



NEMO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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NEMO Workforce Development Board (WDB) Employer Engagement Committee Meeting June 7, 2021

Members Present

Jim Kolve
Annette Sweet
Erin Dennis
Steven Garner
Julie Rodgers
Jennifer Taylor

WDB Staff Present

Diane Simbro
Sharon Hillard
Lawonda Hart

Members Absent

Michael Purol
Glenn Eagan
Darin Arnsmeyer
Lesa Barber
Mac Wilt
Dennis Gill
Shyla Brauch

Guests Present

Dana Keller
Erica Davis
James Smith
Shari Schenewerk
Janet Hickey
Lon Little
Sheree Pree
Mandy McClanahan
Don Smith
Kim Culll
Susan McKnight
Maudie Fox
Becky Wiederholt

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 six Committee members were present. A total of 22 people were in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA

Julie Rodgers moved to approve the Agenda and the March 29, 2021 Meeting Minutes. Steven Garner seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

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

Diane introduced Susan McKnight and Becky Wiederholt members of the OWD Employer Relations and Engagement Team. Susan said the other members of the team are Don Smith, Becky Wiederholt and

Maudie Fox their Trade Navigator. They are getting out and meeting with the Workforce Boards and Job Centers trying to determine how they can be of assistance in engaging and creating long-lasting employer relationships. They recently visited the Job Centers in the region and they plan to assist with the job fair in Hannibal June 17th. They will also be assisting with the planning of additional job fairs in Kirksville and the region later in July and August. They are excited to meet everyone and see how they can be of assistance and coordinate Employer outreach. Diane welcomed them to the Committee and asked them to feel free to share their ideas with the group.

Steve Garner said the Plumbers and Outfitters were busy hiring and have 70 to 80 interviews every week. They were having no problems finding new hires and were doing fine. Diane said some of the struggles other employers are having may be due to the wage and benefits they offer. Jim said he was at a recent job fair where 65 companies and 370 job seekers attended. He spoke with a representative from each company and the two companies that were offering lower wages were very lonely. The job seekers were busy visiting the companies offering the higher wages. He said wages matter to people looking for jobs.

Erin Dennis said the employers, in the areas she serves, are manufactures and they are really struggling to find workers. She typically reaches out to her partners to see if they have anybody to help fill those needs. VR hasn't been able to meet those needs and finding qualified individuals within her agency that want to do that type of work is a struggle. She said it's hard to keep those employer relationships going and create new relationships when you don't have any candidates to send to them. In her circumstance, she didn't believe wage was the issue as some of the jobs available pay \$20 to \$24 per hour. One of her employers is MoDot who has great wages and benefits and she can't get people to apply.

Julie Rodgers said, at the last Employer Engagement Committee meeting, issues regarding training a skilled workforce and the needs of finding qualified instructors was discussed. At a conference in St. Louis last month, she had the opportunity to speak with the Missouri 100th District Representative Derek Grier who is also the chair of the Economic Development Committee in Jeff City. She shared with him the Committee's concerns and said they may need to take a look at education's requirements for skilled technical training instructors and make some changes. She also followed up and sent him some of the information that was shared at the last meeting. Representative Grier said he would look into the issue. She was hopeful that we can help make some changes if we can get in front of the right people. She thanked Diane, Janet and Sherri Henderson for the work they were doing in Lincoln County regarding registered apprenticeships. She said the employers in Lincoln County were really interested and she had a couple more names for Diane.

Janet Hickey said the Warrenton Job Center had two candidates lined up for the preapprenticeship project and she will be sending those names to Diane. Both of them have registered in MoJobs, have completed the application and have already talked to the employers. She has flyers posted and they are going to start doing weekly hiring events in different areas. She didn't believe they would make the June 14th start date but she was working on it.

Diane said we need to make sure that anyone interested in the pre-apprentice project has an opportunity to take part. If someone resides in a surrounding region, we can still register them for the pre-apprenticeship training and they don't have to be WIOA eligible. No one should be turned away regardless of where they live or their income. Anyone 18 and older that can legally work in the US can be a part of the project.

Janet said they were disappointed that they only had two people at their event but it could have been less. Diane agreed and said Kirksville held a job fair at Macon and only three people showed up. She felt the employers were understanding, and if they were able to help those three individuals, it was still worth their effort. James said they were in the process of following up with those individuals to see if they found employment.

