Business Engagement Committee Meeting

**Date**: September 16, 2020

**Time**: 10am – 11:30am

# Committee Attendees

Tom Hacker (co-chair), Tom Wendorf (co-chair), Caroline Crozier, Colin Cosgrove, Katie Bata, Jennifer Serino, Patrick Campbell, Sherry Sparks

# Guest Attendees

Nathan Painter, Tory Davis, Kim Kuchenbrod

# Staff Attendees

David Gallagher, Stephanie Veck, Lisa Jones, Aimee Julian

# 1. Introductions, Welcome and Roll Call

Co-chair Tom Hacker welcomed attendees to the meeting and conducted a roll call. At the time of the roll call, only five committee members were in attendance, which was not enough to provide a quorum for the meeting.

# 2. July 30, 2020 Meeting Minutes Approval

Given the lack of an initial quorum, this agenda item was tabled until later in the meeting.

# 3. Co-Chair Comments

Co-chair Tom Hacker provided brief comments regarding his impressions from sitting in on some of the September Committee Work Group meetings. He also commented on the ongoing employment issues raised by the pandemic and the economic reopening, including the need for this group to monitor the shifting dynamic between job seekers and employers and the need for the whole workforce system to react accordingly. Our committee can help this process by making sure that businesses are aware of the services that are available and the connections to the seekers that are needed.

# 4. Review of Committee Work Group Meetings and Plans

# David Gallagher provided the meeting review for the Communication Work Group. That meeting began by looking into the activity and tactics under the five goals that have been assigned to them. They talked about how to transfer information and employers on, in terms of expanding employer knowledge, workforce, and regional workforce networks were discuss, work net and bill or discuss for venues for doing that. They discussed a possible directory of business services staff in the local and regional programs across the state, and held a long discussion about sort of the technical aspects of that, particularly the need to make sure that a directory like that is kept up to date so that businesses that utilize it don't have problems actually making contact. They also talked about sharing to uncover any existing local or regional business service directories and attempting to sort of link them together into a statewide database. They talked about determining the baseline provision of business services across the state, but that was sort of tabled until October, given the presentations and Jennifer Serino, which might give them a better idea of exactly what those baseline services are.

# The group talked about engaging employers in identifying communicating workforce needs, and the point was made that we can find ourselves in a situation where we're asking for employer input without getting a tangible result. Something has to result from the communication. We cannot ask them for something, and then not follow through on it.

# One specific item that was mentioned was the development of a navigator role similar to the type of role played within local workforce centers to work with job seekers. Something analogous that might be useful for businesses to sort of help guide them through the process of obtaining workforce system services. Then we also need to develop referral networks so that businesses themselves are acting as our leaders and our information providers to other businesses.

# The group talked about the need to explore remote work and technology, especially now, but it seems like a lot of those sorts of workforce interactions are going to be with us for awhile with or without a vaccine. Many people are finding it advantageous to work remotely, so we may need to start thinking about how we can best work with businesses in that regard.

# And then in the last part of the meeting, the group talked about common messaging and shared branding efforts, and discussed the “Workforce Connection” effort in Rockford as an example of this, and it was thought it would probably be a good idea at some point to have representatives from Rockford join to talk about their experiences -- what happened in that effort, what pitfalls there were, what advantages there have been, and what are options for helping other areas in the state to replicate that sort of messaging and branding program.

Tom Hacker raised a question at this point, basically asking how this Navigator position – while potentially a very good idea – would fundamentally differ from what is already being done in terms of the provision of business services. David Gallagher noted that it is probably too early to provide a specific answer to that question, but the Work Group will keep that in mind as they examine both the current provision of business services and the possible use of such a position.

Carolyn Crozier then discussed her and her business’ experience with remote work, and her belief that the importance of remote work will only grow in the future. In particular, she noted the potential importance of the state workforce system providing assistance to businesses – especially small businesses – in the provision of technology and related training to permit them to succeed in an environment that accentuates remote work. Tom Hacker noted his agreement with that as a potential need and a potential area of response and leadership from state government. Stephanie Veck also noted the potential response that might be offered from across state government, and the need to perhaps coordinate a response that would include all possible sources of assistance. Patrick Campbell noted that some type of table or spreadsheet that might pull together information from the various possible sources of this assistance might also be helpful.

