



## **APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY COUNCIL**

10:00 – 3:30 PM  
Friday, September 27, 2019  
Seeley Lake, MT

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dean Bentley (Chair), Brock Tessman, Chris Hopkins, Margaret McManus, and Barry Reddick

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Dale Carpenter, Tim Newman, Quinton Queer, and Jeff Stark

**STAFF:** Shannon Lewis, Jay Reardon, Madeline Boehm, and Cole Mack

**GUESTS:** Claire Mueller, Seeley Lake Community Foundation  
Barbara Wagner, Chief Economist, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Chair Bentley called the meeting to order at 10:00.

**ROLL CALL:** Shannon Lewis conducted roll call and established a quorum.

**AGENDA:** Chair Bentley asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

*Mr. Hopkins moved, and Mr. Tessman seconded a motion to approve the agenda.*

*The motion carried.*

**JULY 11, 2019 MEETING MINUTES:** Chair Bentley asked for motion to approve the July 11, 2019 meeting minutes.

*Ms. McManus moved, and Mr. Hopkins seconded a motion to approve the July 11, 2019 meeting minutes.*

*The motion carried.*

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **RURAL WORKFORCE AND APPRENTICESHIP PRESENTATION:**

Barbara Wagner, the Chief Economist for the Montana Department of Labor & Industry presented information on rural economies and rural workforce and gave some insight into the economy and industry mix of the Seeley Lake area. Ms. Wagner was able to discuss the state as a whole and highlight the differences in the definitions of rural, which include many Montana economies like micropolitan communities like Bozeman to highly-rural economies like Seeley Lake. She was able to discuss the industry mix throughout the state and highlight some of the more significant apprenticeships that support rural communities. While there are many specialized apprenticeships developed to support rural employers, the state is seeing significant gains in the healthcare

occupations designed to support rural healthcare providers. Expansion of registered apprenticeship throughout the state is having a positive impact on rural communities that continue to face challenges in the tight labor market and the need for specialized training.

#### **SEELEY LAKE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE UPDATE:**

Claire Mueller with the Seeley Lake Community Foundation updated the council on the opportunities that exist in Seeley Lake and other rural communities across the state. She highlighted some of the insights recently offered at the Reimagining Rural Conference, and how she was inspired to be a part of the rural landscape of Montana and how rural communities have a lot to offer people and families. Rural areas throughout the state often have robust microeconomies and a sense of community that's designed to support those who live there. Rural communities often have an educated talent pool of individuals that support the local economy and there is only opportunity for growth in rural areas. That said, there are also challenges in rural communities like a lack of childcare and housing; however, most communities are rising to the challenge and working with partners to find innovative solutions that often include funding partners like the Seeley Lake Community Foundation.

#### **RURAL HEALTHCARE APPRENTICESHIP:**

Madeline Boehm gave an overview of Montana's healthcare landscape and the role that Montana played in establishing the rural hospital and critical access hospital designation as a Congressional priority designed to support rural communities and allow for flexibility within the facilities to remain financially viable and continue serving communities. Quality rural health services, including emergency services, are a necessary component to community viability and the ability for communities to attract businesses, families, and support an aging demographic throughout the state.

Montana's healthcare apprenticeship program continues to grow and gain national attention due to its success and the collaborative nature of the program. Montana's program has been successful due to stakeholder engagement and buy-in. Hospitals, nursing homes, home healthcare providers, and specialty healthcare occupations are looking to apprenticeship as a model because it allows providers the flexibility to design a rigorous program that meets the specific employer needs. In addition, Montana's healthcare apprenticeship team started dialogue with the licensing boards throughout the entire process. Buy-in from the licensure entities is critically important when designing and establishing healthcare apprenticeships as licensure passage is necessary for many healthcare occupations.

In addition to working with the licensing boards, Montana's healthcare apprenticeship program spent more time listening to providers about their needs and designing programs to meet the need, rather than offering solutions without a comprehensive understanding. This allowed providers to tailor programs that were specific to the needs of that system.

#### **DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ONLINE LEARNING:**

Maricel Lawrence, the Executive Director of UMOonline, which is part of the School of Extended & Lifelong Learning at the University of Montana discussed the university's intentional expansion of online and distance learning as a way to serve individuals where they are and remove barriers to education and training. Online and distance education will directly support rural economic and workforce development and will better serve Montanans throughout the state.

**MONTANA RURAL APPRENTICESHIP:**

Cole Mack discussed the challenges and opportunities that registered apprenticeship offers to both businesses and individuals. While there has been growth in apprenticeship in support of niche occupations and industries that operate in rural areas, there is still need for all occupations that serve communities regardless of community size. Occupations like plumbers and electricians are in such high demand in all communities that rural apprentices continue to leave rural communities for that can offer higher wages. The inability to pay higher wages paired with the tight labor market will continue creating challenges for employers throughout the state and will continue disproportionately impacting rural areas where the bulk of employers are smaller and can't compete with large employers in urban areas.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Chair Bentley adjourned the meeting at 3:30 PM.