



In the Business of Connection
ROCKVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INC.
WORKFORCE EDUCATION TASK FORCE MINUTES

June 2, 2021
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Via Zoom

ATTENDEES: Lori Crowe, Jacki Davis, Steve Greenfield, Jennifer Hester, Kim Kelley, Aneta Lefterov, Carla Merritt, Catherine O'Brien, Cindy Rivarde, Ellen Wallace

1. Welcome

- a. Dr. Kelley welcomed the attendees and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Debrief from May 6 Roundtable Discussion

- Two people responded to the post roundtable survey.
- Both respondents scored the roundtable at a five.
- Their comments were:
 - i. The discussion focused on real life scenarios with practical tips to avoid risk.
 - ii. There was a personal feel to the communication and it was not overly technical as to be hard to understand.
 - iii. The chat questions were not that useful. This comment is probably due to the questions being too specific and tailored to one person's particular needs.
 - iv. The moderator was very effective.
 - v. The panelists were excellent.
 - vi. The collaborative discussion was very useful.
 - vii. Alexander Stoltz was singled out as being very informative.
- The suggestions for future topics were:
 - i. Hiring problems as the result of labor costs increasing. Labor supply is low due to high unemployment benefits.
 - ii. Transitioning from a brick and mortar business to e-commerce.
 - iii. The roundtable should continue to focus on real world and current business and employee lifestyle issues.
- The response rate to this survey was very low. There were two responses out of 55 attendees.
- It was noted that if people are pleased they don't generally respond.

- Ms. Rivarde and Ms. Crowe received emails from attendees who were very pleased with the information discussed in the roundtable.
- It was suggested that for a future roundtable a survey be sent to attendees immediately at the conclusion as a poll in the Zoom meeting.

2. Discuss Collaboration with WorkSource Montgomery

- When the roundtable series started the main reason was to spark a dialogue between the Rockville business community, Montgomery College, the public school system, Universities at Shady Grove, Department of Labor, and the Department of Commerce.
- The goal was to understand some of the challenges that these entities were facing together and understand the resources that each partner had available to the community.
- Elaine Chang, Director, Partnerships Unit, MCPS, recently assembled a group of people to pursue the development of an employer portal with business needs that communicates with educational institutions to let the businesses know what skill sets their graduates possess.
- This effort to develop an employer portal has been stalled due to the cost of initiating such a project.
- There is a great interest in how to align business needs with educational institutions to close the talent gap and become more competitive, globally.
- There is a monthly meeting of the Joint Business Council (MCPS, USG and MC) to talk about business engagement. There have been discussions to include the Chambers and Workforce Montgomery, as well as some other entities, in these meetings.
- The last meeting of the Joint Business Council discussed assembling a sub-committee that would put together a business summit that would engage education, industry and the non-profit community.
- Mr. Greenfield attended a WorkSource Board Meeting this morning and this same topic was discussed. They are looking at holding a Business Summit Meeting in September.
- It was suggested that there is a need for practical planning on how to move forward with this initiative.
- There is currently a talent gap for employers who need to fill jobs now and within the next three to five years.
- The current WorkSource Montgomery portal is not useful for teens. It is not reaching them where they are. Teens are not interested in corporate.
- We have to be creative in meeting teens where they are.
- One way to reach teens and get them engaged is through social media.
- The 16 to 18 demographic is very under employed.
- There are non-profit groups that are searching for ways to reach teens.
- [Boundless Peake](#) assists with linking underserved children, and young adults with professional tutoring and career coaching.
- It was suggested to utilize non-profits to reach out to parents and schools to engage students, test them, and have companies to send the students for on-the-job-training.

3. Next Steps

- Which entity is best to lead this effort – REDI or WorkSource Montgomery with REDI’s assistance?
- It was suggested that there be a meeting between REDI and WorkSource Montgomery about how to engage teens.
- Ms. Hester is on the Program Committee with Michelle Bell-Smith from WorkSource Montgomery and would be happy to make a connection and invite her to a meeting to hear feedback and discuss how to proceed.
- It was suggested to include Cynthia Grissom, Director of Business Solutions at WorkSource Montgomery in this meeting.
- We need to determine the best way for REDI to get WorkSource Montgomery to focus on an impactful way forward.
- Meeting with other board members is a good first step to begin the discussion.
- REDI would like to have a seat on the WorkSource Montgomery Board. Mr. Greenfield and Ms. Hester will help REDI achieve this.
- Can some of the funding that is coming into WorkSource Montgomery be designated for this project?
- The role of REDI and that of the Board need to be identified. Who will lead?
- The next meeting of the REDI Education Task Force will be scheduled for July.

4. Adjourn