

Meeting Minutes

Education, Training and Upskill Committee

Friday, September 9th, 2022

10:30-11:30am

Teams Virtual Meeting ([Click here to join the meeting \[teams.microsoft.com\]](https://teams.microsoft.com))

Meeting ID: 274 308 511 706

Passcode: mMCgAG

Members Present: Adam Gilbertson
Bo Bruinsma
Deb Poteet
Mary Armstrong
Quinton Queer

Members Absent: Elsie Arntzen

Public in Attendance: Mary Heller – MT OPI, Jason Butcher – Reach Higher Montana, Sarah Swanson – MT DLI, David Smith – Montana Contractors' Association, Brock Tessman – MT OCHE, Annmarie Robinson – MT Department of Commerce, John Elizandro – MT DLI, Andrea

I. Review State Workforce Innovation Board Goals:

a. [SWIB Goals](#)

- Engage the public workforce and talent development system to respond to business needs for the skilled workers.
- Encourage alignment among workforce development, post-secondary education, and economic development partners; and
- Advance workforce development policies by providing recommendation to the Governor and other state leaders who support economic and workforce development efforts in Montana.

II. The State of the Workforce Discussion

a. What challenges exist in your communities and businesses for the workforce?

Mary Heller – Is she correct in assuming biggest workforce need is in heavy construction, welding, transportation, healthcare, among others.

Bo Bruinsma – High Wage, high need jobs are most critical, and he would agree with Mary Heller's question.

Mary Heller – Through multiple surveys another weak area is soft skills, employability skills. These are most in need.

Bo Bruinsma – He would agree but would like to ensure that the best guide is educational impact, through employment and experience, rather than in a classroom. This is a collaborative effort among education and employers.

Deb Poteet – Has been trying to work with Missoula College to get a truck mechanic program going, but has found struggles. Missoula College has identified a lack of student interest.

Brock Tessman – Tech, IT, Cyber Security is a growing industry with a lack of workers. Home life is where employability skills starts. Getting their foot in the door is where work based learning is most successful.

Educational setting is also a good place to learn employment skills; critical thinking, response to issues, etc. Most of what 2-year colleges now do, takes less than to 2 years. The pipeline is the challenge. Even when the benefits of trades are promoted, there is still a struggle for the pipeline.

Adam Gilbertson – Spent the last number of days presenting to secondary students about industries in need of employees. Promoted the benefits of programs. Technology and innovation component to trades is a key to helping increase the pipeline.

Bo Bruinsma – Networking aspect of different careers is also key.

Exposing students to all careers is important, as many students think certain things about careers, but are unaware of all aspects. A happier workforce will be found when they have been exposed to all careers early, and may then be making a more educated decision when they begin their career.

Adam Gilbertson – More collaboration is needed among workforce and education. It is not a competition, but a collaboration. Education and workforce can and should be feeders to one another and not an either or. Lifelong learning takes different pathways.

Mary Heller – Education and workforce, and entities within both, have far too long looked at each other as competition. It should be an all of the above menu. All industries do and can help one another.

Adam Gilbertson – Priority focus around a few industries is noticed. This includes infrastructure, IT, and healthcare. Where would the members like to see the committee focus and what are the opportunities?

Brock Tessman – Early College and Dual Enrollment. More structured sequence of courses. 4 or 5 course sequence certifications or micro-credential in high school, which lead to many other educational opportunities, but provide a concrete credential out of high school. Two free courses already provided by the MUS.

Adam Gilbertson – The above recommendation is then seen as a steppingstone, should be wanted.

Bo Bruinsma – Pilot opportunities and incentives to help with this. One example was MMEC's teacher externship program. Teachers received a stipend to learn about manufacturing. The teachers know the student best.

Wes Feist – Youth Program, if waiver to allow more funding toward in-school-youth is approved many students could take advantage to obtain additional coursework toward the possible 5-7 course certification.

Mary Heller – Working on some of this with Build Montana. These youth are our captive audience, and we should target them then. CTSOs need to be better utilized across the state of Montana. Based on above areas of focus would include TSA, SkillsUSA, and HOSA.

Bo Bruinsma – Supports youth program thoughts and would like to encourage more of that programming. CTSOs are a great place to begin. These are students that have already exhibited interest and willingness to be engaged.

Adam Gilbertson – Conversations to get students to the right place is critical to helping them find success.

Mary Heller – Utilizing programs outside of CTSOs like 4-h and Youth Entrepreneurs are also outlets to help steer students toward in demand careers.

Adam Gilbertson and Mary Heller – There is a need to better connect opportunities like the SWIB and CTSO teachers and conferences.

David Smith – Working on a presentation to provide CTSO teachers more grant funding to help connect students, educators, and employers.

From the Workforce Policy Committee, there is a desire for OPI to better align students to on-the job-training. That is also on the side of employers but hoping OPI can help champion these experiences.

Mary Heller – Will help with SWIB getting more involved with education and more industry involvement with classroom teachers.

Mary Armstrong – Building confidence in students and providing mentorship is key.

Adam Gilbertson - Dollars, resources, and time are most in need commodities. Time has been most difficult, especially recently. Hoping to unlock opportunities and dollars is important, so is finding the time to provide the appropriate

Wes Feist – AJAY Montana is a great organization providing soft-skill development, mentorship, job connection, stipend, pay, etc. Working more with them may be helpful.

Mary Armstrong – Can AJAY model be expanded? Is there a playbook to scale this?

Mary Heller – OPI is finishing a work based learning manual. This book has been developed with DLI, OPI, Governor's Office, and employers. This guide provides technical, legal, and other resources to help students and employers understand how to take advantage of work based learning. Guide is meant for all people connected to a student, seeking and completing a work based learning experience.

Mary Armstrong – A goal may be to help determine how to utilize the work based learning manual.

Bo Bruinsma – Survey after first Build Montana event. Goal may be to obtain feedback on paths to career.

David Smith – Some surveys have been completed. MCA obtained data on this. A social media plan was drafted and will be sent to the group. Social media plan focuses on safety, as that was a concern of the survey. The plan will target the safety of the industry, to expel some myths.

- b. What opportunities exist that the committee should consider to improve workforce readiness and employability in Montana?

III. Committee Goal Setting

- a. Goals:
 - i. Identify 3-4 Actionable Goals for recommendation to SWIB.
 - 1. Short term credentials with braided funding for students to earn credentials, credit, and income.

2. Building a pipeline for students to utilize work based learning
3. A message to industry is to be involved – Show the investment from the state and employers and employees are needed to buy-in to fix workforce shortages.
4. Connection to CTSO teachers
5. Where are families in the thought process of students and careers?

ii. Goal horizon: 12 months or less.

iii. Scope: Partnering industry, labor and education systems.

IV. Open Discussion:

- a. Placeholder for any discussion points committee members would like to contribute

Adam Gilbertson – Rabbit hole to send us down... Retiree pay may need to be discussed. Many states have reduced tax on retiree pay, including that of veterans. Is this something the SWIB should consider looking at? Or, is this something the state is looking into?

Mary Heller – OPI oversees adult education as well. Mary is working with state providers and we need to pull in adult education as well.

V. Next Committee Meeting Date: This will be determined at October 19 SWIB meeting.

VI. Adjournment: This meeting will adjourn promptly at 11:30am.