IWIB/BEC BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT RETREAT FINDINGS, KEY POINTS & NEXT STEPS

1. SYSTEM MESSAGING (COMMUNICATION WORK GROUP)

FINDING: The lack of common messaging by Illinois' workforce development system reduces business use of the system.

KEY POINTS: This limits delivery of important economic services to the business community. Illinois needs to create perception in business community that the Illinois Workforce System is a powerful partner, easy to access and use that aids businesses' success.

NEXT STEPS:

- Engage the full BEC to identify all entities needed to form a core group WIOA partners to craft a path toward a unified messaging solution, building upon the existing branding work in Illinois by September 1, 2021.
- Create proposed solutions and present to the IWIB for approval and funding by December 31, 2021.
- Develop and implement the solution during 2022.

2. COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM (RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP)

FINDING: The lack of an effective and consistent two-way communication between the IWIB and the LWIBs creates a lack of efficiency and synergy in the workforce system.

KEY POINTS: Increasing communication between the two levels of workforce development leadership regarding their goals, activities and initiatives will serve to better coordinate the provision of workforce development services to businesses and individuals across the state.

NEXT STEPS:

- The IWIB is requested to intensify its efforts to create and disseminate a quarterly IWIB electronic newsletter to communicate specifically with LWIB members (as well as others).
- The IWIB is requested to invite the Illinois Workforce Partnership to work with the BEC to examine and develop mechanisms to create a quarterly report or newsletter of LWIB activities that will serve to better inform the IWIBs own goal and initiative development processes.

3. SMALL BUSINESS FOCUS (COMMUNICATION WORK GROUP)

FINDING: A top priority of Illinois' workforce development system is the need to specifically target small businesses for workforce support.

KEY POINTS: In Illinois businesses with 10 – 499 employees account for less than 20% of all businesses in the state, yet they employ nearly 60% of all workers in the state. By specifically focusing outreach and support to this target group of businesses we can better utilize the limited resources available to help recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain a skilled workforce in Illinois.

- Identify the resources and supports available to small businesses, across the state to recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain workers.
- Clearly and simply communicate the resources and supports available to small business in a manner that make it easy for them to navigate the system to find support for their specific needs.
- Make new information and updates easy to access for small business.
- Identify instant help options such as web-based chat or virtual assistants to help navigate resources as needed, when needed (24/7).

4. INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS (INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS WORK GROUP)

FINDING: An opportunity exists to leverage existing sector champions across the state to implement industry partnership strategies more effectively.

KEY POINTS: Businesses continue to struggle with unfilled positions, career advancements, turnover, and retention, along with improving diversity opportunities. Throughout Illinois, industry partnerships have successfully developed an end-to-end process to address local workforce challenges. Business associations can support expanding industrial collaborations across the state to communicate specific workforce challenges in building a talent supply chain.

NEXT STEPS:

- IWIB members to receive some deeper training on the concepts and implementation of sector strategies in general, and Talent Pipeline Management in particular.
- Identify and recruit business champions for each region along with new and emerging business partnerships.
- Develop a plan of action to provide training support for new partnerships using an end-to-end talent pipeline management process.
- Submit a plan of action with performance measurables to IWIB for approval and funding.
- Implement the plan.

5. BOARD MEMBER ONBOARDING (RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP)

FINDING: No standardized recruitment, onboarding and retention guidance exists for the IWIB's membership.

KEY POINTS: The BEC, through its Board Recruitment Work Group, has created both initial and detailed orientation materials, for use in onboarding all new members. Specifically an initial orientation document and slide deck that are intended to explain basics of the workforce development system and the roles of the workforce boards and workforce board members have been developed.

NEXT STEPS:

- The BEC is asking that the IWIB review these materials in order begin a process to have them available for use in the onboarding of new IWIB members during 2021.
- In addition to developing these materials for IWIB use, the BEC intends for these materials to be available for LWIBs that wish to use or amend them for use in their LWIB onboarding processes.

IWIB/BEC BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT RETREAT FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION NOTES

Date: February 23, 2021
Time: 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

PREWORK

- Prior to the IWIB/BEC Retreat board members were assigned prework which included an overview of the BEC, and five one page finding summaries. The discussions during the retreat built upon this prework.

