



**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**  
Relocation and Recruitment Committee - Meeting Minutes  
August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Robert Peterson, Jen Stromsten, Christopher Koliba, John Burnham, Amelia Seman, Molly Mahar, Gary Scott, Peter Edelmann

**Guests in Attendance:** Abby Rhim

Abby Rhim began the meeting at 12:05 pm with updates on the Board. She then asked the group to introduce themselves. She then shared her screen and presented data on higher education, specifically focusing on enrollment and retention rates. She also shared a proposed mission statement and goals for the group.

Peter Edelmann asked if there was data that has been collected more recently than 2020, specifically post pandemic.

Abby Rhim stated that she couldn't find more recent data, however, that is important to note.

Chris Koliba asked Abby if she was able to meet with Emma Spett regarding UVM as a data resource. He also asked if the group's focus would be on recent graduates for relocation and recruitment efforts, as she only presented data on that specific group.

Abby Rhim then asked the group that question. While she stressed that the group is one key population that can provide net new workers, the committee can decide where to focus efforts.

Chris Koliba noted that the Legislature identified \$2.5 million dollars for UVM's Office of Engagement to work in partnership with VSAC to get recent graduates to stay and work in Vermont for two years in order to receive a \$5,000 grant. While that program might be something the committee wants to focus on, a broader view on what services and programs are currently available is just as important. He stressed the need to identify gaps in services, specifically on a regional level. This includes looking at housing, childcare, etc. He noted that an end goal would be providing recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

Abby Rhim asked if the group would be interested in mapping out the system, with a regional focus.

Jen Stromsten argued that there isn't a system at all. While there are wonderful regional and statewide efforts occurring, they all fall short on being resource consistent or coherent due to a lack of funding.

She suggested starting with a basic policy suggestion, along the lines of a baseline commitment from every region to support recruitment efforts for employers. Additionally, she noted pushing policy suggestions surrounding housing. Regardless, these policy suggestions must come from a group of employers.

John Burnham, focusing on the mission statement, noting that it is difficult to look at Vermont as one system. He shared that each region has different challenges and needs. He also noted that while college is pushed onto many students, we end up losing them if they leave the state. He suggested figuring out ways to better expose kids to careers and internships in order to better retain them, if they don't go into higher education or to remain connected while they do.

Abby Rhim agreed with John, stressing the Governor's support of trades and CTE centers.

Molly Mahar noted the importance of sharing success stories regarding career paths in certain industries and how lucrative the trades can be. She also favored the idea of policy recommendations or testifying.

Abby Rhim summarized the group's idea of wanting to not just focus on college students and the need to acknowledge that the current relocation and recruitment system in Vermont, isn't really a system. She then reviewed potential deliverables that the group could focus on.

Chris Koliba asked who would be responsible for meeting goals? He noted how the entire workforce system has little accountability. He suggested engaging with folks that are already involved in this work, to not duplicate efforts. He also urged the group to be realistic about bandwidth and what is possible within this group.

Jen Stromsten added that while it is good to set goals, the committee must have partial and total goals. She suggested having someone like Mat Barewicz help identify exact projected need of skilled workers. From there, based on specific subjects (highly skilled and trained employees, mid-career supervisor manager, entry level workers, etc.), the group could then set forth recommendations.

Molly Mahar added the need to identify what programs have and haven't been funded by the Legislature. She stressed that the group should identify gaps in what already exists in order to base recommendations.

Peter Edelmann suggested bringing an expert on housing in to realistically paint a picture of Vermont's housing needs.

John Burnham highlighted the success of the "Stay-to-Stay" program, which has now fallen to the wayside. That being said, he noted that the Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce and Manchester Business Association are working to maintain a similar program in their specific region, however, funding has stopped.

Abby Rhim asked if the group would be interested in documenting success stories.

Jen Stromsten noted that there are already many reports and well documented success stories, and that isn't really going to get the group anywhere. She noted that the group needs to identify what the correct conditions are, in every region of the state, that will leave the state better off, grounded in policy recommendations. She then stressed the importance of recommendations and suggestions coming from employers.

Abby Rhim agreed that the recommendations do need to come from a new voice.

The meeting adjourned by 12:57 pm.

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Respectfully submitted by Abby Rhim.

Abby Rhim, Acting Executive Director  
Vermont State Workforce Development Board