



MAWB Business Services/Economic Development Committee Minutes

April 12, 2021

Employer-Related Updates: Items Pertinent to Employers or Employer Services

- M State
 - [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Talent Finance initiative](#) is exploring new ways for employers to help students finance their higher education debt. More information here on their website or [read their white paper](#).

- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
 - Event on April 29th at 10:00 AM to present the key findings of the Minnesota: 2030 Report. [Registration here](#).
 - 2021 Workforce Solutions Forum on May 13th at 10:00 AM event. Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of the Lumina Foundation will be the keynote speaker. [Registration here](#).

- Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM)
 - Continuing to work with business to understand impacts on taxes from legislation this session.

- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED)
 - Will be hearing a guest presentation about [Starlink](#) at an upcoming meeting. Also closely monitoring the legislative session and providing input on potential impacts of bills.

- State Agencies
 - DEED, Liz Jennings
 - Tech Month has already been successful for jobseekers. They are still looking for employers to join their weekly events – please send recommendations to Liz Jennings.
 - DEED, Jackie Buck
 - Workforce Strategy Consultant newsletter will come out in April. [Sign up for emails here](#). A monthly webinar, Workforce Wednesdays, will include hot topics from employers.
 - Anderson Windows & Doors is searching for candidates. They will guarantee an interview to anyone who applies. They are looking for \$18-23/hour positions. There is a metro van pool available through Metro Transit.
 - Continuing engagement with employers around hiring immigrants and refugees.
 - Coursera has been extended through June 30th for those who have courses in-progress. If you know of success stories from individuals who completed the

Coursera I.T. certificate and were hired, please send them to Ben Baglio at ben.baglio@state.mn.us.

- DEED, Chet Bodin
 - They have heard throughout the state that diversity and inclusion is a topic of increasing interest to employers. The Inclusive Workforce Employer (I-WE) program continues; two new employers received the designation recently.
- DEED, Della Ludwig
 - Working on rolling out the I-WE designation in Central Minnesota. A pilot will run this summer. Collaborating with the Central Minnesota Manufacturing Association to prep for Manufacturing Month in October. The 4th Annual Innovative Approaches to Career Readiness event will be held on Friday, May 7th, 2021 starting at 9:00 AM. [Registration here](#).
 - New initiative to work with employers on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce in manufacturing, especially in management positions.
- DoLI, Dan Solomon
 - [Dual Training application is open through April 16th](#) with funding available up to \$150,000 per company and \$6,000 per employee.
 - [April 15th IT Apprenticeship event](#) (part of April's Tech Month)
 - Save the date for May 12th half-day event on diversity and inclusion with employer-based training. The target audience will be employers. More details to come.
- Local Areas
 - Rural Minnesota CEP
 - Have been holding training sessions with employers about communicating with applicants (sending automated status updates about their applications or sending rejection letters).
 - Cold calling businesses has resulted in some additional youth work experience placements.
 - City of Duluth
 - Hiring in the \$12-18/hour range is a challenge in Duluth as well as many other areas of the state. Transportation remains another issue.
 - Drive-thru job fairs are continuing and have been successful.
 - Hospitality Hiring Week will utilize CareerForce staff to hand out flyers and put together packets of information about hiring opportunities. Some employers are also creating a universal application to streamline the process. The goal is to have staff scan and send completed applications. The drive-thru job fair for Hospitality Hiring will likely be at the end of April. Exact date is TBD.
 - Central Minnesota (CMJTS)
 - Have been working on I-WE presentations for potential members. They are hoping to get funding for a separate I-WE website like the one used in Northern Minnesota.
 - [Bounce Back Project](#) is an initiative with CentraCare Health. They will be hosting a webinar on resiliency and mindfulness that employers can join for free.

- Employers have been pushing for in-person hiring events.
- Southeast Minnesota (WDI)
 - [April 22nd Workforce Forum](#) will be combined with Best Places to Work event. Over 120 registrants already.
 - Accelerated welding training 5/17 – 5/21 and accelerated forklift training will be held in early June.
 - In general, have been hearing more urgency and desperation from employers recently.
- Ramsey County
 - Regional virtual job fairs – working with the Center for Economic Inclusion on an assessment for employers. Also holding a virtual panel with tech industry experts.
- Anoka County
 - Partnered with local chamber on a youth event. Used EasyVirtualFair and the school's WebEx platform.
- Stearns-Benton (Career Solutions)
 - Received the Diversity and Inclusion Action Guide from Duluth and have been working on changing the listed resources to the St. Cloud area. Incumbent worker training continues.
 - The [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) is a source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.
 - [April 14th Assistive Technology Webinar for Employers](#) – primer on assistive technology and how employers and companies can use it successfully.
 - Mary Rothchild recommended this [Career Planning Workbook](#) which could be used in conjunction with Career Solutions' projects with schools.

Summary of Special Presentation

Neela Mollgaard from [Launch Minnesota](#) joined the meeting to provide background and context about Launch Minnesota, a new initiative (October 2019) of the state of Minnesota government. They focus on startups and funding entrepreneurs. They were allocated \$3.2 million in funding by the legislature and have also raised \$1.8 billion in private investment capital. Launch Minnesota works through regional hubs and these can serve as connection points to local areas. In the last biennium, the \$3.2 million allocated by the legislature focused on high-tech innovation. Funding for this biennium is still an open question. Startups who apply to a grant through Launch Minnesota but who don't receive funding are given access to events, mentoring sessions, and constructive feedback and are encouraged to reapply.

Discussion

Committee Chair Mark Jacobs posed a question asking about the most important thing to do for employers in the next 30 days. Ideas included trainings for entertainment-type employers (such as Valley Fair, resorts, etc.) which are not currently on the ETPL, sharing best practices through the Workforce Strategy Consultant newsletter, and connecting job fairs with food distribution. Discussion ensued about training employers about communicating with employees – a suggestion was made to have rejection letters include links to CareerForce resources. Conversation also returned to the \$12-

16/hour wage which had been mentioned several times previously during the meeting. This wage is not competitive across most of the state, especially given that other structural issues such as lack of childcare and transportation are still prevalent across the state. COVID-19 remains a concern for many positions, especially those that are customer-facing. The general Labor Participation Rate is also down. Parents have been responsible for their children during school shutdowns and since children may not be vaccinated before the fall, this remains an issue. Reports of age discrimination in hiring older workers (55 to 70) and lack of specialized events/training for older workers are also contributing to the issue.