



## **NEMO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

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[www.nemowib.org](http://www.nemowib.org)

### **NEMO Workforce Development Board (WDB) Employer Engagement Committee Meeting June 19, 2020**

#### **Members Present**

Jim Kolve  
Annette Sweet

#### **WDB Staff Present**

Diane Simbro  
Sharon Hillard

#### **Members Absent**

Corey Mehaffy  
Glenn Eagan  
Darin Arnsmeyer  
Donny Carroll  
Mac Wilt  
Dennis Gill  
Lesla Barber  
Steven Garner  
Michael Purol

#### **Guests Present**

Dana Keller  
Julie Rodgers  
Amanda Sizemore  
Chad Eggen  
Janet Hickey  
Don Smith  
Shyla Brauch  
Erica Davis  
Kim Cull  
Randy Lane  
Sherri Henderson  
Shari Schenewerk

#### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Jim Kolve called the NEMO WDB Employer Engagement Committee Meeting to order at approximately 2:00 pm. The meeting was conducted electronically through Zoom.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Roll call was taken and two Committee members were present. Sixteen people were in attendance and everyone introduced themselves.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA**

Dana Keller moved to approve the Agenda and the June 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes. Annette Sweet seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

#### **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION – ALL ATTENDEES INVITED TO SHARE EVENTS, ETC.**

Julie Rodgers said Governor Mike Parson was in Lincoln County on Wednesday for a groundbreaking for a Workforce Development training center, Lincoln Tech West, in Lincoln County. She said they have been

working on this project for about three years. They received one million dollars from a state grant and they were awarded a \$5.1 million dollar grant from USDA for the project. On July 30, they will be hosting an industry breakfast where businesses can come and here from Ranken Tech about the opportunities for them to partner. Apprenticeship programs are being encouraged as well. This is a huge win for their student population, the community and for their existing and future businesses. The Governor also visited the training center at the jail where they are providing carpentry training and work ready skills, with Connections to Success, to prepare individuals for the workforce. They have constructed a new manufacturing building next to the training center where they will be building tiny houses. On July 9, they will have a formal announcement regarding that. She talked about the need for broad band in their area and said it would probably be 5 to 10 years before fiber was installed. Therefore, they are looking to provide hotspots in their most rural areas to address the current need. She also spoke about an apprenticeship program they are planning to do through the Carpenter's Union which would lead to jobs.

Chad Eggan said discussions were taking place regarding hosting a job fair virtually due to the pandemic and the guidance not to travel. Sherri Henderson talked about some of the challenges they encountered with a recent job fair event. She said they need to somehow provide a way for social interaction. Several types of platforms were discussed. It was stated that some agencies would not allow their staff to use certain platforms. Diane felt if *Go to Meeting* and *Zoom* were offered, most people would be able to participate.

Annette Sweet said several larger employers (restaurants and retail) had announced that they were closing permanently and some of the colleges had furloughed individuals for the summer due to the pandemic. Randy Lane said employers were hiring in the Hannibal area. Diane reported that FASFA applications were down from 14,000 to 2,500 for this time last year. Jim noted that the foreign student population had dropped as well.

Amanda Sizemore said COVID-19 had presented several challenges and some employers were struggling. However, they continue to work with employers to provide customized training. She said the college had been 100% online since March 13<sup>th</sup> and their summer enrollment was up. They are in the process of finalizing their plan for fall classes. At this time, they plan to have a mix of online classes and classes on campus. She noted that students and their parents were still confused. Amanda said she would have Mandy contact Julie to talk about the training at the jail.

Julie said the chrome books they purchased last year could be used for virtual learning. Julie also announced that she was looking for 20 welders for Elite Tool in Moscow Mills. Elite Tool was expanding and the project may be in operation before the end of the year. She said these were good jobs with a starting wage of \$25 per hour.

Don Smith said he had been working virtually and had been working to overcome a lot of technical issues. He said 14,000 workers were laid off this week from the hotels and additional workers were permanently furloughed from the casinos. They were planning a virtual hiring fair based on the Colorado model. He felt they may get more participation when the additional COVID UI benefits run out the middle of July. He added that they were re-opening the Job Center and, thanks to grant funds, they are hiring individuals to help direct traffic flow and minimize contact.

