

Vermilion County Workforce Innovation Board – Workforce Solutions Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting – Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 8am via zoom

Present: Jonathan Jett	Chuck Jones	Melissa Hill	Janice Coleman
Vanetta Harvey	Willie Christian III	Brian Hensgen	Brittany Woodworth
Melissa Ronto	Stephanie Yates	Austin Grammar	Darius Tyler
Joe Stelzer	Jody Wanless	Erin Leverenz	

The meeting was called to order at 8:04a.

Approval of agenda was made by JJ, seconded by Brian. No opposed, motion carried.

Approval of minutes JJ, Chuck

There were no audience comments.

VCW Grant Update – JJ stated the core grant normally would be looking to slow down, but he said they have plenty of funding, so please send referrals. He stated the youth RFP has been put out with proposals due tomorrow and he entertained volunteers for the evaluation team. He listed the programs and apprenticeships that are open for referrals. He mentioned they've been told that it looks like the state will receive a 10% cut in funding for next year, but that gives him an opportunity to go after other additional funds. JJ stated they're open 8-5:30, and Brian stated they're one of the only centers in the state that are open.

Hiring Events – JJ stated they've had a couple of hiring events through DACC including Viscofan, etc. They're not well-attended. He's excited to announce that there will be drive thru events on April 28<sup>th</sup> for manufacturing and warehousing, and on May 5<sup>th</sup> they will have healthcare and miscellaneous. They were well-attended before but he's nervous now with everything going on that people won't so up.

What ideas do we have to get people back to work? The committee agrees the biggest battle is the extra money they're getting from the state, and that doesn't expire until September. The committee agreed that this is an opportunity to have a better opportunity. The committee agreed that people need to think about what they're going to do when the stimulus runs out. Melissa gave an example of single mothers trying to support kids going to school and work to provide for their family. They use the stimulus money because it's the easier way out. Janice stated she's finding a problem with people with criminal records being able to get into places like Viscofan. JJ mentioned maybe talking to some of the HR directors asking how lenient they can be to give second chances. Melissa mentioned they've changed their criteria. They are a little more lenient. There are some opportunities depending on what the conviction was that would open up the benefit. She thinks some programs do help with making it easier for these people to get a second chance. ThyssenKrupp might be another company who has decided to do those things depending on what the charge was in the past. Janice mentioned she knew AutoZone was as well. Jody mentioned IDES does have fidelity bonding for those who decide to hire for second chance workers. JJ asked about utilizing the UI email blasts, and she said she thought so – she was going to double check and let JJ know. Brian stated that one of the things he wanted to solidify was formalizing the partnership with career services and veteran services with the one stop operator to give a consistent process with the job fair opportunity. It will expand the network of people invited to them. As we talk about the lack of attendance and interest – we have to start thinking outside of the box. From his

perspective, we need to figure out new ways to connect real jobseekers with real jobs -identify those who really want to work, not just attend a job fair to meet the minimum. Brian mentioned training while they get their stimulus so they're prepared for when it runs out and they need to work.

Brian then transitioned the discussion to the turnover issue, as it was discussed with Vermilion Advantage about a month ago. He stated those in workforce development rely on businesses to let us know what their true issues are. He stated we are there to support their needs. There will be more stimulus money coming and this could be good for businesses but there has to be a meet in the middle. Discussion ensued. We need to recruit more businesses to participate in this committee so we can help to address their needs. Motivating the jobseekers was discussed. Being out and above advertising services was discussed. Brittany agreed, stating we needed to get them where they're captive – go to jobseekers, don't make them come to you. Ideas discussed included going to the grocery stores, etc. Discussion ensued on how to get people back to work after the stimulus runs out. Brian mentioned short-term training with needs-based support. JJ also mentioned the apprenticeship model. Melissa Ronto entertained an idea of what we can do now to publicize what we are doing or what is coming. Can we use funding to help? She also suggested media outlets including Linda Bolton and other quick free media spots. Austin jumped in and offered suggestions including utilizing their landlords to distribute information to renters. JJ will follow up with Tim Dudley and will work to start putting these ideas into action.

There were no member comments. Chuck mentioned drafting a press release to get it out as soon as possible and continue with follow up to see where it would get us. Brian stated it was included in Kelsey's BCI blast. Discussion ensued on it being a cultural issue. The younger generation hasn't been raised the same as the current generation. JJ stated the college is developing a website for Vermilion County Works and he mentioned putting videos on YouTube to help reach out to the newer generations. A video idea was mentioned. Stephanie mentioned the minimum wage increased having a part in this. She stated employers had to focus on the extra benefits when they're competing with a raised minimum wage. Melissa (Ronto) stated people have been isolated from information due to COVID.

Chairwoman Hill thanked everyone for attending today and thanked them for the ideas to get the committee started on a project. The next meeting will be held in May to follow up on the discussion from this morning's meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Brian, seconded by JJ. No opposed, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02a.