

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
CareerForce - Woodbury
Woodbury, Minnesota
March 20, 2019**

Members Present

Christine Dressel	Christopher Eng	Heather Felderman
Jordan Fry	Jeff Klemmer	Sara Murray

Action Team Members

Stan Karwoski	Michelle Kemper	Ann Lindquist
Lee Miller	Steve Moeller	Sarah Shanley

CareerForce Staff Present

Tina Dudzinski	Rachel O'Connell	Karen Ritter
	Rick Roy	

Guests

Lori Drolson, Forest Lake Area Public Schools
Sheila Holbrook-White, Washington County
Jean Houlding, Stillwater Express Solutions
Lee Okerstrom, DEED
Tim O'Neill, DEED
Mark Jacobs, Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board
Liz Jennings, DEED
Robert Rutscher, GED Testing Service

WDB Members Not Present

Susie Evans	Cindy Larson	Katelyn Nowack
	Lori Tapani	

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair – Christine Dressel

Chair Christine Dressel called the meeting to order. It was determined there was not a Quorum of business members in attendance so the Board could not vote on approving the Minutes and other items on the Agenda.

2. Welcome and Introductions

WDB Members, Action Team Members, and Partners introduced themselves.

3. Washington County Transportation Project – Sheila Holbrook-White, Mobility Coordinator

Sheila Holbrook-White said Washington County did a Transit Needs Study which was accepted by the County Board in February 2018.

<https://www.co.washington.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/20549/Washington-County-Transit-Needs-Study-Final-Report?bidId=>

The study found most communities do not have fixed route transit and no fixed routes that connect the cities within the county. There are some circulators focused on older adults, but none are available to the general public every day. The routes that connect to the Twin Cities are based on a traditional work schedule whereas people work every day of the week over multiple shifts. There are spatial mismatches between the location of jobs and where people live. Van pooling brings people to work at the same time but some people work overtime, creating scheduling problems.

Tier One priorities that can be achieved in one to three years:

- Expand the use and capacity of Transit Link which currently is not always available and is not a good connector to work.
- Increase the number and capacity of circulators.
- Implement scheduled intra-county bus service.
- Add site specific shuttles that take riders the last distance to their employer.
- Sponsor subsidized taxi, Uber or Lyft.
- Enhance volunteer programs.
- Create a one stop travel referral.

Question: *Where does light rail fit in?* Commissioner Stan Karwoski replied the study concluded there was not enough new ridership to justify light rail which would cost over \$1 billion. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will be used for the Gold Line on the I-94 route. It has 70% dedicated lanes, transit stations, and flat buses and is about as efficient as light rail at half the cost.

The County developed a Transportation Consortium which is looking at the key areas where people need assistance with transportation. People need access to the community and region and access to healthcare and grocery stores – 20% of Washington County residents have limited access to high quality groceries. The Access to County Services Workgroup is looking at how to work together to push forward on transportation. The Access to Employment Workgroup invites WDB members to join them and work intensively for three months and then every other month to hone in on strategies most important around employment.

4. Employer Engagement – “Employers of Excellence” – Mark Jacobs, Director, Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board (WDB)

Mark Jacobs said Dakota-Scott WDB’s “Employers of Excellence” is modeled after Southeast Minnesota’s “Best Places to Work” program. Rather than focusing on the problems employers face, the WDB wanted to find employers who are doing a good job. Employers fill out a

questionnaire that takes two to three hours to complete and a report is generated comparing them with other companies. Jerry Hefner from Hefner and Associates Consulting in Florida analyzes the data to see how they stack up to other companies. The best employers are recognized at a public event.

The Dakota-Scott WDB started this survey in 2016 and 19 employers took the survey, 19 took it in 2017 and 28 in 2018. There needs to be a point person who manages this. The first year they held a breakfast where 10 of the 19 were recognized as excellent (according to employer size). The benefit to the companies is in the data they collect. The winners also receive a plaque and banner saying “Employer of Excellence” which is a good advertising tool.

The presentation event features a keynote speaker. Jerry Hefner, the consultant, has spoken a couple of years and brings important economic perspective from around the country. One suggestion he has for companies is to “front load” benefits as an incentive to retain employees rather than having higher benefits begin at 5 years (the average person leaves after 4.6 years). He also has a turnover calculator that shows how much turnover costs employers.

The Board has found smaller events of 1 ½ to 2 hours are more popular with employers rather than half day events. Getting applicants is one of their challenges and they work with the chambers and cities to promote the survey. They have some champions who push hard and are competitive in getting businesses involved. The goal this year is to get 40-50 participants but if they do not meet that number, they may not continue next year.

