



Business Services/Economic Development Meeting

Date: June 11, 2020

Time: 9:30-11:30am

Location: Online meeting

Attendees: Mark Jacobs, Becky Accettura, Leslie Wojtowicz, Kathleen Gordon, Mary Rothchild, Jackie Buck, Marie Larson, Betsy Hill, Eriann Faris, Jeanna Fortney, Morgan Hill, Dan Wenner, Liz Jennings, Jennifer Byers, Sonji Davis, Jason Wadell, Bridgett Backman

Updates

M State – The Minnesota Office of Higher Education has recently created a package of coronavirus guidance for colleges and universities across the state which provides campus-by-campus flexibility on returning to in-person learning. Enrollment trends are improving but the Fall semester prospects are not looking good. The Board meets next week to look at the budget for 2021. Racial equity has come up in many conversations. There was a framework in place for engaging employers with career and technical education. It was an ambitious plan for this summer (2020). This project was delayed and will likely wait until the fall. Continuing Education and Customized Training topic areas will be back under Mary Rothchild’s management starting July 1.

- “[Equity by Design](#)” seminar is coming up at the end of June. This seminar is for internal M State employees only, but the training is put on by a private education, coaching, and consulting firm called Bright Morning. [Visit their website](#) for more information.

DoLI – Kathleen Gordon: There is a list of COVID-19 resources available [on their website](#). Critical sector businesses (customer-facing) are expected to have a preparedness plan by June 29th, 2020. Construction trades exams are indefinitely suspended. They should be announcing the new [Dual-Training Pipeline grant](#) awardees in the next two weeks.

Minnesota Chamber – Jennifer Byers: The Chamber has been trying to assist businesses with webinars about how to reopen safely. About 90% of businesses are operating in Minnesota right now. They are also trying to provide resources for businesses damaged by civil unrest in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Chamber is working with an economic forecasting group to get a sense of the impact of COVID-19 closures on the state economy. The report will be done in the next few weeks.

DEED – Jackie Buck: Blake Chaffee is now moving into a Deputy Commissioner role. There are two more Assistant Commissioners starting Monday. Racial equity has been the focus of conversations recently at DEED. There have been “town halls” within the agency on this topic. Workforce Strategy Consultants are working on a blog post series.

DEED – Liz Jennings: Despite major layoffs, there are employers who are hiring. They are still operating weekly career fairs on Monday mornings. At least 30 employers have participated so far. Liz will be working with M State next week on a project involving “Learn and Earn employers” – highlighting ways to work while getting tuition reimbursed. If anyone is interested in holding a regional job fair, reach out to Liz for assistance.

DEED – Jason Wadell: DEED’s Rapid Response program has been seeing an increase in “warning” activity, but this does not always translate into actual layoffs. There has been a delay between when employers furlough people and when they are laid off. This is creating problems, as the employer loses touch with people before the layoff, making it difficult for Rapid Response to contact them later. Additionally, businesses do not often collect personal email addresses. Rapid Response has worked

with approximately 180 businesses and around 25,000 employees since the beginning of COVID-19. They are still trying to connect with onwardus.org, which is similar to CareerForce but based on COVID-19 response exclusively.

- Some local areas have heard concerns from businesses about fraudulent UI applications. Employers can email Jason Wadell (Jason.wadell@state.mn.us) with their concerns and Jason will send it on to UI.

EDAM – Morgan Hill: The Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM) conference will be virtual next week. You can [register online](#). Reach out to Morgan to share topic ideas for future events.

Local Areas—

- **Rural Minnesota CEP:** Some parents in the area have decided to homeschool their children for the next academic year to protect them from COVID-19, creating concerns that this will reduce per-pupil funding to public schools. The Northwest Minnesota Regional Workforce Alliance ran a pilot program on the Inclusive Workforce Employer designation. They are getting ready to restart this program. More information is [available online](#).
- **Minneapolis:** Working on virtual employer services. They are looking into doing a collaborative youth event with M State.
- **Southeast Minnesota, WDI:** The local board has been fully functional since COVID-19 began. There has been an increase in MFIP client traffic. Starting Monday, they will begin to use an appointment system.
- **Anoka:** The Department of Labor recently provided feedback on the opioid grant application. DEED will be working with local areas on next steps.
- **Southwest PIC:** Work experiences were halted in March but are now phasing back. Educators and students are both interested in returning to work experiences.
- **Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services:** Recently saw an increase in incumbent worker projects. Virtual job fairs are coming up. They are also working on a series of marketing videos.
- **Dakota/Scott:** The educator bus tour has moved virtually which may help draw a larger audience. They also recently held their first virtual workshop with employers and jobseekers.

Discussion: What information do employers need, but don't have?

- Increased access to infrastructure and technology is essential, although virtual methods will only be a solution for a certain sub-set of jobseekers and sectors. It has been difficult to bring construction trade opportunities online.
- M State has been working with Centers of Excellence to dig into employer connections with students.
- Dakota/Scott hopes to offer small business grants or loans. For some, this money could help pay for PPE.

Discussion: Disparities and Inclusion

- M State recently received a new grant. One of the objectives is to increase communication with community-based organizations. It also has funds for professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Next meeting: July 9, 2020