



MAWB Operations Committee

June 27, 2024

Voting members present: Erik Aamoth, Rick Roy, Mark Jacobs, Deb Bahr-Helgen, Jinny Rietmann, Ling Becker, Carrie Bendix, Heather Gleason, Dina Wuornos, Tina Jasper, John Preuss, Tammy Biery, Nicole Swanson, Marie Domiano, Kevin Cardille

Vice Chair, Ling Becker convened the meeting at 9:03 AM. The committee members and guests did a round of introductions.

Approval of the May minutes & today's agenda moved by Rick, seconded by Mark. 12 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

Employment & Training Program Updates – Ama Akakpo

- Performance Negotiations: Overview of the performance negotiations held on May 30th with DOL.
- WEIOWA State Plan: Approval of the WEIOWA State Plan, effective July 1st through June 30th, 2028. It includes strategic goals for workforce development.
- Youth Waivers: DOL approved waivers lowering the requirement for spending on out-of-school youth from 75% to 60% and allows Individual Training Accounts for in-school youth.
- Policy Academy Participation: Minnesota's participation in the NGA Policy Academy to strengthen SNAP Employment and Training delivery.
- Legislative Updates: Highlights from the 2024 legislative session, including expanded eligibility criteria for WEIOWA and the State Dislocated Worker Program.
- Funding Requests: Information on funding requests for training programs and reduced needs for local workforce development areas.
- Direct Appropriations: Details on direct appropriations for adult and youth programs and ongoing implementation efforts.
- Training Announcement: Upcoming training on electronic document storage for new and experienced staff, focusing on Federal requirements and State policies.

CareerForce MN Director Updates – Jeanna Fortney

- Veterans Program Update
 - Eligibility Expansion: The veterans' program has expanded eligibility criteria for program:
 - Veterans self-identifying with a disability
 - Recently separated veterans (within the last 3 years)
 - Any unemployed veteran (previously had to be unemployed for a specific time)
 - Heads of single-parent households
 - Implementation: The changes are effective immediately but will be implemented over the next year. Ray Duha is leading the implementation efforts. Further information will be provided as Ray's team determines necessary steps for local implementation

- SNAP Referrals
 - 2,500 SNAP referrals received since January.
 - 50% of those referrals have been contacted.
 - DHS will send text notifications to individuals about upcoming calls to increase contact rates.
 - Data matching will be implemented to track enrollments in Workforce One programs.
 - Inclusion of county eligibility worker contact information in referrals to address benefit inquiries.
- Employer Engagement Team
 - 7 new positions are being filled: 1 supervisor and 6 staff members.
 - Geographic Distribution: 2 staff in the Metro area, 1 in Central Minnesota, 1 in Northwest Minnesota, 1 in Northeast Minnesota, 1 in Southern Minnesota (based in Mankato)
 - Rationale for Distribution: Metro area has the highest number of employers and job openings. Central Minnesota had the second highest. Northwest and Northeast regions are large, so splitting into two service areas. Southern Minnesota's staff will be based in Mankato but will cover the entire southern region.
 - Duties and Goals: Collaboration with local workforce development boards, Drive for 5 grantees, employers, and other workforce partners. Understanding and addressing regional business needs and gaps.
- Director Fortney's full CareerForce Division update can be viewed [here](#).

GWDB Updates –Sonji Davis

- Sonji Davis thanked everyone for their timely submission of local and regional reports and expressed appreciation for their efforts.
- Update on Local and Regional Planning: Reports were submitted by May 31st. The Governors Workforce Development Board Special Committee is currently reviewing the signed Workforce Development area plans. By the end of the week, all worksheets should be completed.
- Scheduling polls have been sent out; meeting dates and time preferences are expected by Monday, July 1st. Six regional in-person meetings are planned across the state. Location preferences are needed; a designated contact from each area is requested to email Sonji with preferences. Hybrid meeting options are considered based on location and accommodation capabilities.
- Approval Process: Local plans will be approved by the Commissioner by the end of August. Sonji will provide a report with suggestions and comments for the Commissioner's review.

Hot Topics

- Shared Document Management Options
 - Cate and Bob proposed various document management options with capabilities and cost.
 - Move forward with a MS Teams pilot for Legislative Committee, Jobseeker Services Committee, and Summer Conference Committee.
 - Bob will prepare training documents for getting teams to work on your computer.
- Capacity Building Funding for Small Nonprofits

- Jinny shared that her organization received capacity building funds to support a smaller nonprofit. However, she expressed a lack of clarity regarding the requirements and expectations, particularly related to budgeting and deliverables. The nonprofit had to submit a budget and work plan with minimal guidance and that there was no clear communication from DEED. Tammy discussed a similar experience with a nonprofit receiving direct appropriation funds.
- There was a consensus that clearer guidelines and expectations are needed for nonprofits receiving such funds. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the grants, especially when large sums are allocated to organizations with limited capacity. It was suggested that a structured approach and toolkit be developed to support smaller nonprofits in managing these funds effectively.
- Rapid Response Process
 - There was expressed frustration with the rapid response process, citing delays in handling dislocated worker cases and lack of timely communication from DEED.
 - Example: A nursing home closure announcement took DEED three weeks to respond, and the process was further delayed, leading to ineffective intervention. The current rapid response policy dates back to 2006 and is not aligned with the current needs.
 - Jinny suggested documenting issues and forwarding them to the Commissioner to seek policy changes. Gathering case studies to highlight systemic problems and advocate for reform was proposed.
- Corrie's House Partnership
 - Corey's House is a nonprofit organization focused on supporting victims of sex trafficking.
 - Statistics for Minnesota: Over 5,000 students have engaged in sex for something of value. Sex trafficking is present in every county in Minnesota. The Twin Cities ranks among the top 13 locations in the U.S. for sex trafficking.
 - Corey's House has purchased a property. Remodeling and licensing are in progress; expected to open in approximately one year. Focus will be on providing services to youth aged 13 to 21. Plans include collaborating with community services and other departments to ensure comprehensive support for transitioning youth.
 - Continue collaboration and information sharing with Corey's House and other involved organizations. Monitor progress and explore further support options for affected youth.
- DHS Childcare Modernization Working Group
 - The Department of Human Services (DHS) is modernizing family childcare center regulations. Concerns have been raised about the transparency of the process, including difficulties in accessing draft regulations and providing feedback. Hearing sessions and resources for diverse abilities and languages have been insufficient.
 - There is a fear that these stringent regulations might force family childcare providers to close. The impact of these regulations on family childcare providers, especially in rural areas, is significant.
 - Applicable AMC Affiliates are meeting on this to draft a joint statement and AMC staff will be meeting with DHS leadership to voice concern. Dina, Ling, and Elena will attend on behalf of MAWB.
- Apprenticeship Work Group for MAWB

