

**Duluth Workforce Development Board**  
**Monday, November 16, 2020 – 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Meeting through WebEx Events**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent, ISD 709  
Andrea Chartier, Career Services, College of St. Scholastica  
Shayla Drake, HR/Payroll Coordinator, Aftenro  
Brian Durand, Project Executive, McGough  
Emily Edison, Executive Director, SOAR Career Solutions  
Claire Farmer-Lies, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Residential Services Inc.  
Patty Fleege, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Manager, Adult Learning Center  
Lindsey Growette Stingle, Human Resources Director, National Bank of Commerce  
Marla Halvorson, HR Director, St. Luke's  
Monica Haynes, Director, UMD Bureau of Business & Economic Research  
Duane Hill, District Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Julie Johnson Atkinson, Vice President of Sales, Visit Duluth  
Pam Kramer, Executive Director, Duluth LISC  
Laura Krollman, Manager, Minnesota Power  
Jay Ott, Owner and CEO, AdMax  
Paul Pedersen, Director of Outreach, MAC-V  
Julie Sachs, Field Operations Area Manager, DEED  
Erik Simonson, Executive Director of Continuing Education and Customized Training, Lake Superior College  
Ian Vincent, Senior Business Developer, APEX  
Sonia Vinnos, Rehab Manager, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
Amanda Yates, Financial Services Manager, St. Louis County  
Elena Foshay, Director, Duluth Workforce Development  
Carson Gorecki, Northeast Regional Labor Market Analyst, DEED  
Shawn Herhusky, Workforce Strategy Consultant, DEED  
Carol Turner, Operations Manager, Duluth Workforce Development

**Meeting called to order 2:06**

**Action Items:**

- Minutes from September 21, 2020 meeting approved by all in attendance
  
- 2021 meeting calendar approved by all in attendance
  - Meeting in January, March, May, June, September, and November
  - Meeting virtually until further notice

**Updates & Announcements**

- City of Duluth received additional CARES Act CDBG funding to assist with community response to COVID-19, \$1.7 million to support shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, community services, employment, and basic needs. Provide public input to Ben Van Tassel by email [bvantassel@duluthmn.gov](mailto:bvantassel@duluthmn.gov).
- CareerForce continues to be closed to the public until further notice. Continuing to work virtually. Decreasing numbers of calls to the front desk. Unemployment Insurance calls decreasing. Staff have more time to help clients. DEED pulled demographics of customers served by Job Service, does not count number of folks served by all programs. Compared to 2019, statewide, we're assisting fewer people overall, but numbers are good considering we're closed. We're seeing more people with higher education. Those with lower educational levels are suffering higher rates of unemployment, and are not accessing our services at the same rate as last year. We're serving less African American customers than we did last year, another group that has been hit hard by unemployment. Those who suffer digital divide the most are the least likely to access our services. Locally and statewide we are working on additional strategies to make our services more accessible, and to reach those who are underserved right now.
- DEED Commissioner has launched Good Jobs Now campaign. Reach out to Shawn Herhusky [shawn.herhusky@state.mn.us](mailto:shawn.herhusky@state.mn.us) to get involved, answer questions. #GoodJobsNow <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/find-a-job/goodjobsnow/>
- The Digital Inclusion Initiative is a growing group of community partners working to address digital divide. Collectively we have raised at least half a million dollars towards digital divide efforts. Focus was getting devices and access to internet. Now moving on to digital literacy support. A bigger picture, long term effort, will be working to increase access to broadband.
- Workforce strategic plan is due July 2021. It is the outline on how to spend public dollars on workforce development. It's submitted to DEED, and then submitted to the Department of Labor. It is updated every four years. Work started on it, but was interrupted by COVID. An extension of one year was granted. We are waiting for a new template from DEED. Each board committee will have work to do on it. We would like to put together an ad hoc working group that includes the Executive Committee, to work on business and employer engagement. If you're interested, let Elena Foshay know.
- The DEED Virtual Veteran's Career Fair will be held on November 19, 2-6 p.m. for all veterans and active military members and their spouses. The cost for employers to participate might be prohibitive for some.
- If businesses or colleges have computers to donate, or if you're interested in helping with these efforts, please reach out to Pam Kramer at LISC. [pkramer@lisc.org](mailto:pkramer@lisc.org)

### Committee Updates

**Governance Committee:** Recruitment is an ongoing conversation. Some slots for private business to fill. Will be reaching out to newer members of the board in upcoming months to see how things are going.

