

Leading regional resources to build and maintain a world-class workforce



March 2009

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 1

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Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Updates

This e-mail newsletter offers an effective way to stay in touch with our area business and education communities. It will be used to keep you informed of what's happening in regional workforce development and empower you with tools and information you can use in your own organization. This newsletter also aims to strengthen our relationships with existing partners as well as promote the work of the WIB to those unaware of the important impact this board makes in Northeast Minnesota.

Michelle Ufford, Executive Director

Despite the economic difficulties our region is facing (along with the rest of the country), this is an exciting time for workforce development. The Workforce Investment Board is stepping into the spotlight as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is initiated. A significant amount of stimulus funding will be coming to Northeast Minnesota to help prepare our workforce for current and future careers with local employers. It is very important that we understand what skills and education businesses need the workforce to have, both now and in the future. We are working with the Northeast Higher Education District to develop a menu of training options that will help prepare our citizens for local job opportunities. Funding will be available for laid off workers, income eligible adults and youth to enter vocational training designed with input from local business. To add your input, please contact me at (218) 748-2243 or at the email address listed to the left. Look for more information on what the WIB is doing locally in response to the stimulus package in future editions.

The Northland Works Regional Innovation Grant

The WIB has received a \$250,000 Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) that was awarded in conjunction with the WIBs of Duluth and Northwest Wisconsin. This partnership developed through the Northland Works Project because of the economic similarities between these three regions. The Leadership Steering Committee held their first meeting in November to introduce the project, with the primary objective of aligning economic and workforce development resources to create a common vision, goals, and viable regional economic development strategy that will marshal resources and sustain commitment and collaboration. The Leadership Committee includes Craig Pagel and Bud Stone from NE Minnesota WIB, members from the Arrowhead Growth Alliance, and each region's Regional Development Commission among others. This precedent-setting project will establish a work plan to develop a framework for creating a regional economic development plan in conjunction with education and workforce development.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

The WIB operates in part through the work of four active committees:

- Industry Cluster Committee
- Outreach Committee
- One Stop Committee
- Youth Council

Future editions of this quarterly newsletter will report on Committee activity as relevant to our partners and stakeholders.

If you are interested in getting involved with the Northeast Minnesota Workforce Investment Board, please contact Michelle Ufford, Executive Director

(218)-748-2243

michelle.ufford@state.mn.us

Industry Cluster Committee

This committee is responsible for educating the full board about industries key to our regional economy. The committee chose manufacturing as the first industry to study with the intent of identifying how the WIB can facilitate its growth and support workforce needs. A study based on the industry cluster work of Harvard's Michael Porter was commissioned through the Humphrey Institute. State Business Services Staff conducted in-depth interviews with over 40 manufacturing companies, the results of which were compiled into the final study. The WIB learned much about the industry including why firms are located in our region and what keeps them here. The Committee is now engaging the Arrowhead Manufacturers and Fabricators Association in an effort to share information and supplement the study with additional information on this important industry. For a copy of the study, please contact Michelle Ufford at michelle.ufford@state.mn.us.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee is responsible for promoting the WIB and developing partnerships with relevant stakeholders such as business and industry, economic development, education and the community in general. This committee will oversee future iterations of this newsletter and identify opportunities to increase the visibility of the WIB. Recently, the group hosted a 'State of the Workforce' event in Grand Rapids to share information with the business community and public about current and anticipated workforce issues. Future editions of this publication will include additional workshops and events of interest to the business community.

One Stop Committee

The objective of this committee is to fulfill the Workforce Investment Board's responsibility of oversight of Workforce Centers in Aitkin, Cloquet, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, International Falls, and Virginia. Partners that operate from local Workforce Centers include the Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training, the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Rehabilitation Services, and State Services for the Blind. Programs offered through Workforce Centers include employment and training services for dislocated workers, income-eligible adults and youth, public assistance and food stamp recipients, and individuals with disabilities. Workforce Centers also offer an array of services for the general job seeker regardless of program eligibility such as job search workshops, access to computers, and resume assistance among many others.

Youth Council

The newest of WIB committees, the Youth Council is a combination of WIB members and representatives from youth organizations. This group will identify issues concerning local youth and resources available in the region to support and develop one of the most critical components of our future workforce. Current member organizations include School to Work/Tech Prep, Upward Bound, eFolio, juvenile justice, and the Iron Range Youth in Action (IRYA). Upcoming work will include identifying gaps in services for youth and convening youth-oriented stakeholders to share information and better coordinate and promote resources.