

**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

Manufacturing Committee - Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2023

10:00 – 11:00 am

**Committee Members in Attendance**: Carla Wuthrich, Daniel Isaac, Veronica Newton, Brian Carpenter, Barry Hulce, Ashley Lipton

**Guests in Attendance**: Victoria Biondolillo, Abby Rhim

Victoria Biondolillo called the meeting to order at 10:07 am. She informed the Committee that she and Abigail Rhim are putting finishing touches on the Committee’s portion of the strategic plan. She then opened the floor to members to provide updates.

Carla Wuthrich shared the “Call to Action” goals:

1. Tell a story – make the diverse pathways in manufacturing known and inspiring.
2. Leverage resources – open up pathways for community benefit.
3. Take steps together with onboarding and upskilling – join a pilot program.

Veronica Newton asked for clarification about “onboarding and upskilling” and if the Committee should be looking for “gaps” in the system (i.e., what training and development do future employees need to succeed in their job?).

Carla Wuthrich responded that the Committee should be focused on the current needs of employers while also trying to think about possible career pathways in the future.

Victoria Biondolillo said Vermont Talent Pipeline is focused on understanding the entry points into different sectors. For example, in manufacturing, they try to understand what training is needed for employers, what credentials are helpful for employees, etc. She suggested Carla Wuthrich and Mary Anne Sheahan discuss their work at the Vermont Talent Pipeline in the next meeting.

Victoria Biondolillo then presented the one-pager. She outlined the principal parts of the strategic plan:

* Executive summary
* Data from Vermont Futures Project which dictates the focus of the Committee
* Priority areas for the Committee:
1. Utilizing WIOA funding better
2. Supporting the existing workforce
3. Promoting and increasing education and training
4. Increasing the size and quality of the workforce

She also outlined the three overarching purposes of the Workforce Development Board:

1. System improvement (making recommendations to agencies)
2. Coordinating services (increasing coordination between agencies)
3. Making recommendations to the governor on policy and budget items

She said that by Monday, May 1, 2023, the Workforce Development Board will be sharing the first draft of their overall strategic plan with all the committees and invite them to provide feedback before the meeting of the Workforce Development Board in the end of May.

Daniel Isaac asked what else the members of the Manufacturing Committee members can do to increase support and awareness for the plan.

Victoria Biondolillo said the Workforce Development Board feels comfortable with the support they have been receiving from the committees and the state government. However, she has not yet considered how to increase support and awareness of the plan amongst Vermont residents. After the plan comes out, the SWDB (State Workforce Development Board) will invite members of various committees to do regional engagement and speak with business owners and employees directly. That will be most of the work the committees will do with the public. All participation in those regional events would be appreciated.

Daniel Isaac proposed the idea of talking to people out-of-state to inform them of work opportunities in Vermont.

Victoria Biondolillo said he should engage with potential workforce members from out-of-state as much as possible. She also said there is a lot of work to be done on a dual-effort marketing plan that does micro-marketing which targets people from out-of-state in specific industries and allows Vermont to fund regional entities that are engaging in relocation work (conditional on the plan being approved in the governor’s budget).

Carla Wuthrich echoed Daniel Isaac’s opinion that the committee should ensure they have a concrete plan for their work.

Victoria Biondolillo said Abigail Rhim and she have experienced skepticism regarding the SWDB and they are focused on getting concrete work done as well.

Victoria Biondolillo then introduced the one-pager. She started by discussing “The Situation”: manufacturing is seeing a resurgence in the Vermont economy; forecasts indicate that growth in the manufacturing sector is outpacing the growth of Vermont’s labor force. It’s crucial that Vermont focus on:

* filling jobs
* increasing the capability and adaptability of the workforce
* build a sustainable pipeline of workers from all career stages
* work with the career pathways committee to assess future demand for manufacturing jobs based on employer projected innovations

Veronica Newton asked if the font size on the one-pager can be changed.

Victoria Biondolillo said Abby will format the one-pager correctly after the meeting.

Barry Hulce suggested recognizing the granite industry on the one-pager.

Carla Wuthrich agreed with Barry Hulce.

Victoria Biondolillo said she would add the granite industry to the one-pager.

Brian Carpenter added that there are other stone industries that could be included such as marble or slate. He asked if instead of putting granite, they should put a more general industry term in the one-pager (e.g., minerals, rocks, stone).

Victoria Biondolillo asked what the correct term would be.

Barry Hulce suggested using “stone.”

Victoria Biondolillo put “stone” in the one-pager.

Carla Wuthrich asked what the Career Pathways Committee is.

Victoria Biondolillo explained the purpose of the Career Pathways Committee is to approve official career pathways. They look at future demand in different industries and work to understand different career pathways.

Carla Wuthrich suggested capitalizing “Career Pathways Committee.”

Ashley Lipson asked if the different industries listed on the one-pager came from data on Vermont’s largest manufacturing industries.

Victoria Biondolillo said the one-pager is simply listing different industries; they are not derived from data.

Ashley Lipson suggested finding out what the top five manufacturing industries in Vermont are and using those in the one-pager.

Victoria Biondolillo said the purpose of including various industries, even if they are smaller in Vermont, is to ensure that the Committee does not limit any of their work to a single industry. The Committee should emphasize the broad reach of the manufacturing industry in the state of Vermont. However, if the Committee would like, they can re-order the list in the one-pager to list the larger industries first.

Ashley Lipson said the Committee can find data on the largest industries from UVM’s Vermont Futures Project.

Daniel Isaac said this could be a moot point because the Committee has no way to include every manufacturing industry in Vermont in the one-pager.

Victoria Biondolillo said it would still be good for the Committee to have data on the largest manufacturing industries in the state.

