



Vermont State Workforce Development Board
Career Pathways Committee - Meeting Minutes
August 15th, 2022
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Rick Bugbee, Mary Anne Sheahan, Sophie E. Zdatny, Sarah Kleinman, Nicole Miller, Pat Elmer, Rebecca Kapsalis, Heather Bouchey, Heather Waryas, Mark Gebo

Guests in Attendance: Abby Rhim, Adam Grinold

Acting Executive Director Abigail Rhim began the meeting at 2:00pm. She informed the Committee that in the absence of Executive Director Biondolillo, she would be stepping in as acting director until November. She then allowed members the opportunity to reintroduce themselves and give updates on their work.

Mary Anne Sheahan detailed her work at the Vermont Business Round Table Foundation and Vermont Talent Pipeline. These groups work with healthcare, manufacturing, and construction. She also discussed an emerging construction apprenticeship program with all employers in state, a joint effort being taught by Resource Vermont

Sophie Zdatny introduced herself as the Chancellor for the VT State College system. She noted that workforce development is a high priority for them in both credit and noncredit bearing courses and they look forward to expanding partnerships

Nicole Miller greeted the committee as the VT Afterschool Executive Director. She additionally described her position with the CCV workforce initiative, a subcommittee afterschool taskforce created by Governor Scott which informs youth pathways & career opportunities

Adam Grinold established himself as the Executive Director of the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and Chair of the Vermont State Workforce Development Board. He additionally stressed career readiness as a key topic.

Mark Gebo introduced himself as the outgoing School Counselor for the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union in Westminster. This organization provides grades 9-12 with learning opportunities, including informational interviews, job shadows and internships.

Heather Bouchey greeted the group as the new Supervisory Union member. She noted that she had previously been working in the school system for many years and is excited for this new opportunity.

Rick Bugbee greeted the committee from Associates for Training and Development. This group operates workforce development projects for older workers and those reentering the workforce. He further explained that his group offers mostly internship-based programs that focus occupational and social skills. Enrollment numbers in these programs have been low since the pandemic hit.

Sarah Kleinman introduced herself as UVM's 4-H Family and Migrant Programs Career Pathways. She explained that her recent work involves 501c3 First Robotics Initiatives. Other work involves helping young people to see more careers in food systems arena. She additionally explained a new initiative: building an educational learning hub for migratory farm workers.

Rebecca Kapsalis detailed her work as Network Director of Talent Acquisitions in the UVM health network. This involves recruiting and staffing for hospitals, except for physician recruitment. Rebecca stressed her vested interest in workforce development starting in middle school and building out the pipeline from there. She observed that there are currently 2,500 empty spots to fill in her network.

Adam Grinold asked Rebecca how many total people were employed in the network.

Rebecca Kapsalis responded that her network contained 16,000 FTEs across all affiliates.

Abby Rhim then steered the conversation towards the agenda, going over data provided by the Department of Labor. She also indicated that the committee would use the meeting time to decide top priorities, brainstorm deliverables, and go over the current mission statement & group goals.

Moving into the Department of Labor Data, Abby Rhim first highlighted aging VT population metrics. Specifically, the older population growing faster than younger population. She noted that this may be indicative of the committee's need to engage in a greater capacity with the large older population in addition to youth.

Next, Abby Rhim outlined data on the labor force population, which peaked in 2009 and has declined to 50% in 2021 with a 2.2% unemployment rate. Rhim drew the conclusion that there is a missing group not engaged in the workforce. She additionally reviewed county labor force data which showed that all counties have seen a decline in labor force in recent years. Over 8 counties have seen a more than 10% decline in labor force since a peak in the 2000s. Rhim noted that this shows the need for targeted approaches

Finally, Abby Rhim reviewed school data which shows that enrollment has declined 21.3% since 2004 in K-12. She then asked committee members for input on the data

Sophie Zdatny asked if higher Pre-k enrollment numbers could be seen as encouraging.

Abby Rhim noted that it isn't necessarily a trend but possibly a spike and would follow up with Labor on the issue.

Heather Waryas explained that PreK-12 numbers are always higher than K-12 due to a mix of public and private providers in Pre-K, where 10-12% of students are in a private setting. On the other hand, K-12 metrics are usually exclusively public.

Next, the committee members addressed the current version of the mission statement: to organize, maintain and further develop career pathways that are both accessible and transparent to all Vermonters.

Mary Anne Sheahan stated that she believed the statement was strong and could be approached in many ways.

Nicole Miller noted her appreciation for the use of the word "transparent" in the mission statement. She stressed that the communication aspect is very important.

Heather Bouchey wondered if the committee should add something about marketing more attractive career pathways to potential workforce members.

Rebecca Kapsalis questioned whether “transparent” is a strong enough way to describe what’s needed. She suggested going farther by expanding to K-12 curriculum.