OPENING

- The meeting began with a welcome from BEC co-chair Tom Wendorf and an introduction to the meeting Goals, Roles, Process and Interpersonal Agreements from Stephanie Veck. In particular, she described the process for the meeting, a process of five different facilitated discussions each facilitated by a chair of a work group or the committee as whole. They'll have five minutes to give additional information from the finding statements, and then they will facilitate a 12-minute discussion on the topic of the finding. Finding sheets and presentation slides are attached for each of the five findings.

6. SYSTEM MESSAGING (COMMUNICATION WORK GROUP)

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DISCUSSION:

- Tom Wendorf was the first facilitator, on the topic of System Messaging. Tom began by describing how messaging and communication in general is an issue that encompasses the work of the entire committee and each of the work groups (even though one of the work groups focuses specifically on communication).

- He described how the lack of a consistent message across all of the workforce system partners serves to suppress clarity for businesspeople, and hence serves to discourage them from utilizing their services. There is a general lack of awareness among businesses, and where there is awareness it is often undermined by a "noisy" message.

- The general perception among businesses is that the system (if they are aware of it at all) is complicated and time consuming. Tom asked the group why this perception exists. Andrew Warrington responded that the perception exists because it is true. The system is complex, and it is up to the workforce partners to try and simplify the complexity for businesses. Tom agreed, and stated that the system does a pretty good job of servicing businesses, but they just don't find us.

- Mike Conley disagreed (in a chat) saying, "Based on my contact with business leaders in our region, I think it should be considered that this is a red herring put forward by business as an excuse not to engage."

- Andrew Warrington countered (in a chat), "I agree with Tom also. It is complex. But those that have engaged with the one-stops I do not believe would say this. Maybe it looks complex before you engage but once you get in and work with a good partner in the one stop, I believe that they can and should make it simple for them."

- Marlon McClintock said (in a chat), "Provide great examples of how the WF system has worked successfully for specific companies: Small, medium size, and large."

- Next, Tom asked the group why businesses consistently point to the desire to have a single point of contact as very important to them. Dave Friedman responded (in a chat) that it is simply inefficient to talk to multiple people about the same issues. Julio Rodriguez noted (in a chat) that, "All the agencies believe that it's their organizations job to do engage businesses and no one trusts another partners ability to do this behalf of the system as a whole." This has made it difficult to establish single points of contact.

- Andrew Warrington noted (in a chat) that, "The idea of the one stop is great. The key issue is getting more businesses to engage. As Tom says when they do they will probably be happy. Our % of business that do engage is pitifully small. The examples that have engaged deeply are very impressive."

- Tom concluded this topic by noting that, "one of the things that we're going to suggest to the IWIB with their March meeting is that the BEC be authorized to convene a group of workforce partners across the education private and public sectors to talk about how we do this, how do we make this look like one workforce system so people believe we have a system that's actually going to be easy to work with that they're going to be able to access. And then secondarily in 2022 we're going to ask for the state to in some way to fund and build and implement recommendations of the group so we can actually build a way to do what we come up with as a solution."

7. **COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM (RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP)**

FINDING: The lack of an effective and consistent two-way communication between the IWIB and the LWIBs creates a lack of efficiency and synergy in the workforce system.

KEY POINTS: Increasing communication between the two levels of workforce development leadership regarding their goals, activities and initiatives will serve to better coordinate the provision of workforce development services to businesses and individuals across the state.

NEXT STEPS:

- The IWIB is requested to intensify its efforts to create and disseminate a quarterly IWIB electronic newsletter to communicate specifically with LWIB members (as well as others).

- The IWIB is requested to invite the Illinois Workforce Partnership to work with the BEC to examine and develop mechanisms to create a quarterly report or newsletter of LWIB activities that will serve to better inform the IWIBs own goal and initiative development processes.

DISCUSSION:

- Next, Jennifer Serino discussed the finding around the issue of communication between the state board and the local boards. She discussed the survey of local board members and staff around this issue. She noted that generally those surveyed found communication adequate, but that it was generally non-structured. Board members also serving on the IWIB might report on IWIB activities, or board staff might report based on information received through the IWP.

- Of particular note from the survey is the role that the IWIB newsletter might play in this communication process if it were more regularly distributed. Mike Conley noted (in a chat) that, "The IWIB Newsletter is always looking for great content from the board and others in the workforce system, but we're not in a position to do "enterprise" reporting. We are assemblers of information, not gatherers of information.

- Jennifer asked the group for specific communication strategies that might be employed to facilitate dialogue.

