Business Engagement Committee Meeting

**Date**: February 9, 2021

**Time**: 1pm – 3pm

# Committee Attendees

Tom Hacker (co-chair), Tom Wendorf (co-chair), Caroline Crozier, Colin Cosgrove, Katie Bata, Jennifer Serino, Patrick Campbell, Sherry Sparks, Einar Forsman, Robyn Safron, Todd Lowery, John Keller, Lavon Nelson

# Guest Attendees

Kim Kuchenbrod

# Staff Attendees

David Gallagher, Stephanie Veck, Aimee Julian

# 1. Introductions, Welcome and Roll Call

Co-chair Tom Hacker welcomed attendees to the meeting. Roll call and introductions were combined, and enough members were present for a quorum.

# 2. Approval of December 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the December 9, 2020 meeting minutes was made by Einar Forsman, and seconded by Tom Hacker. A roll call vote was held, and minutes were unanimously approved.

# 3. Co-Chair Comments

Co-chair Tom Wendorf began by noting the good meetings of the BEC and the Work Groups in December and January. He identified three topics that wove through those meetings: communication, marketing and data. He noted the opportunity for the BEC to present on each of those topics during the upcoming IWIB retreat, and that planning for that retreat would be the purpose of this meeting.

# 4. Work Group Reports

Einar Forsman began by providing the Communication Work Group report. He noted the good discussions and participation in the group. It is focused on finding ways to effectively communicating out to employers and determine what their interests are.  
It's a fairly simple quest, but still requires penetration into the employers that we currently aren't getting to. Also, how can we demystify what we offer and how to make that practical and useful to them as employers. We're trying to find out what is already out there being communicated and what's being successful, and how can we either model that or take advantage of them.

Katie Bata reported on behalf of the Industry Partnerships Work Group. She described the Work Group meeting discussions around development and implementation of a strategy for the support and expansion of industry partnership projects (including Talent Pipeline Management projects) around the state.

Jennifer Serino concluded this agenda item by reporting on the work of the Board Recruitment Work Group. She described the two main focuses of the Work Group: IWIB/LWIB communication and board orientation/onboarding, etc. She described in particular how the Work Group walked through the orientation document that it had developed in order to finalize and forward its format and content. She also described the need for the Work Group to recruit new members in order to round out its roster in light of recent board withdrawals.

By way of summarizing all of the work group reports, Tom Wendorf noted that we need to make sure we have the infrastructure to accomplish the goals that were set out to do, and in some cases, that will require inputs (e.g., funding) the state and other people. This provides a challenge moving forward, as we’re asking the IWIB to do things that we've never done before, and so we need to be steadfast in our recommendations.

# 5. Planning for February 23rd IWIB Business Engagement Retreat

Stephanie Veck led the discussion on this agenda item. She referred to a tee-up e-mail that Tom Wendorf had sent in advance of this meeting, along with a findings template to be used as a template for the pre-retreat education of IWIB members so that time during the retreat would not need to be spent on background information. In this way the retreat would be focused on discussion and interaction rather than merely reporting out of findings by the BEC. This template was presented within the context of using it to provide initial information to the IWIB about the 5 most important things that the BEC had been working on in its nine months or so of work, and use them as the springboard for receiving feedback, guidance and direction for work moving forward.

The idea is that, for each of the items that are decided today, what are those critical things that we want to discuss with the IWIB? For each of those we will create a one page finding summary. This finding will tee up what it is we want to discuss, what work plan goals and activities does it touch on, what we discovered about that topic during our months of work – what is our brief statement about the topic, what is our suggested solution, and what are we asking of the IWIB at this point to help move the work forward.

Through today's meeting we will all determine, what the 5 to 6 things are that we want to discuss with the IWIB, and then someone (or a small group) will be assigned to develop the findings summary. These findings summaries will be published ahead of time for all of the IWIB members to participate in web based homework for them to do before they come to the retreat on the 23rd. The expectation is, rather than giving individual update, they will do their homework. They will learn about these findings from this homework, and they'll come prepared by doing their homework and reading, these, finding fact sheets, and then thinking about them and being ready for the discussion.

In sum, a very high level set of documents regarding the work that the business Engagement Committee did, and then to request an action. There might only be one option, there might be two options. But whatever action you're asking of the IWIB members during retreat, fill in a short description of what you want them to consider, could come ready to have a discussion, to provide input, or to approve whatever your request is for them to approve.

