



Vermont State Workforce Development Board
Manufacturing Committee - Meeting Minutes
June 22nd, 2022
11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Barry Hulce, Daniel Isaac, Robynn Albert, Brian Carpenter, Monica Greene, Kiersten Bourgeois, Mark Ray, Meg Hammond

Guests in Attendance: Abigail Rhim

Acting Executive Director Abigail Rhim began the meeting at 11:01 am. Abigail Rhim noted that Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo will be taking a leave from the Board to work on Governor Phil Scott's upcoming campaign and the Board will not be hiring a new staff assistant. She then noted that it had been a while since they had last met and asked the committee members to reintroduce themselves and to share where they work and anything going on in their respective workplaces.

Daniel Isaac, CEO, JK Adams
Robynn Albert, Marketing and Training Manager, Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center
Kiersten Bourgeois, Director, Marketing and Industry Relations, Dairy Farmers of America
Monica Greene, President, Vermont Precision Tools, Inc.
Mark Ray, Owner and Head Cider Maker, Stowe Cider; President, VT Cider Association
Brian Carpenter, President and General Manager, Champlain Valley Equipment
Meg Hammond, Executive Director, Generator
Barry Hulce, Executive Director, Vermont Manufacturing Collaborative, Vermont Tech

Following Introductions and brief descriptions of committee members respective workplaces, many of which highlighted the continued labor shortage, Abigail Rhim shared that the purpose of the meeting was to review data based off questions from the last meeting, fine tune a mission statement for the committee, brainstorm concrete goals, and finally to nail down tangible deliverables which the committee can start working on immediately.

Abigail Rhim continued by presenting data involving net new workers from the slideshow, particularly around colleges and college graduates across Vermont.

Abigail Rhim then shared the mission statement and asked the committee members for feedback.

Robynn Albert suggested adding the word "retaining" along with increasing the workforce.

Kiersten Bourgeois also suggested including a clause involving a collaboration with partners because the board alone cannot fill Vermont's labor shortage.

Abigail Rhim agreed with both suggestions and asked if there were any more thoughts on the mission statement.

Meg Hammond questioned whether the statement needed to be more explicit in including education or skilled workers.

Abigail Rhim affirmed their input and said she would workshop the mission statement to fulfill the suggestions.

Brian Carpenter pointed out the brevity in the mission statement and highlighted the importance of keeping the statement brief.

Abigail Rhim agreed and shared the Administration's goal to keep college graduates in Vermont and the importance of simply getting "bodies" into Vermont.

Daniel Isaac affirmed all comments made by fellow committee members and the effectiveness of the mission statement and offered the tag line of recruit, train, retain which his company, JK Adams, uses for their workforce initiatives.

Abigail Rhim thanked committee members for their suggestions and moved on to the next slide of the presentation which reviewed the committee's goals. Following this overview, Abigail Rhim opened the floor to questions and feedback.

Barry Hulce offered an observation that students graduating from a range of educational experiences including high school, CTE, two-year and four-year degrees, need to be matched with the correct level needed from the jobs.

Monica Greene asked if the board has a baseline for the increased number of people entering the manufacturing pipeline.

Abigail Rhim said she did not know whether the data exists but would ask Marianne whether she has the baseline.

Following up on that question, Barry Hulce asked whether the manufacturing pipeline included students as young as 4th, 5th, and 6th graders who were introduced to stem or does this only include people who decided to stay and work in manufacturing

Abigail Rhim theorized that it would be smarter to have it include students earlier down the line because then there would be a greater chance of retainment, so the data point would include more of the front end than the back end. Abigail Rhim continued by asking if there are any areas which the committee goals did not include.

Daniel Isaac asked whether the committee discussed the option of encouraging people to come in from out of state to increase the workforce

Abigail Rhim indicated that the committee had not yet discussed this option and agreed that it's something to add on to the committee's goals. She highlighted how an initiative to bring out-of-state workers to Vermont could tie into several of the goals laid out. She then asked Daniel if there was a specific group he was hoping to target.

Daniel Isaac responded by highlighting the aging workforce in Vermont and the tendency for young people to move out of the state. He added that encouraging young families and professionals to move back to Vermont could prove to be an effective strategy.

Abigail Rhim agreed and stressed the importance of capturing the attention of young families who may have studied or lived in Vermont at some point.

Brian Carpenter asked for clarification on the first goal which was to destigmatize manufacturing.

Abigail Rhim responded by sharing an image which many young people picture when they think of manufacturing involving hard labor when the reality of manufacturing has changed quite a bit with an array of career paths.

Meg Hammond explained how schools have no incentives to promote the tech centers because they take money away from the schools and even when they do promote the tech centers, there's a stigma from parents towards the tech centers. She also supported the comments made by Daniel Isaac about out-state-workers.

Barry Hulce noted his support for both comments and highlighted the stigma against CTE centers and manufacturing in general.

Abigail Rhim agreed and continued by asking for any last thoughts on the committee's goals.

Kiersten Bourgeois suggested that the board makes an effort to share stories of businesses in Vermont which fall under the category of manufacturing but do not fit the pre-conceived images which students see in the manufacturing space.

Abigail Rhim agreed and shared how this could be a tangible deliverable to get students and other workers more excited about working in the manufacturing space.

Meg Hammond highlighted the importance of exposure to the youth.

Abigail Rhim agreed and moved on to the next slide of the presentation which included deliverables which the board can act on.

Barry Hulce suggested the board offer potential workers insight into a day in the life of manufacturer workers in Vermont to bring more exposure to the space.

Abigail Rhim agreed and continued reading potential action items for the committee. She then opened the floor to suggestions from committee members.

Brian Carpenter highlighted the need to get the younger generation exposed to what career paths are available in manufacturing as well as getting parents on board with their kids entering the manufacturing space.

Abigail Rhim agreed and stressed the influence of parents on their kids and if parents are interested in manufacturing there is a higher chance their kids will enter this career path.

Kiersten Bourgeois asked if there any groups which the committee could help support which are already fulfilling some of the potential action items.

Abigail Rhim said she would investigate that further.

Robynn Albert pointed to Manufacturing Day which involves students and parents and helps to fulfill many of the goals discussed by the committee.

Barry Hulce noted the importance of scaling pre-existing programs and mentioned that last week Vermont Technical College had over twenty students in STEM camp where they learned skills and intermixed with companies in Vermont.

Meg Hammond discussed Generator's programs which introduce teachers and students to STEM and other manufacturing pathways and agreed with Barry to scale programs which already exists. She then asked about manufacturing summer camp.

Abigail Rhim responded by explaining that ideally employers would come in at different days and do demonstrations to expose kids to what they do. She also highlighted the importance of scaling pre-existing programs.

Abigail Rhim said she would follow up with more information and thanked the committee member for coming to the meeting.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Patrick Connolly

Patrick Connolly, Intern, Vermont Governor's Office