



**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

**Operating Committee - Meeting Minutes**

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

9:30 am – 10:30 am

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Commissioner Michael Harrington, Joyce Judy, Chris Loso, Commissioner Lindsay Kurrle, Ellen Kahler, Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchee, Deputy Secretary Jenney Samuelson

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

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. She discussed future steps of the Operating Committee and the full State Workforce Development Board (SWDB). This includes the May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, which will serve as the beginning of the development of a strategic plan for the Board. This will be facilitated by the National Governors Association. She went on to say that the entire strategic plan will not be developed in one meeting, so an ad hoc committee or one of the SWDB's standing committees will need to meet regularly over the summer to continue strategic planning. There would also likely be two more meetings throughout the summer to check-in on progress with the end goal of a full SWDB vote on the strategic plan in the fall. She then asked the group about a reasonable timeline for the document and who should be involved.

Heather Bouchee asked what the function of the Operating Committee should be. If it is to serve as an executive committee, it would make sense that the Operating Committee makes decisions, in collaboration with the full SWDB, to develop the strategic plan. She then noted the Steering Group of the Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education as a good model for planning.

Joyce Judy picked up on Heather's point, saying that a task force on the future of higher education was created, in collaboration with a consulting firm to create a similar document to a strategic plan. She noted that it was one of the few committees she has been involved with where the blueprint is still used over two years later for funding, direction and support.

Ellen Kahler asked for clarification of timing for that process.

Joyce Judy said the group's first report was due to the Legislature in December so the entire process was only three months. There were also follow up reports. She recognized that this was a very quick timeline.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed that three months would be quick. She shared that she does, however, like the idea of a living document that continues to evolve with time. She added that she sees the SWDB's

role, similar to Heather and Joyce's example, as an advising group to the Governor. Ideally, the SWDB could eventually put forth proposals for the Governor in time for his budget planning.

Ellen Kahler mentioned S.11 and the creation of an oversight committee. She suggested that with this potential new restructuring within the workforce space, it would be out of sync to create a strategic plan without that new committee present.

Victoria Biondolillo stated that regardless of S.11, the SWDB is federally required and has to exist. She also shared that likely, the oversight committee will have many similar players that are already involved with the SWDB, so she sees the two working in parallel. She then shared that regardless of S.11, she wants to strive to make the SWDB a high functioning body.

Ellen Kahler asked to clarify if this working document would serve to include all workforce development, inclusive of WIOA, or just a plan for the SWDB?

Victoria Biondolillo shared that we will likely consider elements outside of WIOA, however, the strategic plan will mainly serve to address the role and purpose of the SWDB and its role in coordination of the system.

Ellen Kahler shared that we should make this point very clear. She shared that she would be concerned if we were trying to do a strategic plan for the entire state in three months. However, if it is more of a focus on the SWDB specifically and understanding roles, that would be more realistic.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She stated that her goal is to make the SWDB as highly functioning as possible and not to tackle an entire workforce statewide plan. She then stressed the idea of group participation or an active role so folks have buy-in as the process develops.

Joyce Judy asked if we must call it a strategic plan. She believes that if we are aiming to identify the role and direction of the SWDB, unless required by law, maybe we should call it something different that doesn't imply lots of buy-in and a very intense process.

Chris Loso returned to Ellen's point surrounding S.11. If there is an oversight committee established, part of the question that we need to address is perhaps what our role is from an advisory governance and compliance perspective. He then seconded the idea of not referring to the document as a strategic plan.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed and said that we are not required by federal law to create a strategic plan so we can call it whatever we want with the intent of majority SWDB buy-in. She then said that while we don't need to, we have a large, federally required body that we can use to make change. Throughout this process of creating a shorter document, we can identify SWDB goals. She then asked the group what they thought an appropriate cadence for meetings might be.

Commissioner Harrington advised that the group identify and understand where they are going before starting. He then suggested almost a team charter where functions, roles and responsibilities of the SWDB are identified.

Chris Loso agreed with Commissioner Harrington

Victoria Biondolillo agreed with the idea of breaking the process down into identifiable goals.

