

**NEMO Workforce Development Board (WDB)
Employer Engagement Committee Meeting
November 6, 2019**

Members Present

Jim Kolve

Members Absent

Corey Mehaffy
Glenn Eagan
Darin Arnsmeier
Donny Carroll
Mac Wilt
Annette Sweet
Diane Noah
Steven Garner
Dennis Gill

Guests

Erin Dennis (phone)
Erica Davis (phone)
Don Smith
JoAnn Toerper
Janet Hickey
Chad Eggen

WDB Staff

Diane Simbro
Beth Whelan

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Jim Kolve called the NEMO WDB Employer Engagement Committee Meeting to order at 10:00 am at the Warrenton Job Center in Warrenton, Missouri.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken and a signature sheet was signed by all. Nine people were in attendance. Everyone introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA

Janet Hickey moved to approve the Agenda and the June 4, 2019 Meeting Minutes. Don Smith seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

• **Step 1 – Define Strength/Weaknesses (Completed)**

Jim said Step 1, Defining our Strengths and Weakness was pretty much completed at the previous meeting. He noted that the Governor was going to be addressing the issue of poor internet access in the rural areas.

Chad said two companies were coming into the Warrenton area to address the broadband issue. They are Callaway Electric Cooperative/Callabyte Technology which is or will be providing internet access to Herman, Southern Montgomery County and Jonesburg. The other group Gateway Fiber would be offering fiber optic internet to Winfield and Ellsberg.

Diane said Representative Lewis Riggs was on the committee that is working with the Governor on the broadband project. Representative Riggs had contacted her about providing him information regarding the number of people in the apprenticeship programs state and region wide that were using online for any of their course work. Diane asked OWD for the numbers. Then it was discovered that OWD staff was going to be meeting with that committee on Friday and they volunteered to get those numbers together for them. She would be contacting the Representative next week for an update. She said Representative Riggs was trying very hard to make sure that Northeast MO gets a piece of the pie. Chad said he thought the only successes they had had had been through the co-ops. Diane said everyone on Ralls Tech has

been very satisfied and there was talk that they were going to extend their fiber but it has never happened. She hoped that they would be allowed to do so now since they already had a system in place. She said fiber optics would be an important piece for business and education.

- **Step 2 – Define the Skills Gap for Local Employers &**
- **Step 3 – Define the Training Needs of the Employers and Who Will Deliver the Training**

Don said the apprenticeships were an excellent solution to the skills gap and Missouri was leading the country in apprenticeship training. Diane agreed and said more and more people were showing an interest. She thought the lack of an apprenticeship database was one of the weakness in the apprenticeship program. She is hoping that the database will soon be set up so we can see where all the MO apprenticeships are. Currently, the Job Centers don't know and they are unable to make those referrals.

Diane said the group in Scotland County had meet and had decided they wanted to start four apprenticeships there. However, the HR director that was leading the charge on the hospital side is leaving so they will have to meet with them again and re-start the process. The apprenticeships they had decided on were Pharmacy Technician, Daycare Center, CNA and a Maintenance position. She noted that the community colleges and tech centers were also starting apprenticeships and there were so many that the WDB may not be involved in and the database would make this much easier.

Jim said there was a shortage of Computer Specialist graduating from our colleges and we were still struggling to meet our health care needs.

Diane talked about the challenge of retaining trained individuals in our small communities and the need to get individuals not to leave the area when their education was completed. She mentioned that the population in our counties was decreasing and this would have an effect on our funding so we needed to find ways to grow our own people and keep them at home. She felt providing special events like Manufacturing and Health Care Days would be beneficial.

Don asked if any headway had been made regarding housing needs. Diane said no headway had been made and this was a challenge in all our areas. JoAnn said Wright City was expanding and they have had an increase in housing permits in the last five years. Jim said Troy was also growing. He thought people were flocking to the high tech areas. It was mentioned that Teva Pharmaceuticals was closing in Mexico and this would have a big impact in Mexico.

Jim said he had a copy of the MO Workforce 2019 Employer Survey report that could be sent to everyone. He said it was put out by MERIC and he provided the handout. Diane said the WDB would send the report to everyone. Jim said the data showed that we still have problems and they are statewide.

The GM strike and its effect on manufacturing was discussed. JoAnn said she thought change was beginning to take place regarding manufacturing versus education.

