

## **Education and Talent Focus Group**

July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Mesabi College (Room A112)

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**In Attendance:** Jessalyn Sabin, Roy Smith, Bill Maki, Jim Varichek, Steve Giorgi and George Walters

**On the Phone:** Carol Helland and Paula Sundet-Wolf

### **Biggest issue you are currently facing related to education and talent development in your organization?**

Educational access – non-traditional track – how to get back into schooling (K-16)

Declining enrollments across the range – offer quantity and quality (K-12)

Training in Health Care

Partnerships – more certificates and degree programs offered.

Attracting more talent into this area. Expand existing programs and create new ones.

Shift from heavy industrial to other area. (Delta Dental, Delta Airlines) Create living wage jobs.

Certificates vs. degrees – connecting employers to persuade them to have hands on training instead of degrees.

### **Discussion of initiatives and ideas:**

Opportunities for 4 year degrees and Master degrees. Creating partnerships with larger colleges (Bemidji State, Mankato and St. Scholastica) Adding a business program.

UMD would like to have a closer connection to the Iron Range. Finding the right programs that people are interested in. The engineering program is working well.

Industrial Arts needs help, finding teachers for this is difficult. Can we partner with Applied Learning Institute for an educational degree in industrial arts? The more difficult a skill is, the more difficult to find a teacher for that. Also difficult for healthcare.

Education to Jobs: certificates lead to diplomas – it then heightens interest to explore higher education.

Certificates to 2 year degrees to 4 year degrees: Healthcare is the biggest area (nursing assistance program is a Segway to other healthcare positions).

Some initiatives and ideas are already being implemented. Talking to the people putting this on, are they trying to train for jobs that are needed in this area. Strings attached to funding may make it more difficult.

No inclusion from our mining industries. Largest industries, quality employment – everyone is always guessing what type of employment they are in need of. It's difficult to get them to be specific, at least when additional mining officials are in the room. Speaking to HR at each mining company has been beneficial.

Having companies like Sweetwater and other bio-chemical companies will need a certain set of skills. Have a training program similar to Millwright.

Pop up classes- Occasional classes in specialty type skills.

### **Recruitment of additional private sector representatives?**

Steve mentioned passing on the contact information from the Healthcare group

Tony Zupancich

Range Tourism Alliance

Retirees from Mining

Construction workers – Dave Lislegard (Lakehead)

Drew Digby

**What are some companies that may have shied away from doing business here because of lack of talent?**

CrossUSA – back office computing and work for some of the largest fortune 500 companies. Need people that can do computer programming type work. Would a pop up classroom be beneficial?

Bigger need for computer coders and programmers – need to build a base for this in colleges.

Is there a need for a hospitality management certificate/program with the amount of tourism in this area? Wages are an issue for trying to get people into this field.

Companies are hesitant to come to this area because of the trends in this area.

Not enough skilled workers in the industrial electrical field. This is also the same for manufacturing companies (Precision Manufacturing for example)

Transportation is an issue for companies. Railways and Highways.

### **Goals for the Group?**

Getting a gap analysis from DEED or having them come up and present their findings to the group. Certificates and degrees that didn't work and why? Working closer with employers to find the way to package classes to make them more attractive.

What types of skills should be focused on when doing these pop up education classes? When choosing don't look at the starting wage but look at what they can move up to (Example: CNA to LPN)

How do we assess the retention of talent in the area? Lower wage – higher turnover – most typical.

Young people want to be around more young people – test the waters elsewhere.

Should we be focusing on retention? Quality of life effects retention – not necessarily jobs but pace of life, low priced housing.

Creating a line to students – explaining to students what pathways they can follow. Possibly send out surveys to area students that are specific to what they want or why they are leaving? A lot of parents encourage kids to leave because of the unsteadiness of the mines.

Daycare availability is an issue for people trying to go to school. Is it possible to get a corporate run day care? Do they follow the same rules and guidelines as of out of home daycares? Are there any communities in the region that are already offering daycare to accommodate going to school and jobs? Chisholm is doing something, working with the YMCA. They do a drop off daycare, either call the morning of or show up to drop your kids off, if there is space available the kids can stay. Also ran through holiday vacations when of other daycares close.

Should we do some trainings for entrepreneurs? Basic business skills. Is there a broad range of need? Advanced MN has also developed a customer service training for businesses.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Gap analysis – information on labor statistics.

Determine which private sector people should be invited (send Sara names) Should also include counties and banks.

Look at Grand Rapids workforce study.

Roy to pass on the Macalester website information.

Contact Peter McDermott

Information software from Drew Digby – may be better/faster than DEED's (college enrollment/placement)

Send out bi-weekly/monthly update on each focus group.