

**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

**Agriculture Committee – Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, April 6th, 2023

9:00 – 10:00 am

**Committee Members in Attendance**: Alyson Eastman, Kiersten Bourgeois, Brian Carpenter, Roy Beckford

**Guests in Attendance**: Victoria (Tori) Biondolillo, Abigail Rhim

Board Updates

Tori notified the committee that no additional feedback regarding the committee’s one-pager was received since the last meeting. She shared that it is her hope that by the end of this meeting, the group will approve of the draft for the full board to review within the larger strategic plan. She then began to review the document.

Agriculture Committee's One Pager

Alyson recommended that the wording be changed from “butter and cheese” to “dairy” and questioned if the group wanted to included timber. Often agriculture includes maple production, but not all of forestry/timber. If we want to include timber more broadly, we should have representation from Forest, Parks and Recreation (FPR).

Tori noted that we could add a representative from FPR.

Kiersten suggested softening the phrasing around “Vermont employers limiting output” unless data is there to back the statement. It was agreed upon to change the language to “pressure” over actual limitation.

Brian recommended softening the phrasing around "must provide” solutions to “seeking to provide” as a goal.

Alyson asked if Farm Viability could be added as a lead partner with the committee. The group was added. Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation was also added.

Alyson shared the story of an individual wanting to come to Vermont under the Humanitarian Parole Program that got in contact with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. She shared that while an employer is willing to hire the individual, they can’t find a sponsor. She asked if this is something that the Agriculture Committee would be willing to work on, identifying sponsors via a network.

Tori suggested that with the first round of inventory, speaking with employers, the SWDB staff can ask if that individual is willing to, for example, to attend an event or be a sponsor.

Alyson added that if we could put together a sponsor fact sheet, more employers would understand the responsibilities.

Roy added that we must think of how to support/engage with individuals holistically, but that he was also thinking of a similar idea like Alyson’s.

It was agreed upon that this information would be a part of the toolkit, and not specifically named in the one-pager.

Roy clarified if the committee would be developing some sort of informational sheet on the visa process?

Tori and Alyson confirmed. Alyson added that the employer, the sponsor and the potential employee all need information.

Vote to Approve

Brian moved to approve the committee's one-pager, seconded by Alyson and approved unanimously.

Tori shared that Abby would send out a Doodle Poll for the group to reconvene in June, once the full strategic plan has been approved by the SWDB in May.

Adjourn

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Respectfully submitted by Abby Rhim.

Abby Rhim, Deputy Director, State Workforce Development Board