

**Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County**

Equity Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 18, 2024.

3:00 – 4:00pm

Zoom Video Conference

**Present:**

Jonathan Banks  
Michelle Belitz  
Karen Gerdin  
Lauren Hunter-Reynolds  
Mary Russell  
Tanya Velishek  
Tracy Wilson

**Absent:**

Mohamed Alfash  
Becky Degendorfer  
Yolanda McIntosh

**Staff/Guests:**

Ling Becker, Workforce Solutions  
Mariann Macalus, Workforce Solutions  
Rebecca Milbrandt, Workforce Solutions

---

**Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement**

Hunter-Reynolds called the meeting to order at 3:04pm. Wilson read the land acknowledgement aloud.

---

**Approve January Minutes**

**Motion (Russell/Wilson) to approve the January 22, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by chat vote.**

---

**Committee Work Plan/Project Updates**

*Inclusive Workplaces Cohort:* Milbrandt shared that the third cohort is being facilitated by ADR Consulting Group. ADR facilitators come from unique and diverse backgrounds that allow them to truly center intersectionality in the way they approach diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. The eleven organizations selected to participate in the cohort collectively employ over 2,000 people. The welcome and orientation session was held February 27 and the cohort will meet monthly for 90 minutes March through December (except July), with in-person sessions held at Wilder Foundation. Russell shared that at the welcome orientation there was a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and a spirit to learn. If there is anything specific committee members would like to hear, please let Russell or Milbrandt know so they can provide useful and meaningful information during these updates.

*Inclusive Employer Toolkit Next Steps:* The toolkit was launched in October 2023. The plan is to refresh the pdf version twice per year, in May and December. Becker shared metrics from October through the end of 2023 stating the guide received about 3,000 views. Becker and Milbrandt will work with RealTime Talent to add statistics on strategies, adding narrative for social media and finding employers who are using it. Committee members are encouraged to share the link and to think about other ways it can be shared out. Notebooks with the QR code will be brought to the next WIB meeting for use in sharing. Committee members should share the resources within the toolkit with others in their networks. Milbrandt will check into an auto reply when an employer is posting jobs in JobConnect to help promote the Toolkit more.

*Board Equity Training:* Becker shared that the WIB has some member development funding to offer training to deepen individual and collective understanding around equity. There was discussion on potential training options in the fall as this could be an additional time commitment for members. A suggestion was to cancel the October WIB meeting and hold the training that month instead. This committee thought this was a good idea so Becker will bring this to the Executive Committee. Some training topics included a fair opportunities simulation, where the WIB is at as a board and where does it need to be successful in areas such as DEI, and what the Toolkit is all about. Becker and Milbrandt will explore a simulation event and possibly another option such as visiting a provider.

---

## **Director's Updates**

Becker shared the following:

*Drive for Five:* The Minneapolis Workforce Board, who partnered with the Saint Paul Area Chamber, Minneapolis Chamber and the two counties was awarded an \$800,000 grant which focuses on job placements and employer supports. The State's Drive for Five initiative focuses on helping people get training and support for placement in the near term to meet the moment of the state's current high job vacancy rate. This will accelerate the work of the Minnesota Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator.

*MN Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator:* This program is being offered in partnership with Goodwill Easter Seals, Urban League Twin Cities, and the Minneapolis Regional and Saint Paul Area Chambers. It offers a hands-on assessment and reconstruction of organizations' hiring, onboarding and talent management processes to move beyond traditional hiring approaches to focus on the true skills and abilities needed to do a job, particularly with people who face systemic barriers to job opportunities. Two committee members reported having attended the one-day in-person workshop and found it very beneficial in helping their organization build a plan that will attract, hire and retain the best talent. One thing that might be a struggle for non-state employers is changing the requirements as currently the skills-based requirements are only for state positions. Ramsey County is entering into a partnership as a region with the other workforce boards in the metro area to support this new program. More details will be sent soon for a one-hour orientation for regional workforce board members. The WIB should advocate for the 2025 platform to push the state to make changes to their legislation so that employers can use the same guidelines the state is using. Also, a feature in the WIB newsletters could be an endorsement for the skills-based initiative. Another issue is that schools should have an understanding that they should be teaching more of a skills-based approach and ensuring their students have the skills needed for these jobs as they approach graduation.

*Job Quality Initiative:* The Department of Labor (DOL) has been sharing out to employers the idea of job quality. The need is to engage employers on job quality overview, recruiting and hiring, growth opportunities, benefits and wages, working conditions and inclusion. This discussion will continue as the DOL asked workforce boards to be leading champions in talking about this.

---

## **Other**

Reminder that the April WIB meeting is at the High School for Recording Arts. The Youth Workforce Champion Awards will be presented and tours of the school will be offered.

---

## **Adjourn**

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 3:59pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 20, 2024, 3:00-4:00pm. via Zoom