Art Larsen who represented DEED Job Service has moved on to a new position with DEED. Julie Sachs is serving as interim and will be representing DEED on the board.

**Youth Committee/Emerging Workforce:** Discussing how YES Duluth staff are doing in terms of young people engagement right now. Youth services meets with those 16-24. It's been challenging because there's no staff in the building at CareerForce. They've been successful in terms of making improved employer engagement. Making the connection with young people continues to be a challenge. Discussing what youth in our community need from us right now.

**Equity Committee:** Working on tool kit and identifying how to launch it to the community.

**Healthcare Working Group:** Made a lot of progress. Finished pathways documents. Looking at long term action items. May split into committees. It is a high energy group with a lot of ideas for an industry that has an incredibly high need right now.

**Construction Working Group:** Most projects that were planned for summer have happened, folks went to work which is great. A lot of opportunity to focus on equity and career pathways tied to the Twin Ports Interchange project. Talking with Building Strong Communities, an apprenticeship prep training program in the Twin Cities. Building on Tools of the Trade model, incorporating some of their components, working to create a partnership.

## **2021 Budget Overview**

- Elena Foshay presented the Workforce Development Department budget to City Council in October. Budget will be approved at a December meeting, and becomes official in January 2021. Great opportunity to show off to City Council all the great work we do.
  - 4,565 individuals served by all agencies and programs. 30% of people of color. Good mix of youth and adult numbers.
  - City of Duluth Workforce Development MFIP program serves the most clients and has the most staff.
  - Department budget is just over \$3 million. Revenues are a mix of federal formula grants, state formula and competitive grants, and MFIP contract with St. Louis County. We receive a small amount of city general fund dollars to support work with Community Benefits. Half of expenditures is on staff, the other half is spent on program participants.
  - The history of our budget overall has been fairly flat. That is good, we have a diversified budget portfolio. We started going for more competitive grants in 2018-19. Our federal grants have gone down, and we've been fortunate to make that up with state formula and competitive grants. It is concerning though. If population doesn't grow and unemployment rate is low, funding decreases. We do not know if this formula will change. As we have the opportunity to advocate in the next stimulus packages, we would like to see an increase in federal funding for workforce development.
  - Our transition to virtual services has been incredible.
  - Challenges to tackle in 2021 include the digital divide, child care shortage, housing shortage, workforce shortage, young people who are completely disengaged, and staff fatigue.
  - Opportunities include building new partnerships.

## Digital Literacy Resources

- Reach out to Patty Fleege at ABE, [patricia.fleege@isd709.org](mailto:patricia.fleege@isd709.org) Courses are designed for beginners.
- CareerForce computer classes <https://www.careerforcemn.com/>

## Supporting DWD Staff

- Board thank you cards to staff

## Update on economic impact of COVID in labor market in NE MN-Carson Gorecki

- Carson Gorecki, DEED Labor Market Analyst provided an update on the impact of COVID on our workforce and economy to date.
  - The unpredictable nature of COVID has made it challenging to make data informed decisions. We didn't expect so many people to leave the workforce. Training/educating workers for in-demand careers with stable wages and benefits will be important. Helping employers hold on to their employees is also a goal. Employers also need to help control the spread of COVID among their employees.
  - COVID has a lot of impact on businesses and profits, and there are not a lot of resources for businesses who have to close.
  - How do we convince folks to get more training for in-demand careers, especially while they're at home, doing all the things they need to during the pandemic?
  - How can we help? Create an initiative to educate employers to keep employees safe and sending people to places we know they'll have safety in place.

## Equity Action Items

- Sumair Sheikh, a member of the Equity Committee, joined us to discuss the launch of the equity tool kit.
  - The need comes from addressing disparities. We have a lot of diverse groups within our community, and addressing employment and education needs is important.
  - The purpose is to help engage employers in the conversation around equity inclusion, diversity issues and think about their own process, procedures, and protocols. Using the tool kit can help employers reflect on these best practices to create momentum towards employee retention.
  - Suggestions for the launch were added to Jamboard. Suggestions included launching the toolkit with a virtual event and key note speaker, holding it in January, advertising that this is a launch for a guide and that employers want take-aways, lunchtime or morning good, and marketing with the Chamber.

**Meeting adjourned 4:01.**

**Next Duluth Workforce Development Board Meeting is Monday, January 25, 2021, 2:00-4:00 p.m.**