Erin said the employers she met with were not really worried about skill gaps. Most of them were willing to train but they need the people to show up for work. The big issue is soft skills. Employers are finding that they need to expand their candidate pool in their search for employees, and she felt we were going to be seeing more diversity in the workforce.

Diane said Erica and Janet were working closely with re-entry. Janet was working with the Justice Center in Lincoln County. Staff was providing services at the Northeast Correctional Facility and she has a meeting with the Moberly Prison and Probation and Parole on Friday. Erica said they were currently

working on enrolling 12 justice involved individuals that would be completing the Connections to Success Personal and Professional Development Training in December. She said it is a 2-week training that provides assistance on soft skills and pre-vocational training to help them as they re-enter the workforce. Diane said they have been utilizing the Connections to Success program in Lincoln County as well. The training was amazing and worth every penny. She is seeing more employers that were on the fence about hiring justice-involved individuals changing their minds. At the Workforce 2030 Conference, Connections to Success and Shelly Jacobs provided a presentation. She brought one of her former clients that they have now hired as a peer consultant. The gentleman spoke to the group about his experience and the employers asked a lot of questions. Most of them would have never guessed that the he had once been incarcerated. She said not all justice-involved individuals would be as successful, but he certainly made a very positive impression on the group.

Don suggested marketing the hiring of these individuals using billboards containing pictures of successful individuals. Diane felt that was a good idea and said we had gotten approval from the Board to spend a little bit of money through a partnership with NECAC on billboards, but we held off because of the budget cuts.

Janet said currently their biggest issues with re-entry individuals was the lack of driver's license and transportation. Because of some of the individuals were not allowed to have a driver's license they had to try to find them employment located close to their housing. Issues with transportation were discussed.

JoAnn said employers were saying that the lack of skilled workforce is slowing their growth. They can't accommodate customer needs and they contract out because they don't have enough skilled workers. Jim said he didn't see High Schools going to 4-day weeks as being conducive to preparing a skilled workforce.

It was mentioned that Altorfer was in need of more diesel mechanics but there was no training in the area. The need is here today but it takes the colleges some time to develop the training programs so apprenticeships may be the best option.

Diane felt everyone was in agreement that skills gap were still an issue and more short term training is needed. She said the plan just needs to be developed in a way to address everything. The basics of the plan is to continue to work with the employers, to grow our apprenticeships and to work with our community colleges and other providers regarding the types of training needed.

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS UPDATE

Don said next week they would be in Hannibal doing NCRCs for the Hannibal High School. Diane said the counties had gotten notification regarding the availability of the Work Keys funding and she was gathering information for the contacts in each county to make sure all the proper individuals had received the information and were working to complete their paperwork.

JoAnn said Tracy Albertson said counties working toward certification would take priority but counties in the maintaining phase were also eligible for the funding. She asked if the WDB would oppose BRPC assisting the counties in writing the grant. Diane felt that would be a good idea.

Diane said she is now a member of a Whole Family Engagement Advisory Committee. They Committee has discussed the importance of starting at the kindergarten level and having the whole family involvement in order to change the work ethic issue. That is their mission. She believes the Governor is going to appoint someone to the committee also.

Diane said five Reverse Job Fairs are being planned for this year and will be held at Kirksville, Moberly, Warrenton, Pike and Hannibal. She spoke about the success of the one held in Hannibal last June for individuals with disabilities and said Reverse Job Fairs may be good events for older workers and other populations as well.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Chad said BRPC was looking at a project with St. Charles Community College and working with Lincoln County on a Technical Training Center they plan to build there. The site for the college has already been selected. He said the Lincoln County High School would be involved also Wright City and probably Warrenton for that center. The specialization will be based on demand. They plan to address advance manufacturing, building trades, agriculture and technology. They need the Board to be involved in helping to understanding everyone's niche so everyone won't be doing the same thing. Diane spoke about the work being done in Arkansas to address employer needs and said she would send the information to everyone.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Jim said the National Apprenticeship week begins November 11-17. He said there was a need to encourage individuals to evaluate job offers based on wages plus benefits such as healthcare, pensions, savings plans and salary.

The issue of employers stealing one and others employees and employee loyalty was discussed. Diane said employers need to invest in and see the value of employee loyalty. If they truly want to hire good employees and retain them, they need to evaluate the way they treat their employees.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Next meeting date was not discussed.

ADJOURN

Janet Hickey moved that the meeting be adjourned. Don Smith seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 am.