Ashley Lipson said it might not be the most accurate data, but it could still be useful. Ashley also said that 3% of Vermont’s GDP is related for defense contracts, and that might be relevant to include.

Victoria Biondolillo said the aerospace industry in Vermont is growing and the committee should keep that in mind for the future of manufacturing jobs.

Ashley Lipson emphasized that defense contracting does not simply include munitions; one of Vermont’s largest defense contractors is a woodworking business that makes bunkbeds for the DoD.

Barry Hulce said the Committee should focus on growing diversity in the manufacturing industry and focus on helping folks who have been marginalized in the past.

Victoria Biondolillo edited the one-pager to say the Committee should focus on “building a more diverse and sustainable pipeline of workers from all career stages.”

Barry Hulce suggested appending “from diverse backgrounds” to the addition as well.

Victoria Biondolillo said that makes sense to include. She also added that she and Abigail Rhim often discuss the importance of marketing collateral (e.g., an add with two older white men will not work as well in recruiting women and people of color into the workforce).

Barry Hulce referenced case studies for helping people with autism enter the workforce. The Committee should think openly about different business model setups that can better serve diverse communities.

Victoria Biondolillo asked if there were any more suggested edits to “The Situation.” She then moved onto “The Solution”: to address the manufacturing workforce shortage, the Committee should assist the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC) and Vermont Talent Pipeline Management (VTPM) to develop effective and accessible flow of competency to Vermont’s jobs and careers in manufacturing. Furthermore, the Committee should rebrand manufacturing and employ a strategic marketing campaign to engage younger generations. The Committee will evaluate success based on the number of people who transition from awareness of job opportunities into employment in the manufacturing sector.

Veronica Newton asked to make sure the SWDB has the means to track data on how many people enter the manufacturing industry.

Victoria Biondolillo said the SWDB will not be able to capture the data perfectly, but they can track the amount of people who go through “one-stop partners”; in other words, if someone gets a job through an entity that receives state or federal funding, the SWDB can track it.

Barry Hulce suggested tracking the path from “awareness to employment.”

Victoria Biondolillo responded that she and Abigail Rhim decided that they should have no more than five metrics for success. They determined awareness-building would not be a success metric; instead, they could track employment in Q2 and Q4, or wage growth, and use those numbers to evaluate how well the strategies are working.

Barry Hulce agreed but said some of the bullet points define actions while others define measurements. He suggested adding more bullet points to focus on getting people from school to the workforce.

Carla Wuthrich added that the Committee should focus on the “flow” from exploration to awareness to employment.

Barry Hulce said the Committee should focus more on potential employees who have more barriers to entry into the workforce (e.g., issues with childcare, transportation, language, etc.).

Victoria Biondolillo said the “one-stop system” part of the strategic plan is where a lot of the work addressing barriers to entry occurs. But the Committee can add a long-term strategy of looking for where they are falling short in connecting marginalized groups from “awareness to employment.”

Daniel Isaac said the strategic plan is the place for “all of the details” regarding metrics.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed; she also said one of the biggest issues with the workforce system is there are so many moving parts that need to be connected. The Manufacturing Committee is only focused on “one piece of the pie.” But the full SWDB plan will weave all the moving parts together. She also emphasized the fluidity of the milestones; the Committee can revisit goals and metrics for those goals to ensure they are working and make amendments where necessary.

Victoria Biondolillo then introduced the “Milestones”:

* The Committee will support the VTPM employer-led regional workgroups via advising, administrative support, and promotion of work (and limited financial support) as the pipeline management process continues.
* By October of 2023, the Committee will host an annual event in coordination with VMEC for Manufacturing Month that highlights innovative work in VT’s manufacturing sector.
* By July of 2023, the Committee will define the three core principles of their manufacturing rebranding plan and sub-plans for targeted age demographics and regions of the state.
* By September of 2023, the Committee will define a list of no more than five success metrics to track the campaign.
* By December of 2023, the Committee will meet with ACCD to develop promotional materials, messaging, and a “sales funnel” for the campaign.
* By March of 2024, the Committee will identify top stakeholders for promotional material distribution and top distribution strategies.
* By July of 2024, the Committee will launch the promotional campaign.
* By September of 2024, the Committee will host no less than three events for various affinity groups (students, veterans, disengaged, etc.).
* Annual assessment of the efficacy of the pipeline and recommendations on changes where appropriate.

Victoria Biondolillo then opened the floor for thoughts and feedback.

Veronica Newton said Generator has sponsored the “Advanced Manufacturing Day” in the past and is looking to continue to do so.

Carla Wuthrich suggested the Committee should aim to host manufacturing events in October because it is manufacturing month.

Victoria Biondolillo said that was a good idea.

Victoria Biondolillo then called for a vote to move the one-pager to the Operating Committee.

Daniel Isaac made a motion to approve the one-pager for forwarding to the Operating Committee.

All members seconded the motion.

Victoria Biondolillo said she and Abigail Rhim would send the one-pager to the Operating Committee with the suggested edits from the meeting. They will also send the edited one-pager to Committee members.

Carla Wuthrich then suggested “continuous improvement” be added to “Metrics Tracking” on the one-pager.

Victoria Biondolillo appended “continuous approvement” to “Metrics Tracking.”

Daniel Isaac asked if there would be one definitive strategic plan compiled from all of the different strategic plans of the various committees.

Victoria Biondolillo said yes. The SWDB will send out a full strategic plan with all of the committees’ strategic plans.

Victoria Biondolillo adjourned the meeting at 10:59 am.

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Respectfully submitted by Nicholas Kebo

Nicholas Kebo, Intern, Office of Governor Phil Scott