Charges of the Business Engagement Committee (BEC):

The mission of the BEC will be to provide guidance and direction to help bridge the gap between Illinois' important business sectors and employers, and the Illinois workforce development system.

Priorities of the BEC:

- **Engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships** that will convene employers, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. These partnerships will seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote economic growth across the state.

- **Develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the workforce development system** in order to increase employers' awareness of the services that are designed to provide them with the skilled workforce they require.

- **Assist the IWIB and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach, recruitment and engagement of business representatives to the board(s),** that are representative of the geographic, demographic, and target industries of the state or local area, respectively.

Quarterly Update:

Committee:

The full Committee generally meets quarterly, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. The committee met in March, 2021. During this meeting the committee was debriefed on the results of the February IWIB Business Engagment Retreat (detailed in the previous quarterly report). Tom Wendorf discussed his main takeaway from the retreat, which was the importance of communication to all five of the finding areas discussed. Not just the obvious importance of communication in the implementation of a unified system messaging, but communication of activities under all five finding areas (e.g., communication with small businesses, communication between levels of the system, etc.).

Key points of discussion included:

- We must understand the primary role of communication – within the system and outward towards businesses – in the ultimate aim to clarify the value to business of the workforce development system. Retreat comments included the contention that a major communication flaw exists between the business services representatives for the system partners, and that this results from a basic lack of trust among these individuals and organizations. This is a serious

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obstacle to the desired goal of providing businesses with a single point of contact for the *entire* workforce system.

- A discussion about the importance of this communication issue, especially within the context of the House's Reorganization Bill. Opinion was given that the two issues are very tightly linked, which is borne out by the amount of overlap between the research and findings of the BEC and those of the group that is developing the report mandated by that bill. The perception of the disconnect between all of the different pieces of the workforce system, and the perception of employers about it being too complicated to deal with is likely driving this desire on the part of the legislature to want to fix it. And just moving things around, just reshuffling the deck is not going to fix the core issues.

- A discussion on the finding related to IWIB/LWIB communication (another facet of the communication issue discussed earlier). The IWIB newsletter was identified as an important potential source of such communication, and the committee had been asked to provide content for the newsletter describing the results of the retreat. Discussion was also given to the possibility of developing video components of the newsletter, and of engaging the Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) to develop newsletter content. Indications were that the IWP had discussed this issue, and is currently working to develop a process for generating and transmitting newsletter content from the LWIBs.

- Also mentioned was a possible role for the State Chamber of Commerce to act as a conduit to provide the IWIB newsletter to local Chambers, and thereby to businesses across the state. This could have a great effect on the awareness level of workforce development among businesses across the state. Illinois workNet has also recently striven to beef up the content and simplify access to the workforce success stories that it houses. This might also be a good source of newsletter content.

- Discussion was given to the communication issues arising from the other side (i.e., communication *from* businesses *to* the workforce system). There is a consistent conversation around the need to use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software across partners in order to better track relationships and ensure a single point of contact for employers. Also the need to ensure that the first contact with employers results in a quick and transparent solution for their workforce issues. Initial meetings are also important in order to begin building a trusting relationship with the businessperson. For many employers their *actual* first contact with the workforce system is through the various websites for LWIAs, LWIBs, partners, as well

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as Illinois workNet, and that these sites are rarely well-coordinated across the workforce system.

- A contention was made that a key to a successful initial contact is to utilize a consultative sales approach that listens first to the described needs of the business and then attempts to respond with a tailored approach that doesn't overwhelm the business person with a fire hose of information and available resources, most of which are not germane to the stated need. Keep it simple and focused on that need. Furthermore, all of the websites discussed rarely seem to understand and utilize this approach. More often they utilize an approach that pushes everything out at once, without using an interactive approach that would simplify the experience for a user that comes in with no knowledge base regarding the workforce system. A very simple front-end access point that quickly sussed out employer problems and directed users to an appropriate follow-up (either a website, or a phone number, or what have you) would be a worthwhile approach to think about. There may also be a role that AI might play in helping to quickly determine the pain points for the employer and direct them to the appropriate resource. Another option might be to direct business to a live-staffed 800 number that can provide that direction. The key here is to not make it too complicated. How do we use very simple things, and existing resources, to be able to, with one voice, advertise how easy it is to connect with the system? We have an infrastructure in place, so we don't necessarily need to build from scratch, but what we do need is better intel from businesses regarding how they might best interact with that infrastructure to quickly find an answer to their questions, and then revise the infrastructure on the basis of that intel.