Abby Rhim suggested using an action word more along the lines intentional, targeted, and proactive.

Mary Anne Sheahan observed the flaws in the high school career day model, noting that one day is not enough. She suggested institutionalizing workforce education in the same proactive way that health education was made a requirement.

Abby Rhim also mentioned the importance of being more proactive with marginalized groups like adults.

Sophie Zdatny indicated that it would be beneficial to hear from Rick on this issue because of the need in older populations to have wraparound services like childcare and other general issues.

Rick Bugbee reaffirmed the importance of addressing wraparound services like housing. He also stressed that older adults have less confidence & informing these adults about pathways that include and cater to older populations would help to counter the age discrimination concept. He noted that breaking down the confidence barrier and agism mentality is half the battle.

Abby Rhim noted that Rick’s point went along with the idea of making the jobs seem more attractive, and again stressed the importance of marketing.

Rick Bugbee argued that the committee would need to market to both the 16-year-old and 65-year-old. He noted that different messaging would be needed for different groups.

Mark Gebo argued that it is important to keep the mission statement relatively broad. He recommended also writing more specified vision statement as a means of flushing out the mission statement.

Abby Rhim then moved on to reviewing the current committee goals: better organized and streamline access to career pathways, start engaging with VT students on career pathways education by 5th grade, and promote non-traditional career pathways to adult workers and/or those looking to re-enter the workforce.

Sarah Kleinman stated she liked the idea of starting at the 5th grade level because it isn’t too late in the education process.

Mary Anne Sheahan asked if the committee was missing a point about DEI, referring to a news report about encouraging relocation.

Abby Rhim noted that relocation is an ongoing conversation with the Workforce Board. She mentioned that the most diverse demographic in VT is younger people. As such, increasing diversity means engaging more with young people.

Adam Grinold asked the committee to further define what “adult worker” means. He was curious if this meant a 25-year-old or a senior worker.

Rick Bugbee clarified that an adult worker means 25. On the other hand, senior workers would be described as mature workers. He noted that nontraditional career pathways are great for adult workers but there are different classifications of adult. He stressed the importance that anyone’s pathway, from 5th grader to 65-year-old, should have digital literacy built in. He pointed out the lack of affordable digital literacy training currently available in VT Career pathways.

Abby Rhim indicated that the Committee could establish certain digital criteria within all pathways. She further highlighted filling the gaps between accessibility and content.

Heather Bouchey stated her support for the committee's goal of workforce integration by or before the 5th grade.

Abby then moved the conversation towards potential action items and what the committee wants to focus on. Beginning with the action item of establishing a career pathways database on the top 100 earning jobs in VT, she asked for committee feedback.

Rebecca Kapsalis noted her support for the database idea. She assumed that the list would include the pathway to get a desired job. For example: the exact education that someone would need to get a top engineering job.

Rick Bugbee spoke out against using solely a "top earning" metric because he felt it would exclude entry level jobs that many Vermonters are ready for now. This would essentially shut out a lot of people and occupations that could benefit from the pathways.

Abby Rhim argued that while some people want top earning positions, others want flexibility, easy commute, or social setting, etc. She noted the advantage of having database list variety or by industry lists.

Nicole Miller recommended using "growing" instead of "earning" as term for the database

Mary Anne Sheahan noted that the right phrase might be "in demand".

Abby Rhim moved on to the next goal: create and maintain distribution network for the database of schools, businesses, community organizations and online. She pointed out that this goal addresses where the information goes and ties in with the mission statement transparency point. Next, she discussed the goal of declaring a Career Pathways Month as a form of Sophomore summit replication. She noted the more hands-on nature of this approach.

Mark Gebo recommended reaching out to Christy Baby if the committee decides on this hands-on approach because she has experience with it and does a great job.

Abby Rhim noted that she doesn't want to duplicate efforts but building off previous momentum could be beneficial. She then moved on to the next goal: working toward VSAC Career pathways app development. She noted the potential utility of engaging students at a very young age and guiding them through career opportunities. She also mentioned that Patrick Leduc could come and present to the committee about the early development of the app.

Adam Grinold noted that his company has investigated development a similar app more geared towards adults statewide. This app would solicit information about life history and use AI to help identify jobs and pathways that match with listed skills.

Abby highlighted the more youth-oriented nature of the VSAC app but also noted the possibility of combining and/or collaborating efforts.

Mary Anne Sheahan recommended using some of the data from the My Future VT to inform the app.

Abby Rhim moved on to the final goal of launching a social media campaign that highlights non-traditional career pathways.

Rebecca Kapsalis stated her support for the idea but noted that not all social media targeting will hit every desired age group

Abby Rhim agreed, noting that there is not a one solution fits all for social media campaigning

Finally, Abby Rhim told the committee that she would distribute presentation and is still very open to suggestions.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Jacob Greenberg

Jacob Greenberg, Intern, Vermont Governor's Office