Kim Cull said the Job Center had registrations coming in daily for their Job Fair and they had about 30 employers already registered. They have reached out to over 100 employers for the event. They have done outreach on social media, have some adds at the local radio networks and have reached out to a couple of newspapers about doing some ads there. She announced that the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development is doing a FASFA Frenzy on July 15. The event will be held from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and again from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. They have reached out to the area high school counselors and added the event to their social media page. A counselor from John Wood has asked to assist with the project to see what she can learn.

Erica Davis said the Hannibal Job Center was also working to find individuals for the pre-apprenticeship project. They have one person who is interested. The individual is scheduled for a SkillUp enrollment and possible WIOA enrollment tomorrow. She plans to speak with him more about the apprenticeship then. She is also working with a couple of other applicants. She will be on vacation later this week and she is trying to get all of this done before she leaves.

Mandy McClanahan gave an update of all of the job fairs the Kirksville Job Center has planned or is in the process of planning. A job fair is planned for July 22nd from 11:00 to 5:00 at the primary school in Kirksville. Another, with a tentative date of August 5th, is being planned for Schuyler; Scotland; Clark and Knox. A job fair will also be held for Sullivan and Putnam Counties August 12th at the Miland School from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Staff will be partnering with the Chillicothe job fair. Don, Maudie and Susan will probably plan to assist with that one so the Chillicothe office can have coverage. The job center is putting their workshops back on the calendar and they have hiring events scheduled all this week. In addition, she is working with her current people doing updates.

Don Smith said the Employer Relations and Engagement Team is focusing mainly on maintaining relationships with employers listed in MoJobs and trying to engage more employers. However, they are still working with companies providing ETT. Currently, they are preparing an ETT meeting for the Wentzville plant. It appears that 146 of their union employees will be let go between July 1 and August 30. They will hold an ETT meeting in that plant for all three shifts in mid-July. They will be utilizing Kelly Spangler and Jim Kolve as they go into the Wentzville plant and speak with those employees. They have been negotiating with the Vice President of the HR department. They are also working with the Eaton Bussman Corporation as well. They are going to be doing an ETT meeting for them tomorrow and will probably be doing an interview workshop. He said they are wearing a lot of hats right now and ETT is no longer their only focus but it's still very important. If anyone hears of an employer or company that is downsizing or closing, they would like to be informed so they can assist with possible layoff aversion or other types of services.

Shari Schenewerk with Regional Engagement Missouri Department of Economic Development said they have teams across the state and she helps to cover the Northern Region. The confirmed projects or the projects in process over the last few months have created 79 jobs in Lincoln, Marion, Monroe, Randolph, Montgomery, Audrain and Macon Counties. Construction of the wind farms is still going on and Adair and

Knox are opening theirs. The wind farm alone is going to provide about \$3 million a year to the Schuyler County school district. Knox is in the process and theirs will be similar. There is no doubt that the wind farms impact the economy. Whether this positive impact will be long term is yet to be determined. She said tourism in Kirksville was only down 11% even with the college being down part of the time. A lot of that may have been due to the construction going on with the wind towers. Also, the training program that Carolyn Chrisman and the County Commissioners submitted a grant for is starting up. Shari said, in terms of direct investment of real estate and equipment, the Northeast Region has received \$210 million. With the EDA grants received for transportation, infrastructure for water and electric that is an additional \$8 million. They have a lot going on right now. She is working with their communications team and whenever she has a project that announces she always asks how individuals need to apply for the jobs. They have had 11 announced projects across North Missouri. Despite all of the challenges this past year, it has gone well and they look forward to helping get folks into these jobs very soon. Shari said Swift Foods in Moberly was off to a fantastic start and has hired 250 people. Because of their success, they have announced that another plant will be opening in Columbia. On the negative side, some of our other businesses may have lost employees to them.

Diane introduced Wonda Hart the NEMO WDB Project Manager who will be working with the Job Centers and their teams.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Jim talked about a video presented at MAWD called *Leadership Informed by Poverty* by Chad Dull (can be viewed on YouTube) that he thought was outstanding. One of Chad Dull's statements was, "I try to change the economic reality for those I love. Everything else I do is minutia." Jim said he felt he does plenty of minutia and he has been inspired by Mr. Dull to spend more time trying to change the economic reality for those he loves. Another statement from Chad was "Any fool can make things complicated. It takes a genius to make things simple."