- The committee also noted the special need for a quick resolution of need on the part of small businesses. Those with few employees have the least time available to try and track down solutions, and that they often would likely find a quicker solution at the end of a phone call rather than a poorly designed website. In order to improve the usability of the systems we already have in place, we might work with the state Chamber to identify some businesses (especially small businesses) that could help through focus groups or product testing to better clarify aspects of a website that would be of the most use to them.

- Simplifying the process of employers' interactions with the system is of the utmost importance. To that point she said that employers rarely begin from a place of interest in on-the-job training, or apprenticeships, or whatever. They have a position to fill, period. Meet that need, and you can begin to build a relationship that eventually might involve a greater breadth of workforce solutions, but initially you have to be able to meet that basic need. This stratagem is typical of

successful interactions in the experience of his business teams. Satisfy a basic need and build a relationship that later might involve deeper connections.

Work Groups:

The Committee established three Work Groups, each based on one of the three Committee priorities described above. Goals and activities for each were included in the Committee work plan, and have since been built out through tactics identified by each Work Group in their monthly meetings.

Industry Partnerships Work Group

CHARGE

Engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships.

GOALS
1. Identify Illinois Target Industries & Sectors.
2. Increase awareness of and support existing sector strategies.
3. Identify and support opportunities for additional sector strategies.
4. Effectively communicate with and aid sector strategies identified under Goal 2 and 3.

ACTIVITIES

During this quarter the work group met in April and in May. In April, much of the work group discussion continued to be centered on the need for, and ability to, identify sector champions in each of the sectors identified in workforce and economic development planning as statewide "target" sectors. These sector champions would be utilized to help raise interest in sector strategies in general and Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) projects in particular.

An opportunity exists to leverage existing sector champions across the state to implement industry partnership strategies more effectively. But what we need to move on to is, how do we identify and access those sector champions? A recent KEB report helps lead us to groups that are interfacing with businesses, and we may be able to use those groups to access those we might want to end up being

sector champions. Groups such as the Navigators, local and regional business services teams, etc. We need to figure out how to utilize our relationships with those groups to access the business champions that we want to have out there talking about the workforce system. The KEB report identifies ~23 partners that have some connection to business outreach. To move the finding along we should be looking to them to identify sectors and champions that they are currently working with and experiencing success with – or even those sector with which they are having trouble identifying or connecting with.

Next steps require us to identify not only who the current sector champions are across the state, but a messaging that allows us to be able to engage those additional champions. We have to be pinpoint sharp about the resources that we can offer businesses across the state to help meet their employment needs.

At the May meeting of the work group, discussion centered around a presentation regarding an early stage Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system being developed under the auspices of Illinois' Apprenticeship grant, but which may have some very useful applications across all of the workforce system, and particularly around industry partnerships and sector projects. This is a project to ensure that all actors at the local level have access to all information about employers and participants under the project, and to make it easier for new actors to be brought up to speed about ongoing activities.

This is still in a developmental stage, and does not currently have an estimated implementation date, although we do need it as soon as possible in order to avoid a developing problem of data siloing amongst the navigators themselves. Regarding what the BEC and IWIB could be doing to seed the ground for the development and roll-out of this product, one thing that was mentioned was the utility of having access to business-level data from the Secretary of State's office.

A question was asked regarding why there would be any opposition to a wider roll-out of a product like this? Many times people just don't like change, and that in particular they are often hesitant to do the data sharing agreement modifications that something like this would require. But if those issues can be overcome, the system alignment that results will self-evidently prove effective. And if early successes can be proven, then others will join a project that improves their productivity. But that can often take some time, and universal adoption won't happen overnight. The most effective strategy is to develop a good product, invite everyone to join, and sell them on the return on their investment and the benefit to taking part. The barriers are fear of change, perceived competition, a lack of trust in partnerships, and a very real fear of data privacy issues. There is an important role that the IWIB can and ultimately

must take to overcome these barriers in order to move the system to a better place. Its fundamental value is to make the entire process of outreach and provision of business services to companies more efficient. Given the nature of the workforce development system and the current methods of business outreach, it is necessary to share information across all of the possible actors and under the current system to siloed information that is too often just not happening. A shared CRM system would be a giant step towards fixing that problem.

Communication Work Group

CHARGE

Develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the workforce development system.

