

**Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County**

Equity Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 16, 2024

3:00 – 4:00pm

Zoom Video Conference

**Present:**

Michelle Belitz  
Becky Degendorfer  
Karen Gerdin  
Yolanda McIntosh  
Lauren Reynolds  
Mary Russell  
Tanya Velishek  
Tracy Wilson

**Absent:**

Mohamed Alfash-EA  
Jonathan Banks

**Staff/Guests:**

Bryan Kuzel, Mississippi Market  
Mariann Macalus, Workforce Solutions  
Rebecca Milbrandt, Workforce Solutions

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**Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement**

All those in attendance introduced themselves. Reynolds called the meeting to order at 3:01pm. Belitz read the land acknowledgement aloud.

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**Approve May Minutes**

**Motion (Degendorfer/Wilson) to approve the May 20, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by chat vote.**

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**Committee Work Plan/Project Updates**

Milbrandt provided updates on the following:

*WIB Equity Training:* The October WIB meeting will include the Racial Equity Framework Training. The County Manager's office has adapted the training from an internal training series available to new and current county employees and is supported by ongoing funding included in the county budget. The purpose of the training is to educate and inform community advisory board members how to utilize a racial equity lens when working with Ramsey County. There will be a lot to cover in the one-hour training. Committee members are encouraged to send feedback on the framework document to Milbrandt. She will check into further offerings of this training and whether recordings will be available for new WIB members.

*Inclusive Employer Toolkit:* The Toolkit continues to evolve with new resources on the topics of skills-based hiring and creative employee benefits packages. The Toolkit was submitted as a Ramsey County project to the Minnesota Association of Government Communications (MAGC), an organization dedicated to improving public sector communications. At MAGC's July 17 Northern Lights Awards ceremony, the Ramsey County Communications & Public Relations team received several awards including a silver award for the Toolkit. Ideas for how to continue sharing and expanding the use of the Toolkit include testimonials from business leaders about how the Toolkit benefits them/their organization and hosting virtual lunch & learn sessions each featuring a section of the Toolkit. Milbrandt thanked the committee for helping with the design and contents.

*Inclusive Workplaces Cohort:*

- **Current Cohort:** Milbrandt and Russell provided an overview of the current cohort which started in February. Summer sessions were virtual, focusing on bias in hiring practices and creating a culture that builds retention. Overall, participant survey responses have been positive, with the exception of the August session which some felt was too condensed, resulted in a few negative responses related to facilitation and adequate time for interaction/Q&A. The topics for the remaining sessions were shared. The recognition luncheon will be held December 5 at the Minnesota Humanities Center. Polar Semiconductor withdrew from the cohort due to a job change.

- 2025 Cohort Planning: Russell and Milbrandt met with ADR to start planning for the 2025 cohort. They shared ideas such as extending sessions to two hours vs one and a half, starting in March vs. February to allow time to recruit at the Inclusive Hiring Connections Summit in January, continuing to have sessions at the end of the workday, creating a workbook that organizations can use to build out a plan along the way, having some continuity of breakout groups and whether the summer sessions should be virtual. Next steps including obtaining additional feedback from this committee and having ADR provide an updated statement of work prior to the renewal of the 2025 contract. Consideration of a lunch and learn on the Inclusive Hiring Toolkit was suggested along with getting information on which sessions should be more in depth. A follow up survey was suggested after 6-12 months to get a sense of what has changed with the organizations since being involved in the cohort.

*Upcoming Events:* Milbrandt highlighted the following events:

- MN Skills Based Hiring Accelerator: The Accelerator program continues to be offered by the metro area workforce boards in partnership with Goodwill Easter Seals, the Urban League, the Saint Paul Area Chamber and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber. The half day in-person workshops will be held monthly through the end of the year. There is also a new website - mnskillsbased.com.
- Inclusive Hiring Connections Summit: Planning is underway for the January 2025 Inclusive Hiring Connections Summit. Workforce Solutions' Employer Services Leadership Team is in the process of determining breakout topics. More information will be provided once a location is chosen as the Metro Square Conference Center is currently under renovation. Milbrandt will be seeking assistance from WIB and committee members to introduce sessions and host a WIB table to promote the cohort and inclusive resources and events.
- Career Connect Day: October 15 at St. Paul RiverCentre. New this year is a "day in the life of" experience in various sectors. WIB and committee members are invited to spend time in the booth talking with students.
- Youth Works! Networking: October 3 at Rondo Library. This event is hosted two times a year by the Youth Committee to bring together those who support Ramsey County youth to celebrate the work happening in local schools, businesses and community-based organizations.

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### **Staff Updates**

Workforce Development Month: Milbrandt extended a huge thanks to the committee members for their leadership and commitment to driving innovative workforce strategies in the community. These efforts have a meaningful impact on the job seekers and businesses of Ramsey County

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### **Other**

McIntosh/Belitz shared that DEED held a workforce conference in Duluth last week.

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### **Adjourn**

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 3:54pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 18, 2024, 3:00-4:00pm. via Zoom