

**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

Youth Committee - Meeting Minutes

July 12th, 2022

10:00am – 11:00 am

**Committee Members in Attendance**: Nicole Miller, Loretta Stalnaker, Sarah Kleinman, Laurel Butler, Kym Anderson, Caelan Keenan, Jess DeCarolis, Elizabeth Frascoia

**Guests in Attendance**: Abigail Rhim, Patrick Connolly

Acting Executive Director Abigail Rhim began the meeting at 10:04 am. She noted that it had been a while since they had last met and asked the committee members to reintroduce themselves. She continued by sharing that the purpose of this meeting was to review committee updates, discuss new data in the youth workforce space, and to nail down a few goals which the committee is interested in.

Abigail Rhim then noted that Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo will be taking a leave from the board to work on Governor Phil Scott’s upcoming campaign.

Following introductions, Abigail Rhim opened the floor to committee members who wished to share anything going on in their organizations or work which might interest fellow committee members.

Laurel Butler mentioned that the Governors Institute of Vermont Entrepreneurship Program was a massive success. She noted that it was the first time they had huge diversity, with 35% of students identifying as non-white.

Abigail Rhim thanked Laurel Butler and agreed with the importance of accessibility to these programs.

Jess DeCarolis informed committee members that the Agency of Education is about to embark on a year-long study on work base learning and career technical education with the Regional Educational Laboratories. She added that this study is an extension of work that the agency engaged in surveying and pulling data around school counseling. She proceeded to share that committee members may be receiving an email from her in hopes for collaboration in this endeavor.

Loretta Stalnaker then noted that Royalton Police Department is doing a National Night Out on August 2nd and invited fellow committee members to join.

Kym Anderson mentioned that the restorative justice programs are becoming more involved per request by the schools and highlighted her excitement about this growing demand.

Sarah Kleinman shared that she launched a new program called AgroTek which is a grant funded initiative that ran intensive weeklong summer academies to build Agro-STEM skills, noting the success of said program and that they will continue to build on this program in the future. She quickly pointed out that she is looking for facilitators to be trained and work in a drug and alcohol prevention programs for ages 10-14.

Abigail Rhim then steered the conversation to the meeting’s agenda, which included reviewing data and coming up with deliverables which the committee can achieve efficiently and effectively.

The first piece of data which Abigail Rhim shared was the declining Statewide Education Enrollment from 2004-2021, which fell 21.3%.

Jess DeCarolis explained that some of this decline was due to a withdrawal of independent schools from data and reporting.

Abigail Rhim continued by displaying data which showed a significant decline of enrollment in rural counties, a slight decline in graduation rates, and a decline in college/career readiness.

Jess DeCarolis added that this data could be slightly skewed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a significant drop in ACT/SAT testing. She highlighted that pre-pandemic 13% of 11th graders took the ACT and the following year 1% of 11th graders took the ACT.

Abigail Rhim then flagged how WIOA funding had served 337 low-income young Vermonters who were not connected with a job or in school and how the labor participation rate had dropped 20% since mid-2000s. She pointed out that Vermont has the infrastructure to fully utilize the workforce with the Career Technical Education Centers but needs to be more efficient with coordination and collaboration. She proceeded to show a map of after school programs and highlighted key partners of the board.

With this data, Abigail Rhim acknowledged four key goals/deliverables which the committee could work towards involving the youth, the system staff within the youth, employers, and accessibility. Some of these goals included tracking already existing career events, identifying gaps by location/type of program, developing school toolkits for educators and mentors to reference.

Laurel Butler stressed the importance of extending the period which student met with career mentors and questioned whether the time allotted for career exploration was enough for students.

Jess DeCarolis said she could provide Laurel Butler with more data, but she guarantees that the time for career exploration has tripled since Laurel taught in schools.

Abigail Rhim thanked Jess DeCarolis and continued reading goals/deliverables slide from the presentation.

Kym Anderson agreed with the goals/deliverables and highlighted their importance as wells as their challenges

Jess DeCarolis shared that some of these goals had been attempted in the past, but a big problem was keeping databases fresh for those in the workforce and those searching for work.

Abigail Rhim agreed and asked the committee whether it would be best to have an updated website or a newsletter. She then moved back to the presentation and explained more goals/deliverables.

Jess DeCarolis asked whether the third goal, to develop ad promote business owner toolkits to reach out to schools, is for businesses to be aware of things that are already happening or is it for businesses to help inform entities that are offering career exploration opportunities.

Abigail Rhim responded by saying the toolkit could provide both options and could be tailored to what the businesses and schools are looking for.

Laurel Butler reaffirmed the importance of strong databases and criterion for internships

Jess DeCarolis indicated that there is a group of tools and resources which schools can use to direct students to said internships, but questioned what resources exist for youth’s divorced from schools.

Nicole Miller noted that part of the Governors after school task force has included some work around matching jobs for youth.

Jess DeCarolis pointed out that one categories of goals/deliverables that could be added is families and caregivers because often youth require connection and support system from these entities. She highlighted the importance of outreach to these families and caregivers

Abigail Rhim agreed with Jess DeCarolis as well as the other comments of members of the committee.

Caelan Keenan mentioned that UNH did a study on how families at different income levels viewed career tracks. The study concluded that low-income families continue to see a four-year college a requirement to a ticket out of poverty whereas middle- and high-income families are warming up to the idea of CTE and other learning tracks for their children to be successful.

Abby Rhim asked Caelen Keenan to share the study with the rest of the committee.

Kym Anderson noted that the mentorship programs are not viable in Orange County and was wondering what role the committee envisioned for mentorship programs.

Elizabeth Frascoia highlighted mental health, LGBTQ, and BIPOC communities and stressed that these communities should be at forefront of the committee efforts. She was also curious about how businesses are able to incorporate student who identify outside the gender binary. She also presented the dangers to trans youth who enter an unaccepting workplace environment.

Abigail Rhim agreed and discussed adding members of these communities into the committee.

Jess DeCarolis thanked everyone for their ideas and suggested that providing training to employers who work with students, especially in minority communities, through toolkits would be a concrete step moving forward to help youth and student groups. She continued by highlighting the importance of mentorship programs in different areas of Vermont.

Abby Rhim agreed and reaffirmed the employer/mentorship focused goal. She then thanked the committee members for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Patrick Connolly

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Patrick Connolly, Intern, Vermont Governor’s Office