GOALS
1. Expand employer knowledge of the workforce and education systems.
2. Engage employers in identifying and communicating training and workforce needs.
3. Support the development of an employer information database.
4. Support ongoing employer engagement
5. Explore, and if viable, promote an initiative to provide common messaging and shared branding across all system partners.

ACTIVITIES

This work group also met twice during this period, in April and May. Initial discussions in April centered on the availability and need for information about business services activities across workforce development activities in Illinois. Under the context of this discussion, mention was made of the Illinois Performance and Transparency System (IPATS). This is a new system under development at Illinois workNet that is meant to provide an easily accessed way to view performance data across the state. Discussion was tabled until May in order to invite a presentation on this system.

The meeting moved on to discussion of implementation of the retreat findings related to this group, particularly the unified system messaging finding. It was suggested that a starting point for the process of establishing a Task Force to review current messaging and then look for ways to overarch those existing messages might be the KEB Outreach report and the over 20 groups that were consulted during the development of that report. It was determined that identification of a "focus group" of

business representatives should also be undertaken in order to develop a test bed of sorts for the resulting unified messaging (as well as for messaging specific to small businesses, a second retreat finding related to this group).

The May meeting of this work group included two presentations. The first was by Olivia Miller of Illinois workNet, describing the IPATS (described above). While this system clearly has potential for displaying the type of business engagement activities and performance that this group is searching for, it does not (by itself) answer the problem of if and how that information is collected.

One possible answer to this was suggested by the second presentation, of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System in a very early developmental stage. This system (also under development by workNet, and also presented at the May meeting of the Industry Partnership Work Group), is being developed under the auspices of Illinois' Apprenticeship grant, but which may have some very useful applications across all of the workforce system, and particularly around industry partnerships and sector projects. This is a project to ensure that all actors at the local level have access to all information about employers and participants under the project, and to make it easier for new actors to be brought up to speed about ongoing activities.

The Work Group indicated approval for this system, but noted that as it moves towards implementation and efforts are made to bring other partners into the fold if we start running into resistance to adapt to the system we need to bring that to the surface so that we can start doing what's necessary to leverage acceptance and use of the system statewide. This is exactly what the system has been missing with respect to this particular subject matter. Also noted was the longer term use of this system in conjunction with the IPATS in order to provide easy access to information regarding business services to end users such as the IWIB. Another possible use for information from this system might be to identify particularly engaged business people as possible recruitment targets for LWIB or IWIB membership.

Lastly, the group reviewed a listing of those interviewed by KEB in the Outreach report discussed in April. Given that the Work Group Chair was not able to attend this meeting, it was determined that staff would contact him off-line to discuss and winnow this list as well as to discuss contacting them.

Board Recruitment Work Group

CHARGE

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Assist the IWIB and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach, recruitment and engagement of business representatives to the board(s).

GOALS

1.   Assist IWIB/LWIB recruitment, engagement, retention, and accountability.
2.   Enhance IWIB/LWIB Communication

ACTIVITIES

As with the other two work groups, this work group met in both April and May. One specific item discussed at the April meeting was the need to develop suggested mechanisms for IWIB/LWIB business recruitment and include it as part of the overall board orientation package. It should be part of this group's work to develop or acquire outreach mechanisms and other tools to assist in recruitment. What sort of tactics might be looked at in order to accomplish that? To date it's generally been word of mouth, person-to-person contact. The fact that there is no process for regularizing that during the pandemic has really amplified the need for that process.

There are studies out there, and local area-specific strategies. But in general there is usually a continuum of levels of engagement, from a business leader finding value in the workforce system all the way through to engagement with the board. A gathering of best practices from the LWIBs could be done through the IWP. It is important while recruiting to be very specific and up-front about what tasks they will be asked to do and how much time board membership will require. While there is no magic formula to board recruitment and membership, there are key elements that can be extracted as best practices that anyone trying to recruit for a board can utilize, related to expectations, commitment, etc. While it's not a simple recipe that can be followed for identical results, you also don't have to just do it ad hoc every time, either.

Also discussed was the applicability of the finding of the need to speak with one voice across the entire workforce system to this question of board recruitment as well. We should seek to unify our outreach messages for IWIB, LWIBs, committees and work groups. The Work Group Chair volunteered to reach out the IWP membership to begin discussion of sharing best practices and trying to unify recruitment messages.

