Margy Hendrickson shared that the new phone with direct help services was used within hours of setting it up. Margy reported that 89 youth are in a work experience. There have been three large group intakes with over 22 youth showing up with interest in working this summer. Overall, the Youth and Young Adult Program is running strong. There is an upcoming youth networking event at Sibley Park. Margy stated that the new staff in Le

Sueur County is bringing in more referrals with increased exposure. Margy was happy to report that they are seeing an increased number of Senior participants existing to employment instead of retirement.

Mary Shumski shared that the Career Lab is steadily getting busier. School employees can apply for unemployment, so staff are assisting with that process. There are two new staff that are great additions to the DEED team. A lateral staff move opened a Dislocated Worker position. Jed Highum is working with Taylor to develop new leadership curriculum for current staff. The Incumbent Worker Training has recently had large enrollment and has been offering training at all career levels. Mary shared that staff has been serving individuals impacted by local layoffs at Nortech Systems, Itron Inc., and Alumacraft. The Veterans program is changing their eligibility which will serve more veterans. Mary shared that the new hotel in downtown Mankato will bring a refresh to the area.

#### Labor Analyst Update -Amanda O'Connell

Amanda O'Connell reported that new data is being released and will provide new labor force projections. The job vacancy survey was completed with 9,600+ vacancies and 1,000+ unemployed. In addition, there will be new wage data for 2024.

#### Staff Updates

Heather shared that the Department of Labor is looking at WIOA reauthorization at the capitol. The Department of Labor is also looking at expanding eligibility for Youth Program, repurposing H1B revenues, raising the cap for incumbent worker training, and increasing the amount of funds that the state can set aside at the state level, which would decrease local funding.

Sara shared that Training Day was hosted in May with a topic of customer service in our programs and organizations.

### **IX. Other Business**

Scrubs Camp: June 11-13, 2024

MAWB Summer Meeting: August 14-16, 2024

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. September 11, 2024.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Brent Christopherson and seconded by Tim Wenzel. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Val Bentsdahl, Chair