

**Vermilion County Workforce Innovation Board – Workforce Solutions Committee**  
**Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 8:30a via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Austin Grammer      Joe Stelzer      Laura Williams      Willie Christian III  
Chuck Jones      Annie Monyok      Janice Coleman      Brian Hensgen      Erin Griffin  
Emilee James      Paula Riggle      Melissa Hill      Tim Dudley      Jody Wanless  
Brittany Woodworth      Stephanie Yates      Darrius Tyler      Maruti Seth

**Others Present:** Lindsay Light

**Members Absent:** Alison Ciulini      Jonathan Jett      Lori Russell      Melissa Ronto

The meeting was called to order at 8:36a.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Janice, seconded by Joe. No opposed, motion carried.

Motion to approve last meeting's minutes was made by Janice, seconded by Melissa. No opposed, motion carried.

There were no audience comments.

**Discussion:**

**Cooperation** – Annie gave a brief description, stating it is a two-option playbook for employers to look at recruitment and retention as a manufacturing coalition. They will start by conducting a survey of the underemployed & unemployed to understand social and economic barriers. Employers have a strong opinion that it might have to do with the additional unemployment benefits, but she doesn't believe that to be the whole case. Identification & collaboration is the first phase. The second part is they work with the manufacturers on a competitive edge for employees, surveying the employees about retention, etc. Registration opened this week and they hope to kick off on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Stephanie asked Erin if she had recommendations on who to work with at the schools to get a survey distributed and Erin volunteered to take that project on if Stephanie sent her information. Tim stressed that participation is key. Annie is going to send some information to Lindsay to distribute to the committee.

**Follow up to last meeting's discussion** – Janice voiced concern that benefits were running out and people still don't seem to be interested in working. Tim stated that he knows a lot of people are under the perception that the extra unemployment amount is the problem, but he doesn't believe that's the problem. He thinks there's more to it than that. He would like to see our area more prepared if COVID rebounds and shutdowns return. Discussion ensued on barriers for jobseekers. Brian mentioned employers offering incentives to employees to create an environment of teambuilding or employees helping each other. Melissa stated they hired 13 people in July, but they lost 23 while in that process. 5 gave reasons as to why, but the rest were just abandonments. She stated that a majority of those who leave don't give a reason and it's impossible to exit interview or communicate to know what happened. They also try to offer incentives to employees who stay, but it's hard to follow through when there aren't enough employees to cover those incentives. Chuck mentioned some of the issue is just an attitude among some jobseekers that once they get their emergency needs met, they don't need the job or to participate anymore. Janice brought up people with criminal records. She stated a lot of employers don't have a written policy on who they hire with a record. She stated Goodwill did a study on the needs of the community, and they found that transportation has been an issue for years. DMT had a part of that and it wasn't cost effective for them to have bus routes at certain times of the day, creating a problem. Tim stated Vermilion Advantage met with the Department of Corrections just two weeks ago to come up with some ideas on acclimating the outgoing prisoners into the workforce. One of the barriers he sees is a "halfway house" or a transition home for them to live. He suggested watching a video from Second Church, which includes a perfect example of a prisoner who is getting ready to be released. Stephanie stated DACC is in the process of using Industrial Career Pathways in the Dept of Corrections to provide short-term training. When

they reach the point of their release dates, they will start to receive this training. It will provide an OSHA credential.

Discussion ensued. She is just unable to provide a timeline at this point.

**Apprenticeship Grant Update/Core Funding Update** – Chuck stated they're successfully operating an apprenticeship grant right now, and have met their goal. They're looking to add more participants including working with the plumbers & pipefitters union to provide books & supplies. They will be enrolling some from IBEW 601 in Champaign also helping w/books and tools. JJ & Chuck are working on a grant requesting additional money (due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month), but they're currently unsure of the amount. It would begin December 1 and will last two years. They've had a lot of interest from the trade unions, interest from Carle, and interest from area manufacturers. Brian threw in that this is a regional concept and, working with LWIA 17, LWIA 17 is writing an apprenticeship grant for a navigator to create new apprenticeship opportunities, which will help us. Brian gave statistics on new apprenticeships throughout the state, with most being in our area. Chuck mentioned JJ had discussions with Dr. Arnold about not only using apprenticeship funding, but using core funding to help support apprentices in their training programs ensuring to maximize what's available. Vermillion County Works is still enrolling and has funding available in their core grants as well. Chuck encouraged referrals for low-income adults & dislocated workers, especially. He stated they've seen some increased traffic in their office. Chuck mentioned VCW does continue to partner with Land of Lincoln Legal Aid helping with the sealing and expungement summit. In October, Emily, a paralegal for LOL, will have office hours at the American Job Center to help people who have signed up to have records sealed/expunged. They had 90 people apply for assistance.

**Member Comments:**

Brian mentioned Kelsey Landers left to work at the Juvenile Detention Center. Jeremy Morgeson has started as the new Resource Room Assistant.

**Next meeting:**

October 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am – information to follow

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Chuck, seconded by Maruti. No opposed, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30a.