

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County

Equity Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 27, 2025

3:00 – 4:00pm

Zoom Video Conference

Present:

Mohamed Alfash
Michelle Belitz
Becky Degendorfer
Yolanda McIntosh
Lauren Reynolds
Mary Russell
Tanya Velishek

Absent:

Jonathan Banks
Karen Gerdin
Bryan Kuzel-EA
Tracy Wilson-EA

Staff/Guests:

Mariann Macalus, Workforce Solutions
Rebecca Milbrandt, Workforce Solutions
Catrice O’Neal, Workforce Solutions

Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement

Reynolds called the meeting to order at 3:02pm. McIntosh read the land acknowledgement aloud.

Introductions

Introductions were made to welcome Catrice O’Neal as the new Workforce Solutions Director and Executive Director of the Workforce Innovation Board (WIB). O’Neal expressed her excitement about working with the WIB.

Approve November Minutes

Motion (Reynolds/Degendorfer) to approve the November 18, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by chat vote.

Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement

Reynolds read the Conflict of Interest Policy and reminded everyone that any WIB or committee member who has a conflict of interest should abstain from discussion and voting. The policy is reviewed by every committee and the WIB each year. The policy will be included in the follow-up email

Committee Work Plan/Project Updates

Milbrandt provided the following updates:

2025 Inclusive Workplaces Cohort: A huge thank you goes out to Mary Russell for her leadership and dedication for this ongoing project. Applications for the fourth cohort opened in January. There will be an information session in February for interested businesses, with the application deadline being late February. Changes from the previous years’ cohorts: sessions will be 2 hours, rather than 1.5 hours in length, the start date for in-person cohort sessions will be later (May); a historical data analysis will be added as a way of measuring the impact of the project and a capstone project will be required from each participating organization at the end of the cohort. Cohort selections will be brought back to this committee at the March 17 meeting. A cohort recognition event will be at the December 4 WIB luncheon.

Inclusive Employer Toolkit: Page view metrics were shared since the launch of the toolkit in October 2023. There was discussion about how to expand the use of this site with information that is relevant and useful to the business community. Rather than the lunch & learn sessions, the proposed plan is to feature a section of the toolkit in the WIB newsletter and to share testimonials from employers who have utilized the toolkit in a social media campaign. Additional suggestions included more in-depth poster boards with the QR code at various events and rack cards which talks more about the toolkit. Milbrandt explored the suggestion of adding a link to the Job Connect submission confirmation message but learned that is not possible due to it being a standard message established by the web host. Another link on JobConnect might be useful to bring people to the toolkit. Milbrandt will explore this as well. Committee members were asked to share the various links, including Ramsey Means Business, with their networks, especially

smaller businesses. The toolkit will be shared at the upcoming Inclusive Workforce Summit to expand its use as there will be over a hundred employers participating.

Staff Updates

CareerForce Relocation: Milbrandt provided an update on the relocation effort. Work continues on the build out the space, finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding/Infrastructure Funding Agreement with all partners and obtain a license agreement with the state. The One-Stop-Operator Consortium will provide further details at the February WIB meeting on service delivery plans. The opening date of the new CareerForce location will be in March. An open house will take place in Q2 after Ramsey County's Service Center has been completed.

Upcoming Events: Milbrandt shared the following:

- Inclusive Workforce Summit: January 29, 8am-1pm at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Yolanda McIntosh is moderating the keynote panel discussion.
- Top Trends to Watch in 2025 Webinar: February 19, noon-1pm. Following the event will be a series of articles that dig deeper into the trends. The link to register will be provided in today's follow up email.
- Youth Workforce Champion Awards: This year's nominations are due February 19 at 4pm. The awards will be given out at the April WIB meeting.
- Minnesota Skills Based Hiring Accelerator: Workshops are offered monthly to help companies jump start their skills-based practices. The next session is March 7, 9am to 1pm at Securian Financial in St. Paul.

Other

Milbrandt shared that an Executive Order will end funding for DEI programs. The order directs federally funded programs to cease all activities related to DEI or DEIA. O'Neal shared that the number one priority for Ramsey County is the wellness of staff and the community on the impact of the order and to provide tools to staff in the short term on what this will all mean. DEED is in the early stages of developing guidance on the impacts of the order along with the county leadership.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 17, 2025, 3-4pm via Zoom