- Notes in the chat included the possible use of virtual forums, podcasts, Facebook groups, video messaging, an RSS feed to collect relevant social media posts, links to LWIB minutes and other documents, and other technology-based means of communication. Michelle Cerutti noted that including more local-based information in the newsletter might also make it more appealing to local board members. Sandeep Nain suggested a spot-on Illinois workNet that would be dedicated to LWIB activities and stories that could be easily accessed by other LWIBs as well as the IWIB.

- Comments also suggested that IWIB members attending LWIB meetings (and LWIB members attending IWIB meetings) would be good methods to increase communication. Commenters also noted the importance a "real world" stories – success (and failure) stories, challenges, case studies, and tours of businesses and service providers.

- Many commenters pointed to the key role that the IWP serves as a conduit between the IWIB and the LWIBs.

8. SMALL BUSINESS FOCUS (COMMUNICATION WORK GROUP)

FINDING: A top priority of Illinois' workforce development system is the need to specifically target small businesses for workforce support.

KEY POINTS: In Illinois businesses with 10 – 499 employees account for less than 20% of all businesses in the state, yet they employ nearly 60% of all workers in the state. By specifically focusing outreach and support to this target group of businesses we can better utilize the limited resources available to help recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain a skilled workforce in Illinois.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify the resources and supports available to small businesses, across the state to recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain workers.

- Clearly and simply communicate the resources and supports available to small business in a manner that make it easy for them to navigate the system to find support for their specific needs.

- Make new information and updates easy to access for small business.

- Identify instant help options such as web-based chat or virtual assistants to help navigate resources as needed, when needed (24/7).

DISCUSSION:

- Next, Einar Forsman discussed engagement with small businesses. He began by noting that 80-85% of the membership of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce (of which he is Executive Director) employs 20 or fewer individuals. Thus the importance of small business cannot be discounted.

- He noted that, while judicious use of time is an important consideration for all businesses, it is especially important for small businesses. Communication with small businesses must be clear and concise and take up as little of this precious time as possible. Services must be made valuable and tangible, and should take advantage of existing business association relationships as conduits to the extent possible. To that point, Andrew Warrington noted (in a chat) that, "Direct one on one targeting is probably very inefficient. However, go to where they go, e.g. chambers, banks, trade associations, villages/ towns, regulators. Use those as the channel to the smaller businesses."

- Communication strategies for small businesses are not that distinct from those for larger businesses, but their proper execution is more important, for the reasons discussed above.

  o Identify the resources and supports available to small businesses, across the state to recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain workers.

  o Clearly and simply communicate the resources and supports available to small business in a manner that make it easy for them to navigate the system to find support for their specific needs.

  o Make new information and updates easy to access for small business. Keep it clean and tight, avoid creating confusion.

- Identify instant help options such as web-based chat or virtual assistants to help navigate resources as needed, when needed (24/7).

- Sandeep Nain noted the tremendous importance of business services representatives having some type of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system available in order to both adequately service customers – especially small business customers – and to avoid burdening them with multiple service calls from multiple providers.

- There was a good deal of conversation around goals for penetration of the small business community (e.g., is 100% penetration a "stretch" goal, or an unrealistic objective). However, there did seem to be agreement that establishing a goal and then measuring advancements towards the attainment of that goal is critical.

9. INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS (INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS WORK GROUP)

FINDING: An opportunity exists to leverage existing sector champions across the state to implement industry partnership strategies more effectively.

KEY POINTS: Businesses continue to struggle with unfilled positions, career advancements, turnover, and retention, along with improving diversity opportunities. Throughout Illinois, industry partnerships have successfully developed an end-to-end process to address local workforce challenges. Business associations can support expanding industrial collaborations across the state to communicate specific workforce challenges in building a talent supply chain.

NEXT STEPS:

- IWIB members to receive some deeper training on the concepts and implementation of sector strategies in general, and Talent Pipeline Management in particular.

- Identify and recruit business champions for each region along with new and emerging business partnerships.

- Develop a plan of action to provide training support for new partnerships using an end-to-end talent pipeline management process.

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- Implement the plan.

DISCUSSION:

- Next up was Katie Bata to discuss Industry Partnerships. She discussed four objectives identified by the Industry Partnerships Work Group: identifying target sectors in Illinois, supporting existing sector partnerships across the state, development of promotional strategies for existing and new partnerships, and identifying message elements to promote the industry partnership concept.

- Katie then suggested a series of questions that elicited good conversations both in the meeting and in the chat room. In particular, DCEO was identified as the appropriate locus of action for sustaining and broadening this concept. Also, it was felt that it would be useful for the IWIB members to receive some deeper training on the concepts and implementation of sector strategies in general, and Talent Pipeline Management in particular.

