

**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

Policy Committee Minutes

March 3, 2022

10:00 am – 11:00 am

**Committee members in attendance:** Pat Elmer, Scott Giles, Adam Grinold, Dep. Sec. Heather Bouchey, Diane Dalmasse, Shawn Rouleau, Chris Loso, Comm. Michael Harrington

**Governor’s and State Agency & Department staff in attendance:** Victoria Biondolillo, Abigail Rhim

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo began the meeting at 10:02 by explaining the purpose of the State Plan. She then said that today, this meeting serves to focus on the major objectives and strategies laid out in the State Plan that is due on March 15th. She aims to have the State Plan’s goals align with the workforce system so that we can then use the Plan as a governing document. She then opened the floor to suggestions.

Chair Adam Grinold then formerly called the meeting to order at 10:06 am.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo asked if there was any tweaking to language or any massive changes needed to be made, looking at the document holistically.

Chair Adam Grinold asked that for folks who have had their hands on this document, any specific changes or philosophical additions to be aware of?

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo highlighted that in the goals and vision section, a few goals were added to make the document more in line with the Governor’s vision of recruiting more workers to Vermont, pointing to Goal 5 (relocating more workers to Vermont), Goal 6 (helping on employer side, adapt through current workforce challenges) and Goal 7 (focus on remote aspects of workforce system).

Dep. Sec. Heather Bouchey asked if Goal 6 is brand new. She is in support.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo responded that Goal 6 is new.

Pat Elmer commented on Goal 5, highlighting the need to help current Vermonters but also those out of state, enabling them to relocate to Vermont, which brings in the issue of housing.

Chris Loso agreed with Pat Elmer.

Chair Adam Grinold then stressed the importance of alignment in Vermont’s workforce and upskilling the current workforce. He stressed that if we can free up people due to productivity in certain sectors, these skilled folks can then shift to new jobs, otherwise, the pipeline we currently have is not going to meet demands in five years.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo agreed with the Chair, stating that although this alignment and upskilling does not pertain to federal government reporting, it is something that should be included and brought to the full State Workforce Development Board’s attention.

Chair Adam Grinold then stressed that market trends are going to force this demand and we will have to learn to do more with less. The reality will set in that our population decline is not just a COVID issue, it is real, and people are going to have to figure out how to solve the shortage. He highlighted that we don’t want to be caught off guard with the speed that employers figure this out.

Commissioner Harrington agreed. He then highlighted the importance of acknowledging other elements that stop our ability to grow our workforce, including broadband, housing, childcare, affordability, etc. He noted that we must advocate for non-workforce specific related initiatives that in turn, impact our workforce strategy.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo suggested we add this additional acknowledgement as another goal.

Commissioner Harrington then added that as a new goal, we should take what we hear from the business folks on the full Board and acknowledge how getting more workers includes making the actual locale desirable, a more holistic view of the problem.

Chris Loso agreed with Commissioner Harrington and said that if another goal is added, we need to ensure linkage to the State Plan, adding nuance throughout the document where needed.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo then suggested adding a strategy section regarding this new goal.

Chris Loso then suggested additional spelling and phrasing edits throughout the State Plan, saying that he will send grammar edits via email to the Executive Director.

Scott Giles then highlighted emphasizing alignment between the education system and the workforce. He noted examples where there have been scholarships with and without work requirements.

Pat Elmer then added the importance of alignment of workforce and demographics and needing to acknowledge our maturing workforce. She noted the need for retiree initiatives and their creation and/or expansion.

Chair Adam Grinold then shifted to New Americans and access to scholarships. He noted that some New Americans are not eligible for scholarships because they haven't been a resident for a year. He then went on to stress that, regardless, there has been great success with the arrival of 90 New Americans to Vermont and the importance of a well-functioning system. Without a robust system that people can just fill into, and rather only 1 or 2 people doing it as individuals, it is disconnected and not as high functioning. Success in regional systems now needs to translate to the broader Vermont community. He stressed that the system we have built to help refugees should serve as an example of system wide alignment that we should strive towards.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo then reiterated the importance of alignment and strong communication, highlighted in the State Plan.

Dep. Sec. Heather Bouchey then asked the Chair, were you talking about a local structure built in your county or state structure? Or both? She noted that there are different levels of structures and they all need to be attended to.

Chair Adam Grinold responded saying the example of refugees was regional. He went on to say it is a very focused system that relies on volunteers and has unique characteristics that enables it to work, but we could extract lessons to better connect regional folks.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo then shifted the conversation towards next steps, asking if the Committee would like to vote today with the caveat that changes discussed today would be reflected on the final document and that the final version would be voted on by the full State Workforce Development Board on March 9th. She also suggested that the Policy Committee could solely vote to approve the newly edited goals portion of the State Plan.

Chris Loso then stressed that this is a living document and things are still going to change

Chair Adam Grinold then suggested a motion that says we have reviewed the document today, the Policy Committee recommends sending it to the full board but in interim, edits are to be made and the Committee will look forward to approving at full meeting.

Executive Assistant Abigail Rhim then repeated the Chair’s language, asking for a motion.

Motion moved by Chris Loso, seconded by Scott Giles, approved unanimously by voice vote.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo then reminded members of the full State Workforce Development Board meeting scheduled for March 9th.

Chair Adam Grinold then asked about the procurement of the one-stop operator and a Policy Committee meeting soon.

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo said the one-stop operator meeting with the Policy Committee will be scheduled by end of this month or early April.

Chair Adam Grinold then asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion moved by Chris Loso.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 am.

Respectfully submitted by Abigail Rhim.

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Abigail Rhim, Executive Assistant, State Workforce Development Board