- It was proposed to create a work group focused on apprenticeships, which would involve establishing a community of practice to work with the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and other stakeholders. The work group would share resources, organize information, and serve as a central contact point for apprenticeship efforts.
- The group will potentially be a subcommittee of Business Services/Economic Development Committee or operate separately. Tammy Biery, Chair, provided input on the value of sharing apprenticeship practices and learning from each other.
- The idea of the apprenticeship work group was supported. Marie L. and Leslie W. were suggested to lead the initiative. The group will seek to include representatives from each region to ensure broad representation.

Work Authorization & Immigration Presentation – Marissa Hill-Dongre

- Marissa's presentation aimed to provide a basic understanding of how immigration law intersects with employment. The goal was not to make attendees experts but to enhance their understanding of immigration status and work authorization.
- Marissa used an analogy of a hotel to explain the complex U.S. immigration system:
 - Dungeon: Represents immigration detention for individuals apprehended while entering the U.S. illegally or violating immigration laws.
 - Basement: Represents undocumented individuals who are either unlawfully in the U.S. or in removal proceedings.
 - Lobby: Represents those with temporary or pending immigration status, including asylum seekers and those applying for lawful permanent residence.
 - Hotel Rooms: Represents non-immigrant visa holders, such as students or temporary workers.
 - Chapel/Floor of Refuge: Represents individuals seeking refuge in the U.S. under humanitarian visa statuses, including refugees, asylees, and other special immigrant categories.
 - Apartments: Represents lawful permanent residents (green card holders), who have more secure immigration status.
- Marissa emphasized the significant overlap between immigration law and employment, with various immigration statuses influencing a person's ability to work legally in the U.S.
- See the full presentation [here](#).

Executive Director & WIOA Reauthorization Updates – Cate Duin

- Cate provided an update on the ongoing onboarding process, which is progressing smoothly. Have been visiting various CareerForce locations to better understand local circumstances. Weekly check-ins with Elena and Ling have been beneficial for receiving guidance and feedback. Building relationships internally and externally is a major priority during the onboarding period.
- The Executive Director has met with over 35 contacts in the past six weeks to establish connections and understand organizational opportunities and challenges.
- The agenda for the upcoming summer conference was discussed, highlighting key sessions and speakers. Registration is open, and attendees are encouraged to register. The final agenda will be posted online soon. Nineteen promising practice nominations were received, and the winners will be announced soon.

- Ongoing efforts to prepare legislative priorities for the next session were discussed, with language fine-tuning underway.
- The Executive Director will be attending the National Association of Counties Annual Conference, focusing on topics such as second chance hiring and career pathways. Additional travel to Chicago for a GLETA meeting and the Department of Labor Region 5 State leaders meeting is scheduled.
- Cate reviewed the Senate's release of language regarding WIOA bill language.
 - Feedback Deadline: July 5th for providing feedback on Senate bill language.
 - Feedback Process: Feedback to be submitted line by line using the provided template. Additional feedback will be directed to senators, particularly Senator Smith.
 - Potential delay in the bill's progress until after the election.
 - Possible inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act or Appropriations Bill.
 - Concerns about potential immigration-focused amendments impacting the bill.
 - Positive Measures:
 - Removal of the training mandate present in the House bill.
 - Expanded definition of opportunity youth, including those involved with justice or foster care systems.
 - Concerns:
 - Funding Split: Maintained 65/35 split for in-school vs. out-of-school youth. Limited flexibility in service provision.
 - Local Area Redesignation: Increased state governor authority to consolidate or restructure local workforce development areas.
 - Potential consolidation of states with populations under 5 million; Minnesota is slightly above this threshold.
 - Concerns about the impact on local partnerships and service delivery.
 - Allowance for governors to set aside an additional 10% of Title I funding for statewide training initiatives.
 - A decrease in governors' reservations for rapid response from 25% to 15%.
 - Comparison with the House Bill: Similar but with key differences in local area consolidation and flexibility.

WorkWell Discussion – Julie Brekke

- Julie Brekke introduced herself and WorkWell Minnesota. Julie is also the Executive Director of Hired.
- WorkWell Minnesota is a coalition of workforce development nonprofits focused on systems change rather than direct service.
- Founded approximately 12 years ago by workforce development leaders. Aims to unify the voice of nonprofits to impact job seeker support and policy.
- Julie introduced the new website workwellminnesota.org, developed with the firm Oleo.
- Exploring ways to align policy initiatives and legislative priorities between WorkWell Minnesota and MAWB for the next session.

The committee concluded at 2:05 PM.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 14th from 12-3pm in Duluth, MN