Commissioner Harrington then noted the bylaws and leaning on them when possible to answer questions or concerns.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that she will meet with the National Governors Association (NGA) and bring these thoughts to them prior to the May meeting, including their suggestion for cadence of meetings going forward with the plan of creating some form of a lesser strategic plan.

Ellen Kahler then asked what Kate Ash and Rachael Stephens of the NGA are recommending.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that they wanted a longer meeting on May 26<sup>th</sup>. She then shared that in terms of workload, they felt comfortable with the idea of having one large meeting and then a more regular cadence of smaller meetings with just SWDB members or an ad hoc committee.

Commissioner Harrington noted that it is very important that the Board remain relevant to its members, specifically the business members. He stated that it doesn't take long, if there are a bunch of high-level executive committee members, for business members to feel like the Board is not relevant to them. We need to identify what the business members are looking for to feel that they are still relevant and impactful in the space.

Ellen Kahler shared that we must think about the composition of the board, regarding size or the specific composition of the business members. We need to think about the size of the businesses on the Board in order to represent all businesses in the state.

Victoria Biondolillo shared that she has added more business members to the Board in order to get into compliance, including adding members who are more geographically diverse. She noted that business size should be addressed as well.

Chris Loso agreed with the idea of demographic diversification, specifically small businesses. He added that we must establish relevancy. We need to have something that is manageable and tangible in order to help recruit more members from the business community. If we create something that we can point to in order to display progress, it will provide legitimacy.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She said that she envisions, in the future, starting Board meetings by identifying what we have accomplished. If we can track progress, it will help us point out productive gains.

Chris Loso added that with WIOA, how can we make the components of WIOA operational. What is actionable from the legislation?

Joyce Judy agreed that a small business voice is important. That begin said, she shared that having a virtual element to meetings is key to increase participation. She then shared that a mix of in-person and virtual does not work. If you are virtual, you are a spectator.

Victoria Biondolillo then assured Joyce that meetings will not be in-person all the time but rather only one or two in-person, a year.

Joyce Judy then shared that we also have to ensure that folks have something tangible to walk away with after meetings. In order to get involvement, we need to engage with folks and avoid speaking at them the entire time. There needs to be something in it for them.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She referenced Kendal Smith's and Rep. Toleno's presentation where folks could engage. She then shared that we should spend more time engaging in dialogue rather than reporting at Board members.

Commissioner Harrington returned to Chris' point. He noted that we should keep things simple for Board members. If we get bogged down in federal compliance, it won't be applicable to business members. If we can narrow it down to three things that we do well as a Board, or purposes of individual committees, we will be more effective. For example, what if we had a WIOA oversight committee? That would simplify things for the rest of Board members.

Chris Loso added that keeping things simple would help with Board recruitment.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed with both Chris and Commissioner Harrington. She noted that if we do this process correctly, we can turn the Board into something that can be incredible effective.

Ellen Kahler then asked that as we recruit more businesses, are we taking into account businesses that will never hire someone supported by WIOA dollars? She recommended that we aim to have a diverse group of businesses, including those that are and aren't connected to WIOA.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She reiterated the need to have conversations surrounding representation of the business community in Vermont, as a whole. She then stated that the SWDB staff will create a plan to tackle the strategic plan, including key takeaways and a feedback survey for the end of the May meeting. She hopes that this will inform the strategic planning process. She also added that the staff will brainstorm the cadence of the Operating Committee or the strategic plan group that will meet. She added that the more transparency in the process will be better when it comes time for folks to sign off on the document down the road.

Chris Loso then clarified if there will be a virtual option for the meeting.

Victoria Biondolillo confirmed that there will be a link and that all SWDB meeting minutes are posted after.

Commissioner Harrington then mentioned the need for seven members to be present at future Operating Committee meetings if votes take place and referred to the bylaws. He also noted adding certain members from various departments or agencies in order to be in compliance with the bylaws.

Victoria Biondolillo adjourned the meeting at 10:17 am.

Respectfully submitted by Abigail Rhim.

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Abigail Rhim, Executive Assistant, Vermont State Workforce Development Board