Diane said plans are to re-open the Kirksville Job Center and Hannibal Job Center July 27 for staff and July 29 for the public. The Warrenton Job Center plans to re-open July 15. LaBelle is ready and will re-open

as soon as Donny and she do a walk through to make sure everything is in order. Janet said she was unsure if Warrenton would meet the re-open date of July 15 and that Chad should know next week about the date for Warrenton's renovations.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT ON HEALTHCARE AND AGRICULTURE**

Jim said on Wednesday, June 24<sup>th</sup> Jill Williams would be hosting the next MHA Healthcare meeting by Zoom from 11:00 to 12:00. They hope to get some insight into what is going on with healthcare since this pandemic. They want to see what has changed and if they have enough resources and education to help the industry. The pandemic has put a large strain on hospital budgets and he didn't know if they had received enough assistance to save them.

Reporting on agriculture Jim said MO had over 400 companies and 100,000 farms that generate over \$88 billion in sales and employ 378,000 workers. The region's farmers and food manufactures had been critical in feeding Americans through this pandemic and deserve many thanks. He has been in talks with the University of Missouri and they are happy to partner and collaborate in any way they can to assist agriculture and the food processing plants. Jim said Dr. Mark White would be happy to present at one of the Employer Engagement or WDB meetings to share some of the ways the University of Missouri can assist. He noted that the agriculture program at the University was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the world. Diane said, at the last WDB meeting, Shari Schenewerk shared that the heavy presence of agriculture in the NE Region had helped keep its unemployment rate lower than most other areas. She thought it would be nice if Dr. White provided a presentation at the next WDB meeting in September.

Kim Cull said a lot of Illinois residents were coming to Hannibal to enjoy the dining etc. She said it was really packed there on Friday and Saturday nights.

Shari Schenewerk said consumer spending was up 10% from April and May and they are seeing a lot of positive movement. People are resuming a lot of their normal spending. They are spending a lot toward food but there has been some uptake in retail as well. Julie said <https://opportunityinsights.org/> was a good resource to follow to track the economy. It allows you to drill down by county to see a lot of information and to understand where the struggles are. Shari said DED was working to create an economic weekend, and an economic dashboard was being developed. She didn't think it was going to be made public until they make sure the data was populating correctly and it could be easily updated. The dashboard would have unemployment, retail and tourism so they could easily determine what was happening.

Jim shared an article from *Fortune Magazine* that included a survey of CEOs from US companies that had furloughed or laid off workers due to COVID. The survey showed that 48.8% of the companies said they would not increase employment, 22.6% said they would have more than a 10% reduction, less than 21.4% said they would have a less than 10% reduction and 7.1% said they were planning to increase employment. Knowing that 44.1% of the businesses surveyed plan to reduce their workforce was not good news. Some of the manufacturing businesses were laying off their workers until their sales increase. Some were looking at switching to more advanced manufacturing to reduce costs. Some of the discussions he heard from the Jobs for the Future (JFF) Conference included those concerns. He added that the casinos were not planning to re-open the food service/courts and the food workers will lose their jobs. He said the pandemic had revealed that the U.S. is much too reliant on foreign manufacturing. As a result, the

government has commented that we are not going to wait on other countries when we can make those things in the States.

The loss of manufacturing was discussed. Shari said in MO, there is a huge effort to re-shore manufacturing particularly when it comes to food and medical supplies. Several companies have jumped in feet first and we would hear more about this when they are able to create policy. She said when the government rolled out all of the loan programs, it was kind of a mess so they are trying to make sure they have policy in place. She expects to see a lot of activity even in the Northeast Region and St. Louis area as they start reaching out because this is a very safe area and it is a low-cost place to do business. In addition, they are marketing heavily to companies that are operating nationally to bring some or all of that back to the U.S. Also, they are working on some programmatic systems that will be very attractive to companies. She said there was a lot of interest, but she was unsure of when that interest would turn into actual jobs.

Diane said they are still waiting to hear about funds from the Cares Act. If we are awarded this funding it will be a very large amount (approximately \$400,000) and will have to be spent quickly. She asked that everyone continue to refer dislocated workers to the Job Centers because they were going to have money to assist them and we want to spend all of it. Diane felt the funding could also be used for Incumbent Worker Training.