Jim said the National Skills Coalition has asked for our support and he wrote a letter to both MO Senators regarding providing Pell grant funding for short-term training programs. He said funding for these programs can help millions of people who have lost their jobs through dislocation or COVID re-enter the workforce with in-demand skills and meet the needs of mid-sized businesses. Due to the pandemic, we have a lower labor participation rate and 4.4 million people have left the workforce and the economy is still short 7.6 million jobs. Our labor participation rate in May was 61.1%. This is still 1.6% lower than in February 2020. He also spoke about the reports he sent for the Committee to review. He thanked everyone for their hard work with all of the projects they have going on and offered to assist in any way he could.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Work Based Learning, Pre-Apprenticeship

Diane said the Region received the grant for the Pre-Apprenticeship Project and everyone on the team is working hard to recruit individuals. They planned to start their first cohort June 14th. She will be having a call with St. Charles Community College to confirm that. They have a few people lined up for the class. She said the pre-apprenticeship has to be tied to a registered apprenticeship and we have two employers lined up. One is NECAC who plans to hire approximately 40 individuals for weatherization. The other is LanDesign, which is a big landscaping company that does a lot of commercial landscaping. Later we plan to partner with MACC to do an industrial technician apprenticeship for several employers in the Mexico

and Hannibal areas. They hope to have at least 30 people in the pre-apprentice project. If all of the grant funds are expended, WIOA funding can be utilized. The pre-apprenticeship is 3-weeks long and St. Charles Community College developed the curriculum to meet the needs of two employers. The first two weeks will be concentrating on employability skills and safety training. Individuals will receive their OSHA 10 certification through the training. If they complete their two trainings and pass the test, they will get a MSSC credential. The individuals will also do the TABE and NCRC testing. The last few days of the pre-apprenticeship will be spent working onsite with the employers. This will give the employers an opportunity to determine if they feel the individual will be successful in the registered apprenticeship program. If they are not accepted into the apprenticeship portion, staff will work closely with them to find more suitable employment. Diane felt the program was going to be really good for the employers and the individuals. She said Wonda will be helping with the project. She will also be concentrating on reaching out to employers and working with the job centers to promote our Incumbent Worker Training, OJTs and Work Experience Programs. All of those programs will be beneficial to job seekers and employers. She hopes to have Wonda in the field July 1.

UPDATE ON DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Shari said they would soon hear more regarding the American Recovery funds. When she knew more, she would share with the group. Diane said she was hoping the Northeast Region's counties would consider participating in the workforce needs and help to offset some of the region's 10% cut in funding.

UPDATE ON CERTIFIED WORK READY COMMUNITIES

James Smith said Kirksville had done about 30 NCRC tests, and he thanked Dana for her assistance with that. He felt it might take some time to get the numbers back to where they use to be but they would be back to normal by next year. Dana said she had been playing a support role in the testing where needed. She said James came and helped them in Palmyra because they were testing in two different rooms. Moving forward, she felt they need to make sure they communicate with the schools regarding the testing standards so they can make sure the room accommodations are what they need to be. She added that how well the students scored may be a reflection of how the importance of the test was presented to them by the counselors. Overall, testing had been going well. The Hannibal Job Center staff said they had tested approximately 275 individuals. Diane said she would visit the NCRC web page to see where all of the counties stand so they can form a plan for testing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Annette said MACC received a grant for the wind technician and the mechatronics program at Kirksville and, to her knowledge, they had not found any instructors. If people are knowledgeable about these skilled positions, they are generally working in those occupations and they aren't interested in training others at some school for very little money.

Jim said many of our states decided to cut the enhance UI benefits for individuals and he would have liked them to provide an exception for individuals receiving any type of training for upskilling. This would have helped employers. Diane felt we should let our legislatures know that it would have been a good idea to let those individuals keep those enhanced UI funds.

Annette thought it may be a good idea to put together some talking points that provided some specific information Committee members could use when speaking with legislatures and schools. Diane agreed and said it would be a good idea if the whole group had a consistent message.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The next Employer Engagement Committee meeting was scheduled for September 13, 2021.

ADJOURN

Steven Garner moved that the meeting be adjourned. Annette Sweet seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:20 am.