The current cost of the survey is \$5,000 plus \$50 a survey. The cost is offset by sponsorships from organizations such as community colleges and Community Development Agencies. Some employers do not want to participate because they have multiple business locations and some do not want to share confidential data. Jerry Hefner is the only person who sees the actual data. The surveys are open for six weeks, extended a couple weeks, and it takes a month to process the information.

Questions:

Chris Dressel: Do local community newspapers do a write-up on the top companies? Yes, after the event they do a press release with photos and also send it to the county communication people and individual chambers. There has also been publicity on association websites.

Jeff Klemmer: Do employers make changes after receiving this information? Employers get a confidential report and some companies have made changes. The Workforce Board gets a summary report of all the surveys.

Michelle Kemper: What do the companies who do not get into the top 10 receive? They get the confidential report back which identifies areas they can make improvements. Rick Roy added the survey uses algorithms rather than having people look at data.

Sara Murray commented if the winner was announced at a career fair at a community college, it would be a great opportunity to get students interested in the companies.

Jeff Klemmer: If you do not have the staff to assist employers, could you tap into the private sector such as a business consultant? They have considered that but it cannot be a sales avenue, something companies are concerned about.

5. CareerForce Launch April 15th

The CareerForce launch will be April 15th. There will be a series of activities for about two hours with a 30 minute program. CareerForce staff will talk about how they provide services to job seekers and customers will talk about what impact those services had on them. Several mayors and at least one County Commissioner will speak. WDB members are invited to talk about their role in the community and their experience as a board member. Rick Roy said Washington County staff live the culture CareerForce is trying to create and he sees a different energy and a strong sense of commitment here. He would like to see more connection with area Chambers to partner with the business community. *(The DEED commissioner cancelled this event and it will be held at a later date).*

6. Youth Plan Approval

The Minnesota Youth Program funds primarily go to Tree Trust which operates in County and city parks. WIOA Youth programs operate under strict federal performance standards. The budget goes towards staff assistance to youth, out of school youth, youth transitioning to post-secondary training, youth who are still in high school, and some slots for on-the-job training or paid work experience. Because there was no Quorum of business members, a Motion was made to have the Youth Program budget approved by the County Board, the Motion was seconded and approved.

7. Action Team Updates

Oversight Action Team: Rick Roy reported on the Greater Metropolitan Workforce Council (GMWC) <http://mawb-mn.org/gmwc/>. Andrea Ferstan was hired as Executive Director. Previously, she worked at TwinWest, a west side chamber of commerce, and United Way.

There are a number of issues that need to be resolved: the relationship between local areas, county commissioners and the Greater Metro Workforce Council; misunderstandings about the difference in federal law on funding and county funds; and a decision on the type of agreement they will work under – joint powers, Memorandum of Understanding, partnership or contract – all four have different connotations. The budget needs revision to clarify the funding streams because state and federal funding have different requirements. *Commissioner Stan Karwoski* added the budget is just under \$1 million. *Chris Dressel* commented at the last meeting the Council created and approved Bylaws; it is a dynamic group with different viewpoints.

Jeff Klemmer: Has DEED been involved? Deed provided \$147,000 last year for the Job Skills Training Partnership funds.

Rick Roy said the Oversight Action Team has also been involved with suggestions from DEED. Non-profits contend requirements could be an administrative burden on them in applying for funding. Another point of discussion was about creating more diversity in board membership which is difficult because of the strict rules for membership from the Department of Labor.

Career Pathways Action Team – Karen Ritter: The Team did not meet in February. Their goal is to explore what occupational skills are integrated into the school curriculum, what performance measures exist that identify successful student outcomes for career pathway/occupational skill training in high schools, and how the Team can bridge the gaps with the business community and integrate those elements.

CareerForce Action Team – Tina Dudzinski: The Team is in need of an additional chair to assist Cindy Larson. The Team will be discussing CareerForce launch week and the message they want to send out. Resource Room staff will be performing baseline business services. The Team will discuss the new job role, what is currently being done and if there are gaps. They are also looking at moving forward after the CareerForce launch to implement welcoming protocols. A universal intake form across the programs may be developed to enhance service delivery.

Youth Development Action Team – Rick Roy: DEED has a Youth at Work grant targeting underserved populations. If another community organization pursues it, Washington County will evaluate it and may offer support. Washington County will partner with Ramsey County on a grant with the Finishing Trades Institute of the Upper Midwest which includes painters, tapers, glaziers, sign erectors and inside finishing. There will be five week sessions for 15 young adults, 16-24, from Washington County, with onsite hands-on experience training on Mondays and Tuesdays and career exploration on Thursdays (which will include resumes, interviewing, and meeting with workers and employers from the finishing trades.) *Jordan Fry* added the Institute offers an Associate's Degree in the finishing trades.

8. Meeting Adjourned – Chris Dressel