Stephanie then noted that all of this conversation points to the need to coordinate activities under the BEC such that fruitful ideas can be examined by the Work Groups and then shared through the BEC with the other Work Groups, and through coordinated efforts appropriate responses can be identified and put into action. She noted that it is not required that the committee members solve every problem identified during their discussions, but to identify problem areas and areas of opportunity and utilize their experience to recommend possible paths to solutions, and then monitor responses from the state workforce system (and elsewhere) to bring solutions to fruition.

Next, Katie Bata provided a review of the Engagement Work Group meeting. She noted that they spent time at the beginning talking through the basic ideas of sector strategies and talent pipeline management projects that are key to the work plan of this group. They did receive a presentation on those topics from Kim Kuchenbrod that helped the group to obtain a shared understanding of how these concepts might relate to the group’s work.

From there, they spent some time, you know, broadly discussing tactics for our work group activities, and they’ve identified, that they need to review and prioritize tactics around identifying Illinois target industries and sectors, and then secondly, increasing awareness and support for existing sector strategies, and third, identifying, supporting opportunities for additional sector strategies Then how do we finally communicate with and promote those identified sector strategies? Then they will have some work that we need to do to kind of really further conversation around these tactics, and it is their intention to get back together next month to walk through next steps related to that strategy development.

Jennifer Serino next reviewed the meeting of the Board Recruitment Work Group. She began by discussing the two goals of the Work Group: assisting with the recruitment, engagement, retention, and accountability of board members for both the state and the local boards, and communication between the IWIB and the local board members. She noted that these are not brand new goals for the system, and that what was discussed was, how can we re-invent some of the ways we've been working together? And through that discussion, they've identified that communication between the IWIB and the local board members is the critical point to be starting with -- that's the priority goal to start with. She noted the robust discussion around the different tactics available when it comes to communication between the two entities. A lot of points were made, and a lot of tactics we've put down on paper. Their next step as a work group is to respond and react to each of these tactics that we've identified, and then prioritize from there.

A starting point is to determine what is out there, what is working regarding communication between the two, and identifying what do we have to change? What can we use that we haven't been using? And then where are there opportunities for greater communication?

One area talked about was how can both the local board members and the members have that joint communication around statewide policy development? How can they both have that discussion around key strategies having a crosswalk between local plan strategies and statewide strategies, and use that to elevate some of the communication between the two groups? And then really honing in on identifying those interested members from the local boards, how can they develop to participate.

Initial focus will be on the communication, so that when we start the conversation and start acting on the recruitment strategies, we have this piece nailed down already, so that you have the business community saying, “I want to be a part of that,” and “I want to be part of that leadership group that's driving those policies, both at a local level and state level.” So, this work group feels that if they spend their time out of the gate talking about communication between the two, putting those pieces in place, then recruitment strategies, and retention strategies and accountability strategies for the members can quickly follow.

5. Current Business Services Activities

Tory Davis of IDES began this agenda item by discussing IDES’ business service activities. He discussed their structure statewide – five regions led by regional business service managers (although one of these positions is currently vacant). These regional managers represent IDES on local and regional business services teams across the state. While he described some of the local & regional teams as being in their early stages, many have been up and running for a year-and-a-half or more, have developed into strong partnerships, and are working with businesses and working with each other in collaborative ways to serve businesses. He stated that most of the business service teams have started, or have completed their cross training, such that when representatives of the business service teams are speaking with employers, they're carrying the knowledge of the other partners, and they're more in tune with those partners, and are able to make referrals when needed. He did make a point, however, that regional business service teams are not as fully functioning as local teams.

Tom Hacker questioned what is being done to foster more consistency across the business services activities across all regions. He also questioned what is being done to expand the range of those activities across the state. Tory responded that, while regional teams look to their state partners for some direction, it is generally a matter of defining relationships within the regional teams themselves that leads to working together to provide better service to business. Likewise with expanding the range of activities, teams are finding that the key is building upon business relationships attained by members in order to include the other partners in the provision of needed business services.