Jim also shared a Cat in the Hat flyer regarding education during the pandemic. He then questioned how many northeast region students had full internet access or had access to a computer or iPad to learn. He said the need for equal access to education was something we needed to make known to the state because this was the real equalizer for successful employment. He said the pandemic has caused cuts in the education budget and this puts us on a rocky road when trying to re-build the economy. He said the use of virtual healthcare was up and the lack of internet access also limits individuals in receiving equal medical care. This is also an issue for employers that need to be able to connect electronically. Diane said she would send Jim's slides to everyone.

### **DISCUSSION OF JOBS FOR THE FUTURE CONFERENCE**

Jim said he was out of town and due to poor internet service he wasn't able to gather enough information for this discussion. He said the one session he saw was about restoring the dignity of work and how COVID had forced us to be more appreciative of those in foodservice, logistics and healthcare. Diane said if individuals registered for the conference and were not able to attend the sessions, they were recorded and she provided the link to everyone.

### **BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

- Step 1 – Define Strength/Weaknesses (Completed)
- Step 2 – Define the Skills Gap for Local Employers (Completed)

Jim said due to COVID some of the skills gaps may have changed. Diane said this would have to be revisited and maybe the committee could re-assess this in a month or so. She said staff was busy calling all the dislocated workers to ask if they were interested in training. This was a perfect time to up-skill or to learn another skill and make yourself more employable. A small percentage were saying that they were interested but she expected that number to increase in mid-July.

- Step 3 – Define the Training Needs of Employers and Who Will Deliver the Training

Jim said we be using our Community Colleges to provide the needed training, but we are still discovering how the needs of employers may have changed. We know that transportation and agriculture has been good in our area but it is too early to tell what will be needed for manufacturing.

Diane said logistics, agriculture and hopefully manufacturing would come back. Although there has been a lot of layoffs in healthcare (that she hopes are temporary), there was still a big demand for healthcare training. Amanda said they were working on some things for transportation/logistics. She thought their enrollments for healthcare continue to be strong. She said they have a lot of interest in the fiber optics hands-on program (which is a short-term credential) and they were trying to get things lined out with that provider.

Diane said Steps 2 and 3 would stay on the agenda for the next meeting because we would probably be better able to address those as we got further into the re-opening stage. It was asked if more regional information could be provided. Jim said the MERIC data really didn't address the rural areas at this time, but he hoped they would have more regional data soon.

Shari said when the pandemic first happened, they did a survey working with local economic developers that included over 700 companies. Through this they learned some of the challenges but they found that the situations were ever evolving and the information aged quickly. She said they did a really focused targeting outreach for the Show Me Recovery initiative in which they targeted over 150 key employers and discovered some really strong trends. First in the early surveys, no one could get a face mask or PPE. Since that time, very few of them are have difficulties in getting PPE. She said if anyone had a company that was having any difficulty, they could direct them to DED's website where they could register on the PPE market place. Currently they have about 160 companies supplying PPE and they are working with more companies to ask if they have any interest in getting into this line of business. She said the Show Me Recovery initiative requires the larger companies to have a re-opening testing strategy for their employees. She said we really hadn't had a large outbreak yet but we did have a small one in Adair County that was related to the one in Milan. Testing capabilities is critical to prevent having to shut down and 70% of the employers do not want to test on site because they don't want to be in the news. Overall our businesses are fairly positive. The Northeast Region has several businesses that are thriving. She spoke to a furniture business the other day and they said their sales were up 150% in the last two months and most of the businesses surveyed were fairly positive and feel like they will be able to call their employees back. However, some are using this opportunity to narrow down and/or hire more productive workers. Shari said tourism had been put on hold for now, but MO was awarded the number one spot in the nation for their tourism outreach. They were very excited as this was like winning the Oscars and they are looking forward to rolling that out next year. She said the State Chamber of Commerce received a ranking of number one in the nation and the MO Department of Economic Development received the "Silver Shovel" award from the area development magazine. However, they know they still have a lot of work to do. She said the partnering going on was excellent and she would try to do a better job of sharing. A lot of companies were still interested in expanding and moving into MO. With Ranken Tech and the Wind Tower Technician training beginning in Kirksville (hopes to start in the fall) she was very proud to be in Northeast Missouri.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Julie said the MO Chamber had been an incredible partner during COVID. She was following them closely and using them as a resource and they really helped them to navigate through the process.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION**

The next Employer Engagement Committee meeting was scheduled for August 10, 2020.

### **ADJOURN**

Dana Keller moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:45 pm.