Tom Wendorf indicated his approval of this format because it requires brevity on the part of the BEC, but allows for input and discussion from the IWIB. Tom Hacker suggested that a practical way to approach to come up with five solid findings would be for each of the workgroups to determine their top priority finding that is specific to their workgroup -- that is not an issue that cuts across all of the workgroups -- and then the last two would be those items that do cut across the general scope or topic of business engagement that affect each one of the workgroups. Stephanie agreed that this would be a good way to go, and averred that the meeting format should then consist of 5 20-minute presentations that would largely consist of discussion with the IWIB, led by the presenter, regarding their ideas on the finding and the best methods of implementation.

At this point the co-chairs asked for thoughts and opinions, particularly from the Work Group chairs, regarding what might be the most fruitful findings to bring forward to the IWIB. Jennifer Serino began by identifying two possibilities from the Board Recruitment Committee: the Board Orientation/Onboarding guide and actions to improve IWIB/LWIB communication. Einar Forsman from the Communication Work Group suggested the need to target and improve communications with Small Businesses across the state.

Tom Wendorf suggested that a possible “cutting” issue might be the need to implement communications that speak to businesses with “one voice.” While this may not require an overhaul of existing branding, etc., there is a need for messaging about workforce development services that speaks towards a clear purpose across the board.

Stephanie mentioned the work that the Industry Partnerships Work Group had done in order to develop a strategy around utilizing business “champions” to help engage a wider community of businesses in the implementation of industry partnerships and TPM projects. Through discussion it was determined that this might also be developed as a finding to be brought forward to the IWIB at the retreat.

At this point Colin Cosgrove brought forward the need to include funding requirements and requests as part of these findings. It is all well and good to identify these areas of need, but it is also necessary to identify what (if any) additional funding would be required in order to make them happen. Stephanie cautioned (and Tom Wendorf agreed) that, while it is appropriate to make funding needs explicit, it is really beyond the role of the BEC (or the IWIB, really) to identify specific sources of funding. That identification is really up to the partner agencies to determine.

Tom Wendorf discussed data issues around business engagement as a possible finding issue to be brought forward to the IWIB at the retreat. The Communication Work Group in particular has been looking into this issue, particularly with regard to what data is collected, how is it reported and how is it shared. Dave Gallagher pointed out that part of the Kerber, Eck & Breckel project that is looking into coordination across partners is to examine the collection and availability of this type of data, and that it might be best to wait a bit to see what they find as part of their project before undertaking anything at the IWIB level.

At this point Tom Wendorf suggested that the Committee delve a little deeper into the five finding areas that have been identified in order to make determinations about how to proceed towards the retreat.

A general discussion ensued around the issue of serving small businesses, including defining the size of business defined as “small” and the types of services needed by small businesses, and different types of services needed by small businesses in different areas of the state. In terms of “one voice” messaging, discussion was also given to the work done to date with regard to service integration and how that might impact and enhance the system’s ability to integrate its message as well.

Stephanie brought the conversation to a head by asking what exactly the Committee felt was the appropriate finding to be forwarded to the IWIB regarding services to small businesses. Tom Wendorf summarized it as, “the blanket statement is, small business is not aware of, nor do they use the resources of the State workforce system.” Caroline Crozier added that another statement would be that it's difficult for small business that are aware of the system to navigate through it to find the services they need.

The remainder of the meeting time was used to finalize the five findings, and to assign them each to a member/staff or public partner pair (or group) to complete a single-page finding document by February 15th. Findings and assignments were as follows:

* + - IWIB/LWIB Onboarding & Retention – Jennifer Serino, Dave Gallagher
    - Industry Partnerships Strategy – Katie Bata, Kim Kuchenbrod
    - Small Business Engagement – Caroline Crozier, Todd Lowery, Einar Forsman, Stephanie Veck
    - “One Voice” Messaging & Branding (“External”) – Tom Wendorf, Patrick Campbell
    - IWIB/LWIB Communications (“Internal”) – Tom Wendorf, Lavon Nelson, Dave Gallagher

Copies of the final findings documents sent to the IWIB in advance of the retreat will be attached to the meeting notes for the retreat.

# 6. Other Business

There was no other business.

# 7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

# 8. Adjournment

By unanimous agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 2:56.