**GWDB Disability Equity Committee to Address Disparities for Individuals with Disabilities in Education and Employment**

**Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, August 20, 2020 – 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

# Members Present

# Josh Berg

* Vance Boelter, Vice Chair

# Steve Ditschler, Chair

# John Fisher

# Karen Lilledahl

# Dee Torgerson

# Jodi Yanda

**Staff Present**

* Ben Baglio, GWDB
* Kay Kammen, GWDB

# Call to Order and Introductions

Steve Ditschler called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

**Minutes Approval** – August 8, 2019

Steve Ditschler put forth a motion to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2019 meeting. Vance Boelter seconded the motion and it carried.

**Key Discussion Points on Committee Recommendations for the GWDB 2021 Legislative Report**

* Collaboration between state agencies and WIOA partners (WIOA Youth and Dislocated Worker).
* Demonstrated cost savings of working together.
* Include DEED Business Services (Employment & Training Programs Division and Economic Development Division).
* Value of training and whether training should be mandatory.
* On-line tools available to Small Businesses include social media, e-mail campaigns, professional certifications.
* Ben Baglio, GWDB Director, has conducted Coursera training for VRS/workforce staff throughout the state. These sessions have been well-received and provided an opportunity to work with post-secondary partners, the Department of Human Services (SNAP E&T), and the Department of Corrections. DOC has eliminated its education coordination unit. The Coursera initiative was made possible by $250,000 in federal funding and, to date, more than 10,000 Minnesotans are utilizing it.
* Should recommendations be general/broad?
* Business closures have impacted tax revenue and resources in communities. According to Vance Boelter, the food supply chain/distribution system is a concern.
* Access to technology, including Broadband.
* COVID-19 has restricted the capability to meet with customers in person.
* Challenges include helping employers see the benefit of hiring people with disabilities.

**Disability e-learning modules**

The Disability and Employment eLearning Task Force in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) released three eLearning Training Modules to help support the professional development needs of workforce development staff across the country.  DEED Rehabilitation Area Manager Jodi Yanda, who served on the task force, said the modules will migrate to CareerForceMN.com. Further details are available at the following link: <https://disability.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/19/50/Disability-and-Employment-eLearning-Task-Force>

**Update on VRS Waitlist**

According to Dee Torgerson, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services Director, federal funding for VRS is stable and there are new Supplemental Security Income streams. She discussed progress made on the VRS Priority for Service Waitlist. She said 318 remain on the waitlist; 19 in Category 2 and the remainder in Category 3, with 56 currently enrolled as students. She said a hiring freeze within state government has impacted the division’s ability to clear people from the waitlist.

**Update on approval of 2020-23 Combined State Plan for Workforce Development**

Ben Baglio reported that the 2020-2023 Combined State Plan for Workforce Development was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor with minimal revisions. The deadline for local and regional plans has been delayed until 2021. The State Plan is available on the GWDB’s web site: <https://mn.gov/deed/gwdb/publications/gwdb-pubs.jsp>

Additionally, VRS Public Affairs Director John Fisher said the U.S. Department of Education has approved the VRS, Disability Determination Services and State Services for the Blind Plan. The VRS portion of the plan can be found at:

https://mn.gov/deed/assets/2020-vrs-state-plan\_tcm1045-441982.pdf

**Adjournment** was at 12:02 p.m. The next meeting of the committee will be from *11:00 – 12:00 Noon on Thursday, November 5, 2020* via Zoom.