



Vermont State Workforce Development Board
Career Pathways Committee - Meeting Minutes
March 17th, 2022
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Meg Hammond, Rick Bugbee, Holly Morehouse, Veronica Newton, Mary Anne Sheahan, Chancellor Sophie Zdatny, Commissioner Joan Goldstein, Commissioner Michael Harrington, Pat Elmer, Melissa Norman, Rebecca Kapsalis, Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey, Diane Dalmasse

Guests in Attendance: Victoria Biondolillo, Abby Rhim

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo told the group that the purpose of this committee is to look at the system as a whole and see where improvements can be made. She stressed the idea that there is a lot of good work going on, we just need to do a better job connecting all of those involved.

Victoria Biondolillo, Executive Director, Vermont State Workforce Development Board

Abby Rhim, Executive Assistant, Vermont State Workforce Development Board

Holly Morehouse, Executive Director of Vermont AfterSchool

Rick Bugbee, Vice President of Programs for Associates for Training and Development (A4TD)

Commissioner Michael Harrington, Department of Labor

Mary Anne Sheahan, Executive Director, Vermont Talent Pipeline

Meg Hammond, Executive Director of Generator

Veronica Newton, Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships of Generator

Pat Elmer, Founder, President, and CEO of Vermont Associates for Training and Development (A4TD)

Commissioner Joan Goldstein, Department of Economic Development

Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey, Agency of Education

Diane Dalmasse, Director of Hire Ability (formerly Vocational Rehab)

Rebecca Kapsalis, Director of Talent Acquisition, UVM Health Network

Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor for Vermont State College System

Melissa Norman, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo challenged the committee to identify the group's scope of work. She prompted the group to start with conversations regarding what is currently happening in this space and then speak openly about where efforts should best be focused.

Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey noted that prior to the pandemic, there was funding secured for secondary CTE career pathways training, and the Agency of Education had been successful in building some statewide career pathways in construction sciences and cybersecurity. Currently, the Agency is looking to find a new Career Pathways Coordinator and focus on aiding not only secondary students but meeting folks of all ages where they are in their careers. This includes high school and college students but additionally, folks further along their career pathway.

Commissioner Joan Goldstein noted that the Agency of Economic Development has not been as involved with career pathways, however, the Agency speaks with employers all the time who are confused and unsure where to turn regarding pathways. She added that we must ensure that they will understand how it will benefit them, whether that be a template or methodology. She noted that we also need to align all the players involved in career pathways.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo agreed that a template or best practices format would be helpful.

Commissioner Michael Harrington noted how the Department of Labor has ranged from providing WIOA services, helping create apprenticeships to providing funding to participants in certain programs. He then pivoted to say that the Department's biggest challenge is how WIOA can be constraining and the administrative work it puts on the Department. He is hoping to find more innovative ways to tackle the problem. He ended saying that while the workforce problem is a numbers game, we also need to find the right people for the right positions. To find the best solutions, we need to come together to create links.

Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey noted how excited she is about the breath of this new committee. She then stressed that the term "career pathways" is a broad term and the committee needs to narrow the focus.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She went on to explain that in her mind, career pathways begins when a child enters school, and as they progress, how we are exposing them to workforce potential. This pathway begins in early education and through to when they graduate and make changes within their career throughout. This includes on the receiving end, businesses and what they can get out of this process. She also noted that once kids are already in high school, it is almost too late for employers to make connections.

Melissa Norman noted the importance of veterans and career pathways. She highlighted how career pathways are a great opportunity to not only engage with young people but guide veterans in re-entering into civilian life.

Commissioner Michael Harrington suggested that the committee could define the purposes and goals of the group in order to solidify our ultimate objectives for the State Workforce Development Board. This could then help narrow the scope of conversation.

Pat Elmer added that we need to include the other end of the age spectrum regarding career pathways, including mature people. If we can identify holes where skilled and experienced mature workers are

needed, we can best help the workforce. Additionally, she echoed the idea that we need to maintain connection with employers in order to ensure that at the end of trainings, there are employers and jobs waiting for trained workers.

Mary Anne Sheahan reflected on the word “pathways” and what this entails. She agreed that while not all pathways are the same, it is when you become aware of a job that you are interested in. This could happen in youth, high school or at a mature age. She pivoted to say that she works with employers to identify career on-ramps or ladders. She stated that you need to have both the developing career pathway and career ladder to help find people to successfully fill workplace roles.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo agreed and said that there are many different pathways. She then said that the goal of this committee could be to focus on where people need to go, what the touch points are and the communication structure to help people move along pathways.

Commissioner Michael Harrington highlighted the importance of focusing on actual occupation. He then gave the example of green energy jobs. The reality is, when someone says green energy jobs, we probably have people that already work in similar fields to do those jobs. When we are thinking about bolstering a sector, we need to focus on the actual occupations that employers are struggling to fill.

Meg Hammond agreed that we need to take a more holistic approach. We live in a state where people are coming from different backgrounds. In order to help them find a way to their career, the pathways must be flexible. She also urged the committee to focus on middle schools, high schools or young adults. With those age groups, she sees the benefits of engaging with member-based organizations where folks go on to enter a global industry after spending time at a place like Generator and learning so much. She then pivoted to urging committee members to share their career pathway stories and how if folks were to share, they would not be linear. Lastly, she touched on the importance of diversity and inclusion. She stressed how we must target traditionally marginalized groups and learn how to engage with them earlier.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo agreed with Meg and her point to the lifetime of someone’s career. When discussing pathways, where does exposure begin so someone knows what is possible? She then said that for next steps, she will try to visualize critical points throughout a person’s lifetime and the critical times for onboarding the career pathway. The committee will then identify goals at each key point in someone’s lifetime to create more effective career pathways.

Commissioner Joan Goldstein noted how large the topic of career pathways is. She asked if we should attack one element and then proceed to the next? If we address everything at once, she worries we will not accomplish anything.

Mary Anne Sheahan asked to distribute a diagram to the group.

Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey doesn’t think it makes sense to build career pathways in this committee when that work is already happening on the ground. She asked if, potentially, this committee’s role is to identify gaps in the pathways.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo suggested looking at a career pathway, one specifically, and identify gaps so we can assist in the advising of making those stronger.

Commissioner Michael Harrington added that the ultimate role of the State Workforce Board is to advise the Governor on policy and other initiatives. Whatever work we are doing, we need to identify potential barriers or challenges to then bring to the Governor. We want to support the system or remove barriers. Our work should flow through the Board, to the Governor.

Meg Hammond asked for clarification on the individual committees and how they all add up to report to the Board.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo stated that she will send out a new understanding of what the Board's and Committees' objectives are. She then reiterated her role as implementing strategies that address pain points brought up in meetings. She ended by saying that she will distribute a document with the objectives of the State Workforce Board moving forward so the individual Committees can get a better sense of direction.

Respectfully submitted by Abby Rhim.

Abby Rhim, Executive Assistant

Vermont State Workforce Development Board