Items of note from the May meeting of this group include discussion of how can we build a pipeline to ensure business leadership at the local and state level, and how can we amplify the message of the

system regarding "success stories" across the state. Having a spot where local boards and staff could directly upload news and successes – whether on workNet or somewhere else – could be a real boon to circulating those desired messages. This process might be more successful if a call for stories was done topically, rather than just open calls.

Also mentioned was the need – certainly at the state level, but perhaps also at the local level – for the identification of an individual in charge of communication, who will coordinate these activities on a consistent basis and keep the ball rolling. It was suggested that we work through IWP to identify a communications counterpart at each LWIA who could be the nexus of story development across the state. Requests could go to each of them every 1 to 3 months, with the request focused on a particular subject. Then utilize all communication mechanisms to draw attention to the resulting stories. Also, by building a library of particularly business success stories, we can also be developing a database of those business leaders that have benefitted from the system, and that these leaders would then be prime possible candidates for recruitment to the local or state workforce board.

Work Plan Progress:

IWIB BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE WORKPLAN MAY, 2021)	6/30/20	9/30/20	12/31/20	3/30/21	6/30/21
PRIORITY AREA 1: Establish and Operate the BEC Effectively					
GOAL 1.1: Finalize BEC workplan and methods to implement it.					
ACTIVITY 1.1.A.: Develop and approve a BEC work plan that expresses the priorities, goals and activities of the committee.	▉ (Completed)				
ACTIVITY 1.1.B.: Review, update and approve the BEC work plan as necessary or appropriate	green	green	green	green	green
ACTIVITY 1.1.C.: Establish and support the structure necessary for implementation of the workplan.	green	green	green	green	green
GOAL 1.2: Develop and Evolve Committee Membership and Member Expectations.					
ACTIVITY 1.2.A.: Determine an initial Committee membership profile.	▉ (Completed)				
ACTIVITY 1.2.B.: Develop a set of committee membership expectations, and accountability practices.	green	green	green	green	green
ACTIVITY 1.2.C.: Develop mechanisms for identifying replacements for committee vacancies.	green	green	green	green	green
ACTIVITY 1.2.D.: Create an orientation for committee members and effectively onboard all members, include an overview of each goal and specifically of the elements of Goal 5 and how they relate to the other goals.			green	green	green
PRIORITY AREA 2: ENGAGE ILLINOIS' BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN INDUSTRY-LED SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS					
GOAL 2.1: Identify Illinois Target Industries & Sectors					
ACTIVITY 2.1.A.: Review and (as appropriate) adopt existing statewide and regionally specific target sectors identified through previous statewide and regional workforce and economic development planning.		green	▉		
ACTIVITY 2.1.B.: Explore changes in sectors across the economy, identify new target industries or adjustments needed to existing as appropriate in alignment with economic conditions.		green	▉		
GOAL 2.2: Increase awareness of and support existing sector strategies.					
ACTIVITY 2.2.A.: Support the creation of a directory of existing talent pipeline management projects and other employer-driven sector strategies – particularly as identified under Goal 2.1.		green	▉		
ACTIVITY 2.2.B.: Identify best practices as opportunities for replication and expansion of existing sector strategies.					
ACTIVITY 2.2.C.: Assist existing employer-led workforce development projects in target sector businesses in all regions in Illinois.					
GOAL 2.3: Identify and support opportunities for additional sector strategies.					
ACTIVITY 2.3.A.: Conduct a gap analysis of 2.1 and 2.2 to identify, target industry sectors in regions across IL for new sector-based activities.					
ACTIVITY 2.3.B.: Encourage and support the establishment and sustainability of new sector strategies statewide and within all regions.					
ACTIVITY 2.3.C.: Assist appropriate state and regional actors (e.g., LWIBs, Business Associations, Regional Economic Development Organizations, etc.) to develop and promote new employer-led workforce development projects to sector businesses in all regions in Illinois.				green	green
GOAL 2.4: Effectively communicate with and aid sector strategies identified under Goal 2.2 and 2.3.					
ACTIVITY 2.4.A.: Promote existing and new employer-led workforce development projects to sector businesses in all regions in Illinois.					
ACTIVITY 2.4.B: Identify tangible solutions to support businesses affected by economic conditions, such as COVID-19, especially small businesses and utilize sector strategies to promote these offerings.					
ACTIVITY 2.4.C: Create a network of sector-based community of practice for each target industry of both state and regional players, to support each other and for collaboration to better support partnerships and businesses in each sector.					
PRIORITY AREA 3: COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM					
