



## **MAWB Operations Committee Minutes**

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Voting members of the Operations Committee attending:** Carrie Bendix, Mark Jacobs, Jinny Rietmann, Nicole Swanson, Deb Bahr-Helgen, Vicki Leaderbrand, Kevin Cardille, Tammy Biery, Elena Foshay, Heather Gleason, Marie Domiano, Janelle Wald, Ling Becker, Barb Chaffee.

### **DEED Workforce Development Updates**

Deputy Commissioner Marc Majors shared updated from DEED. Temporary Acting Commissioner Kevin McKinnon will be filling in following Commissioner Grove's departure for the Star Tribune until a new Commissioner is identified. Additionally, Lorrie Janatopoulos, CareerForce Director, is retiring. Her last day will be April 11<sup>th</sup>. They will start seeking applications for her replacement shortly thereafter. Mike Lang will serve as Acting Director in the interim. Additionally organizational chart changes include Katie McClelland who is stepping in as the new Director of the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). Katie was recently with MnTech and has many years of federal workforce experience with WIOA. Sonji Davis was also named as the new Policy Coordinator for the GWDB. The new GWDB team will work on next steps regarding local and regional plans.

Deputy Commissioner Majors is holding off on making a decision regarding regional funding until allocations to the states from the federal government have been announced. The allocations usually are announced sometime between March and April each year.

### **Agenda & Minutes**

The Chair called for approval of agenda. Deb Bahr-Helgen moved to approve the agenda and Jinny Rietmann seconded the motion. The motion carried. Nicole Swanson moved to approve the meeting minutes and Vicki Leaderbrand seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **Partners for Reentry and Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD)**

- Jeremiah Carter, Program Supervisor, shared updates regarding the PROWD grant. This is a grant focused on supporting formerly incarcerated people as they re-enter the workforce. It is a federal grant and focuses on federal prisons.
- The grant will also provide vocational training for program participants. DEED is partnering with Minnesota State Colleges & Universities on a business and entrepreneurship certification. DEED staff will provide career readiness training. There are also some cognitive behavior intervention options via group sessions to help overcome barriers to employment.
- Currently, the DEED grant team is forming an Advisory Committee. They have reached out to statewide employers and industry representatives. The Advisory Committee will meet quarterly.
- Services will be delivered to program participants in the prison facility initially. After release, participants will get hands-on training in the building trades and other areas.
- Committee members emphasized the importance of collaboration and connection between the PROWD grant and the DEED Pilot Re-Entry Grants. Deputy Commissioner Majors explained that they did not know about the PROWD grant when they first asked MJSP for funding for the re-

entry projects. Both grants will be put in Jeremiah's department to help increase collaboration, connection, and sharing of best practices.

### **Employment Flag Amendment**

Scott Godfrey, Performance Data and Reporting Coordinator with DEED, joined the meeting to discuss a recent issue regarding wage detail in Workforce One. There is a State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) Agreement which basically allowed DEED to share wage detail information with local areas. However, it has recently come to light that in the transition from WIA to WIOA, sharing this wage detail is no longer allowable. The SWIS Agreement is an intentionally conservative approach with the goal to be as cautious with the data as each state's own UI office would be. The employment flag data was removed from Workforce One and FutureWork. Texas is leading an amendment to make a change to the SWIS Agreement so that DEED can share this information again. The amendment has been drafted and it is ready for state signatures, but Minnesota has not received it yet. All 52 state UI agencies must sign. It's unclear how long this process will take.

To recap, DEED has the data but it cannot be shared with providers directly or indirectly (through DEED). The state can only provide aggregate counts at this time. The committee was encouraged to contact the Adult Programs team at DEED to discuss possible solutions until the amendment has been approved.

As a follow-up from the Jobseeker Services Committee, Scott also clarified that there is no change to the cut-off date for making changes in PY22 WIOA Youth data – this was just a miscommunication with the Youth Team. The date will still be in July as it has been in the past.