Tory mentioned that there might be a helpful role for the BEC to provide the impetus for statewide marketing activities that would help bring the initial message of business services to employers, which could then be followed-up in a more direct way by the local or regional business services teams. Finally, Tory responded to a question regarding the implementation of the Integrated Business Services Framework by discussing the central role of identified growth sectors in the planning and direction of the regional business services teams.

Tory was followed by Jennifer Serino, who discussed more specifically the local and regional business services activities in her LWIA (LWIA 1, Lake County) and EDR (EDR 1, Northeast Region). She began by discussing the activities of the Northeast Region’s team – which has been meeting monthly for the past year -- particularly with regard to a recent project around the TDL industry that included job fair events held across that large region, an incumbent worker project with Ford dealers that also encompassed the region, and a disability initiative that was due to launch but has been put on hold by COVID.

As a follow-up to Tory’s discussion of a need for better marketing/messaging, Jennifer discussed the often-seen problem of unclear naming causing businesses to think that they are being inundated with different organizations, when actually the are being contacted by partners who are working together but appear to be unrelated. Jennifer agreed with Tory that some type of unified marketing/messaging effort might help to avoid this type of problem.

Jennifer then moved on to a presentation regarding business service activities in her area. She discussed the key services provided around recruitment help for businesses. Other services she discussed included layoff assistance, labor market information, training solutions (customized training, incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, internships/apprenticeships, etc.), and specialized business services around important industry sectors that bring together multiple partners to service specialize needs. As an example of this, she discussed a current project with Abbott Labs in order to hire for up to 2,200 jobs in Lake County.

Stephanie Veck questioned the degree of participation in these regional activities across the entire region. Jennifer responded that, due to unified buy-in by all the LWIAs in the region, there is participation and action from all the local areas. But she noted that a key factor is understanding what types of issues are truly regional – and call for a regional response – and what ones are not.

2. (Return to) Approval of July 30, 2020 Meeting Minutes

With a quorum now in place, Tom Hacker asked for a motion to approve the July 30, 2020 meeting minutes. Motion was made by Colin Cosgrove, seconded by Katie Bata, and approved unanimously.

# 6. Brief / Questions: Learning Management System, Unemployment to Reemployment Pipeline, BRT COVID-19 Reopening and Recovery

Aimee Julian discussed the Learning Management System, noting that it was originally tabbed to help with IWIB professional development, but one impact of COVID has been to increase the range of potential uses. For instance, a package has been designed to assist the onboarding process for Apprenticeship Grantees. Eventually it is expected that an “IWIB University” will be developed that will consist of several modules, including a business engagement module. It is entirely web based, and it's designed to provide training and modularized training. So the content would be developed, and you would be able to ask either your constituencies or your businesses to walk through an online guided module system to allow them to educate about, not only the IWIB, but what the IWIB can do regarding business engagement. Aimee also mentioned that Kim Kuchenbrod is working with Jennifer Phillips to develop a Talent Pipeline Management curriculum on the LMS for apprenticeship, and that would be something that could possibly be slightly tweaked or completely duplicated and brought over on a business engagement LMS. So, that knowledge of talent pipeline and that curriculum around talent pipeline that's being developed, individualized for Illinois would then be able to be shared with our constituency as well. The last part of this discussion centered around the use of this tool specifically with regard to the onboarding of BEC members, and discussions towards the development of such a tool will be ongoing.

Tom Hacker briefly discussed George Putnam’s presentation on the Unemployment to Employment Pipeline project at the IWIB Informational Meeting, and asked for any questions. As with the LMS, it is important to keep this tool in mind as we mover forward as a Committee, in order to identify contexts in which it could be useful.

7. Microsoft Teams Brief

Dave Gallagher briefly mentioned the Microsoft Teams site that has been established for the Committee, and asked for any comments, questions or issues with accessing the site.

8. Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Katie Bata, seconded by Patrick Campbell, passed by a unanimous voice vote.