GOAL 3.1: Expand employer knowledge of the workforce and education systems.					
ACTIVITY 3.1.A.: Develop mechanisms to determine and assemble information sets regarding these systems that are relevant to employer needs.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.1.B.: Develop mechanisms to transmit those information sets to employers.		green	green	green	
GOAL 3.2: Engage employers in identifying and communicating training and workforce needs.					
ACTIVITY 3.2.A.: Support the utilization of sector strategies and business services to engage employers and help them identify and communicate their needs.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.2.B.: Encourage the development of a simple and consistent approach for helping identify employer needs and matching those needs to available resources.		green	green	green	
GOAL 3.3: Support the development of an employer information database.					
ACTIVITY 3.3.A.: Explore and support the development a common database of employer information and contacts with/from workforce development partners at all levels of the workforce development system.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.3.B.: Support creation of a mechanism for sharing up to date information about unified business services efforts, at the regional level and across the state.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.3.C.: Explore the impact of remote work and increased technology use in the workplace – some of which has been in reaction to COVID-19 – in the types of workforce needs seen by employers.		green	green	green	
GOAL 3.4: Support ongoing employer engagement					
ACTIVITY 3.4.A.: Identify opportunities to support and promote unified business services efforts at the state level and in each region of the state.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.4.B.: Develop policies in support engagement between employers and the workforce/economic development system and strengthen communication between system partners.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.4.C.: Identify and implement a framework to assist business advocates of the system to promote the workforce and education system services to their industries and peers.		green	green	green	
GOAL 3.5: Explore, and if viable, promote an initiative to provide common messaging and shared branding across all system partners.					
ACTIVITY 3.5.A.: Identify best practices for shared branding and messaging.		green	green	green	
ACTIVITY 3.5.B.: Explore a collaborative solution across all partners for messaging and branding employer services, that will elevate the system partners "above the noise" and provide a "stamp of approval" that helps businesses identify system resources.		green	green	green	
PRIORITY AREA 4: ASSIST IWIB AND LWIB OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT AND COMMUNICATION					
GOAL 4.1: Assist IWIB/LWIB recruitment, engagement, retention, and accountability.					
ACTIVITY 4.1.A.: Develop outreach mechanisms and other tools to assist in the recruitment of employers to the IWIB and the LWIBs.		green	green	green	▉
ACTIVITY 4.1.B.: Develop a framework for effective engagement and retention of business representatives of workforce boards.		green	green	green	▉
GOAL 4.2: Enhance IWIB/LWIB Communication					
ACTIVITY 4.2.A.: Develop and expand mechanisms to ensure consistent and timely communication between LWIBs and the IWIB.		green	green	green	
PRIORITY AREA 5: COORDINATION WITH RELATED GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES					
GOAL 5.1: Coordinate with Executive Order #3 Activities					
ACTIVITY 5.1.A.: Review Executive Order #3 activities and recommend approaches by which the BEC can assist in their completion.			green	green	
ACTIVITY 5.1.B.: Acquire an overview and 101 training to be used in the committee onboarding orientation.			green		
GOAL 5.2: Coordinate with WIOA State Unified Plan Activities					
ACTIVITY 5.2.A.: Review WIOA State Unified Plan activities and recommend approaches by which the BEC can assist in their completion.			green	green	
ACTIVITY 5.2.B.: Create an overview and 101 training to be used in the committee onboarding orientation.			green		
GOAL 5.3: Coordinate with Restore Illinois Health Plan Activities					
ACTIVITY 5.3.A.: Review Restore Illinois Health Plan activities and recommend approaches by which the BEC can assist in their completion.			green	green	
ACTIVITY 5.3.B.: Recommend approaches to communicate available COVID-19 related business assistance to employers.			green		
ACTIVITY 5.3.C.: Create an overview and 101 training to be used in the committee onboarding orientation.			green		
GOAL 5.4: Coordinate with Activities of Other IWIB Committees					
ACTIVITY 5.4.A.: Coordinate, as appropriate, with the other IWIB Committees, Work Groups and Task Forces in order to ensure successful completion of the activities of all IWIB groups.			green	green	
ACTIVITY 5.4.B.: Create an overview and 101 training to be used in the committee onboarding orientation.			green		

Legend:

▉ (black)	Activity Completed
(green)	Activity in progress during this quarter & on schedule
(orange)	Activity in progress during this quarter & behind schedule
(red)	Activity due to be in progress during this quarter but not yet begun
(gray)	Activity to be in progress during this quarter
(white)	Activity not yet begun during this quarter