### **Job Service Updates**

- Joan Berning, Regional Manager with DEED Job Service, is also retiring. There will be two celebration events planned for Joan and Lorrie. April 4<sup>th</sup> will be for Joan, and they will have a gathering at around 3:30 PM at the Great Northern Building (with cake!) and then a gathering at the Lost Fox (across from Union Depot) at 5:00 PM. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, the same activities will be held again for Lorrie's retirement.
- Trainings are ongoing for migrant/seasonal farmworkers, foreign labor jobs, and H-2A jobs. There is one this afternoon on services for migrant/seasonal farmworkers. Recordings can be made available.
- Working with ABE on conditional work referral for digital literacy training. There will be a joint training on April 25<sup>th</sup> about conditional work referrals.
- DEED is working hire a Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program Manager. This would include agricultural workers and foreign labor jobs.
- There is a monitoring process underway for employment services. Art Larsen is doing internal monitoring (of the DEED Job Service team) and someone else will be doing more formal external monitoring. Findings will be shared with the MAWB group.
  - NEXT STEPS: Anastasia Polda will be invited to a future MAWB Operations meeting to discuss the SNAP Workgroup.

### **State Monitor Advocate Presentation**

- Lidibette Guzmán, the State Monitor Advocate for Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Services, joined the meeting to give a presentation about her work. She reviewed that there is a shorter timeline for addressing migrant worker concerns than non-migrant worker concerns,
- Other requirements include promoting the complaint system in CareerForce locations, having a designated complaint specialist, and keeping a log of all complaints which needs to be reported quarterly.
- The committee asked a few questions. The group agreed that it would be helpful to hold two trainings: one for office managers of CareerForce locations to learn what the regulatory requirements are, and another one for the designated individuals taking complaints to learn what their responsibilities are.

### **Areas of Substantial Unemployment (ASU) Presentation**

- Oriane Casale, Assistant Director for the Labor Market Information Office at DEED, gave a presentation on Areas of Substantial Unemployment. Unemployment rates are incredibly low in Minnesota right now, which means there are far fewer ASUs than there have been over the past couple of years. Many local workforce development areas do not have any ASUs at all, which is a rare situation.
- The committee discussed whether it would be to Minnesota's advantage to consider reworking the ASU formula. Jeanna will discuss with the US Workforce Association group about this idea.
- Ultimately the amount of funding coming from the federal government to the state would not be impacted by changing this formula; it would only change how the amount is distributed among the local areas.

### **Hot Topics**

- **55+ Best Practices:** The group discussed best practices from local areas for serving 55+ populations. Duluth and Rural CEP shared ideas. The committee also discussed a proposal from DEED for an older workers program. The group discussed adding a subcommittee of the Jobseeker Services Committee to discuss best practices for serving older populations.
- **Childcare Career Pathways:** Several local areas have avoided using childcare in career pathways because the field tends to have low pay and few opportunities for advancement. However, childcare is an urgent need across the state, so the committee discussed their ideas and past projects on childcare.
- **Pathway Home Grant:** Workforce Development Inc. is interested in collaborating with someone on this grant, but they cannot be the lead agency, so they're looking for a co-applicant.
- **Prepaid Debit Cards for Work Experience Wages:** Giving youth checks for their work experience wages does not work out well – lost checks, immediate check cashing is not ideal etc. A few local areas are using US Bank for prepaid cards. Rural CEP uses ACH credit.

### **Director's Report/Discussion**

- **MOU/IFA Updates:** Local areas shared their updates on negotiations. Most areas are at an impasse due to a few key questions:
  - Does VRS need to contribute to the front desk?
  - How should FTEs be counted if they are not working on-site 100% of the time?

- How should customers be counted – program enrollments, participants, other?

Nicole Swanson moved to develop a memo detailing these specific questions and requesting a working group meeting with DEED partners with the goal of coming to agreement on methodology/guidelines for IFAs and MOUs, along with answers to the above questions. Jinny Rietmann seconded the motion. The motion carried. Should such a meeting occur, members of the Board of Directors will be invited—with Nicole Swanson and Elena Foshay representing local area directors.

- Jeanna provided updates on the legislative session. MAWB's MYP bill was heard in the House and Senate and laid over for possible inclusion on the omnibus bill. DEED's budget bill was just released and Jeanna will send it to the committee for review.

Following the Director's Discussion and Committee Reports, the committee adjourned at approximately 2:00 PM.

**The next Operations Committee meeting will be held on Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) building at 100 Empire Dr., St. Paul, MN 55103 or online via Zoom.**