



Business Services/Economic Development Committee

November 20, 2025, 9:30-11:00am

The committee was called to order at 9:32 am.

Featured Topic: Evolve Employment Program – Ray McCoy, ERAF Program Coordinator – MN Department of Employment & Economic Development

- Ray joined the committee to share an overview of the Evolve Employment Program. The full presentation can be viewed [here](#).

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

- M State
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM)
 - Gave an update on Lakeville’s workforce/economic development projects, including an upcoming session on how workforce and economic development are driving regional transformation.
 - Described career exploration work with schools, using a “career wheel” with stations to expose youth to different paths and intentionally connecting those activities to:
 - 8th-grade “Stepping Into Your Future” programming, and
 - future opportunities for 9th–10th graders.
- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED)
- State Agencies
 - DEED
 - LeRoy Kiecker introduced himself as a new contact covering Southwest metro counties (Ramsey, Anoka, Scott, Carver), taking over a role previously held by Robert Willis.
 - Invited partners in those counties to reach out as he settles into the position and learns about local employer and workforce needs.
 - Lena Balk introduced herself in a new role and shared updates on a new employer registration/platform system that will replace the old posted-job platform.
 - Encouraged partners to move employers into the new system and offered to walk teams through the transition and provide additional information.
 - VRS
 - DLI
 - Shared DLI apprenticeship updates, including resources for employers interested in starting or expanding registered apprenticeship programs.
 - Mentioned new or emerging apprenticeship occupations (e.g., airline dispatcher and child care roles).
 - Highlighted materials and strategies to better support neurodivergent apprentices (ADHD, autism, dyslexia, etc.) and invited ideas for additional occupations.

- RETAIN
- Local Areas
 - Rural Minnesota CEP
 - Described work with transitional housing and treatment centers (e.g., PERM 180 and Rewind in Perham) to support justice-involved individuals with employment and employer connections.
 - Raised concerns about under-utilization and low visibility of IWE (Incumbent Worker) funds, asking what others are doing and proposing more coordinated, possibly statewide, discussion.
 - Mentioned involvement with Growing Careers in agriculture and the need to coordinate meetings so small numbers of regional folks aren't spread across multiple groups.
 - City of Duluth
 - City of Lakeville
 - Central Minnesota (CMJTS)
 - Reported on a successful event held with Angie, focused on energy-sector careers and partnering with a tribal workforce committee to support Indigenous jobseekers.
 - Shared results of a hiring event at the Monticello office (multiple employers and jobseekers) and noted they're revamping their committee to focus more on recruitment, hiring, retention, and onboarding support for employers.
 - Southeast Minnesota (WDI)
 - Highlighted strong employer engagement conversations in Southeast Minnesota, including sessions with attorneys and SHRM groups on legal updates and DEI topics.
 - Noted many employers are already doing internal diversity/culture work and that WDI is exploring ways to streamline support across multiple businesses rather than one-off efforts.
 - Working on an employer survey to launch in the new year and building a toolkit and resource list (including potential state materials/trainings) to help employers with cultural awareness and inclusive practices.
 - Hennepin-Carver
 - City of Minneapolis
 - Expanded on the Office of New Americans grant, describing more intensive supports for New Americans entering the workforce.
 - Discussed work with host families and communities supporting refugees (e.g., from Ukraine or other crises) and efforts to build stronger connections between these families, New Americans, and employment services.
 - Emphasized that services are not limited to Minneapolis and can support individuals with humanitarian parole or similar statuses; invited partners statewide to connect.
 - Shared examples of employer-focused events (career fairs, resume reviews, networking) and praised counties (e.g., Ramsey) that have invested in substantial employer-engagement efforts.
 - Anoka County
 - Reported a series of job fairs/hiring events, including one with 117 attendees and around 10 employers, noting things have been very busy.

- Mentioned resource constraints (budget and staffing) even as demand for events remains high.
 - Highlighted grant-supported work through Drive for 5 and Growing Careers (including CDL Class B and agricultural sectors).
- Ramsey County
 - Asked how to better get state/employer resources out to the business community so they're actually used.
 - Shared challenges in finding enough employers with appropriate roles for English language learners and in balancing immediate income needs with skill-building opportunities.
 - Previewed that they'll be doing the Employer Summit again regionally with Minneapolis and Anoka.
- Dakota-Scott
- Stearns-Benton (Career Solutions)
 - Added to Leslie's update, including collaboration on events tied to the New Americans grant.
 - Celebrated a cohort of 21 welding students completing training through Drive for Five (and related Pathways to Prosperity work), with strong employer engagement.
 - Mentioned interest in an employer workgroup/space to share ideas and coordinate future events (like Employer Summit).
 - Framed how their Office of New Americans (ONA) grant work connects to incumbent worker/retention efforts (similar to IWE), especially with employers who have many New American employees and language barriers.
 - Highlighted strategies to keep New American workers connected to services and employers over time.
- Washington County
- Northwest PIC
- Winona County
- Many areas report increased jobseekers coming in seeking DW services.
- The committee discussed how areas are moving forward with the I-WE program.

Featured Topic: Innovative Service Delivery: Ramsey County Workforce Innovation Board Spotlight – Catrice O’Neal, Director – Ramsey County Workforce Innovation Board

- Catrice joined the committee to share an overview of an innovative service delivery model in Ramsey County. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

The committee concluded at 10:56 am.