- Tom Wendorf pointed out the opportunity and the value that IWIB members themselves might have as spokespeople for the development of industry partnerships within the sectors that they represent. Related to that was conversation around the idea of developing partnerships with business organizations – particularly those that represent specific industries or sectors – in order to spread the word regarding the advantages of industry partnerships.

- The value of case studies, etc. to help explain the value of industry partnerships was also a topic of discussion both in the meeting and in the chat room. Several related resources were mentioned, including:

    - https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/EconDev/workforce/nextgen.aspx

    - https://youtu.be/YnAUy4BM0w8

    - https://www.clevelandfed.org/newsroom-and-events/publications/special-reports/sr-20160815-addressing-employment-needs-through-sector-partnership.aspx

    - https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/reports/building-more-inclusive-talent-marketplace-increasing-opportunity-through-community-and

    - https://businessengagement.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/05/12/14/10/State-Sector-Strategies-An-Overview

10. BOARD MEMBER ONBOARDING (RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP)

FINDING: No standardized recruitment, onboarding and retention guidance exists for the IWIB's membership.

KEY POINTS: The BEC, through its Board Recruitment Work Group, has created both initial and detailed orientation materials, for use in onboarding all new members. Specifically an initial orientation document and slide deck that are intended to explain basics of the workforce development system and the roles of the workforce boards and workforce board members have been developed.

NEXT STEPS:

- The BEC is asking that the IWIB review these materials in order begin a process to have them available for use in the onboarding of new IWIB members during 2021.
- In addition to developing these materials for IWIB use, the BEC intends for these materials to be available for LWIBs that wish to use or amend them for use in their LWIB onboarding processes.

DISCUSSION:

- The final presentation returned Jennifer Serino and Tom Wendorf to discuss IWIB/LWIB member onboarding. Jennifer began by noting the workforce system "org chart" that had been presented to the IWIB at their December meeting. The daunting nature of that graphic crystallized the need for a process to demystify the system for new board members in order to hasten the day that they will be able to provide meaningful contributions to the work of the board.

- Jennifer detailed the Board Recruitment Work Group's utilization of existing materials developed in the Northeast Region to help create an orientation / accountability / mentoring guide for use by the IWIB. As Jennifer described, this guide scans 16 topics within three general

areas: the workforce system in general, the role of the IWIB and the LWIBs, and the specific roles and responsibilities of board membership.

- Discussion of this topic led in several directions. Tom Wendorf related the difficulties that he had as a new board member, and that it took approximately 18 months for him to feel conversant in the language and concepts of workforce development. Andrew Warrington echoed this, and also noted that this problem also spoke to the underutilized value of looking to individuals on local boards as a source of recruitment for the IWIB, given that they likely would have already have put some time into understanding the system at the local level.

- Tom Wendorf spoke to the frustration that was felt – and this was also touched on in the chat room conversation – with the current process for IWIB appointments that is long, laborious and often inscrutable.

- Sandeep Nain suggested that the onboarding guide should also include an introduction to the data elements involved in board membership. Specifically, the outcomes and evaluation elements attendant to the workforce system, and the IWIB's role in assessing those outcome elements.

- Elba Aranda-Suh mentioned the role that the Equity Task Force might play in the process of identifying representative individuals for appointment to the IWIB.

- Tom Wendorf asked for more specific discussion regarding how local board members might be identified for IWIB membership. In particular, Tom noted that there might be value in targeting recruitment of those local board members who represent specific industry sectors that are currently underrepresented on the IWIB.

- Tom Ashby suggested that a source of members might be those companies that are currently doing business with the state (or have done so in the past).

- Tom Wendorf suggested that an additional item not included in the onboarding guide but of possibly great value would be to regularize the appointment process so that new members might be added in "classes" that could be brought on and initiated as a cohort. Doing this would also make the appointment process cleaner for the Governor and the legislature by keeping the process to a single point on the calendar each year, avoiding "one-off" appointments at various times across the calendar.

CONCLUSION

- Tom Hacker concluded the retreat by noting some of the themes that crossed the five finding areas, in particular the importance of messaging and communication. Each of the topics discussed require ongoing clear communication. Whether it is between the IWIB and the LWIBs, better servicing of small business needs, implementation of industry partnerships, or more effective onboarding of board members, communication and messaging is key to implementing better business engagement.

- At this point, the meeting was adjourned.