

**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

Manufacturing Committee - Meeting Minutes

June 7th 2022

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

**Committee Members in Attendance**: Monica Greene, Barry Hulce, Daniel Isaac, MaryAnne Sheahan, Meg Hammond, Veronica Newton, Kiersten Bourgeois

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

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo began the meeting at 1:02 pm. She told the group that the purpose of this meeting is to go through the manufacturing workforce data that she and executive assistant Abby Rhim had compiled in a slideshow, brainstorm ideas about what the data indicated, and develop a roadmap of future priorities and ways to improve.

Beginning with the data slides, Victoria Biondolillo first noted that her office did not collect the data. It was instead gathered by reliable institutions like UVM Office of Engagement, Vermont Talent Pipeline, and the Agency of Education. She highlighted several key topics, critical roles, an overall lack of career awareness among students, and common needs for employers (employability skills, high school education, and certified production technician training).

Veronica Newton of Generator asked if employers require C&C level 1 and 2 training specifically.

Mary Anne Sheahan of Vermont Talent Pipeline and Victoria Biondolillo noted that most prefer but do not require this training. Mary Anne also pointed out that the data shows a cross section of 45 durable and non-durable companies

Barry Hulce, VTC asked if every job role referenced in the slideshow earns at least a livable wage.

Mary Anne Sheahan noted that livable wage depends on household income in this case.

Victoria Biondolillo continued with the presentation, moving into feeder pools. She pointed out that school populations have increased since 2017 and CTE has increased slightly between 2018 and 2019. She also highlighted a mismatch between people with engineering degrees and job openings due to training capacity issues.

Barry Hulce, VTC asked which universities the degrees in the data were coming from.

Victoria Biondolillo stated that she was not sure but would find out for the next meeting. She then moved on to pipeline visualization, explaining that an entry level employee can advance their salary up to $10 an hour with the training programs highlighted in the presentation.

Next, committee members addressed the question: What does the data appear to tell us?

Mary Ann Sheahan suggested looking at some untapped places for new employees. She pointed specifically to systems that already exist in the state, such as economic opportunity & human services, but lack the connection to basic skilled training.

Monica Greene noted that 12% of 6,000 students in K-12 who fail to graduate should be targeted for GED or entry level training.

Daniel Isaac stated that he found the geographical locations of training institutions interesting and asked if there was metadata about how many of the programs are remote and their lengths. He theorized that too many in-person courses might be the reason why people fail to follow through on training.

Barry Hulce, VTC suggested focusing on the ratio between academia and hand- on learning experience in different schools and finding the option that fits best for individual students. He also observed that current job marketing for engineering positions doesn’t create passion and that youth needs to be more exposed to day-to-day work activities.

Monica Greene mentioned that while remote work might help with engagement, it could be harmful to potential employability (showing up to work) and suggested a hybrid training model.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that early exposure is a good way to provide young students with experiential learning. She suggested rebranding manufacturing to increase youth interest.

In response, Barry Hulce, VTC highlighted paths for learners starting with becoming aware and finding passion (you can’t start from the learn).

Veronica Newton agreed with this sentiment, pointing out that high school students were mesmerized and engaged by a tour of her facility. She emphasized being in the physical workspace.

Meg Hammond, Generator noted that they try to fill some gaps between students and tech programs.

Daniel Isaac pointed out the difference between perception and reality in high volume manufacturing jobs. He stated the importance of managing expectations early between creative design work and more mundane realities of production.

Victoria Biondolillo affirmed that manufacturing needs a rebrand, comparing current thought around the industry to World War II. She suggested stressing room for growth in these jobs and opening students’ eyes to the possibilities of a career path (not dead-end jobs)

Barry Hulce, VTC asked Daniel Isaac how much of manufacturing work is design and programming vs manual operation.

Daniel Isaac noted that his company tries to move people around though it doesn’t happen all the time for the sake of production efficiency. He also noted that his company always looks to promote from within and train employees for new positions so long as they have the right attitude and willingness.

Barry Hulce, VTC suggested an emphasis on automation to increase sought after fields like design and programming while shrinking production jobs for which there is less interest.

Meg Hammond, Generator stated that it is difficult for employers to rely on diplomas and certificates because these educators aren’t up to par. Often, her company will have to teach new employees skills like basic math.

Victoria Biondolillo suggested changing educational formulas, so schools are no longer disincentivized to throw underperforming students into CTE. She suggested expanding the trades.

Mary Anne Sheahan noted that the manufacturing industry has been overlooked in Vermont policy making for a long time. She stressed that it needs more representation.

Daniel Isaac suggested looking at the recent S53 bill which gives tax benefits to manufacturing companies.

Victoria Biondolillo then steered the conversation towards the question: What should be our priorities?

Mary Anne Sheahan stated that she liked the concept of apprenticeship as a model because it transitions low skilled workers to skilled craft and planned wage increases over time. This could also be used to interest potential employees in manufacturing careers.

Monica Greene asked how manufactures can get needed support from the education community to supplement training and paid apprenticeships.

Barry Hulce, VTC recommended taking a step back and asking the following questions: What does success look like? Why does this matter?

Victoria Biondolillo indicated that she would find answers to the questions asked regarding school and other data. She noted that next meeting would cover what success would look like to the committee and would solidify the committee’s top priorities.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Jacob Greenberg

--------------------------------------------------------------

Jacob Greenberg, Intern, Vermont Governor’s Office