

April 23, 2018

Rick Roy, Director

Workforce Systems Coordination

MN Department of Employment and Economic Development

St. Paul, MN

Dear Mr. Roy,

Please accept this letter outlining updates to Workforce Development Area 3’s Local Plan per the guidance memo dated February 28, 2018. For questions or clarifications, please contact Michelle Ufford at michelle.ufford@nemojt.org or (218) 735-6173.

Sincerely,



Bud Stone, Chair

Northeast Minnesota

Workforce Development Board

**Section B: Local Plan**

**Question 7, Update on transportation initiatives**: *Describe how supportive services, such as transportation and other needs, will be coordinated to better serve individuals with specific barriers to training, education, and employment;* **and**

**Question 20,** *Describe how the local area board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out under this title with public transportation and other appropriate supportive services.*

As a result of the regional workforce system asset mapping endeavor, transportation was identified as a topic of focus for the Northeast Board. To better educate the Board about existing transportation resources, operators of existing transportation services were invited to present to the Board. The presentation focused on existing resources, gaps in transportation resources (both geographical and programmatic), and insight into the sustainability challenges and opportunities of current programs. Both NEMOJT and the Northeast Workforce Development Board subsequently supported regional system partner AEOA’s application for MNDOT’s Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCC) Phase I Organizational Planning Grant. As referenced in the local plan, AEOA has been a long-time provider of innovative rural transportation services and is an excellent candidate to initiate planning for a comprehensive, coordinated transportation strategy for Northeast Minnesota. If awarded, Board members and partner agency staff would provide insight and support of the development of a RTCC and participate on an on-going basis once a RTCC is established.

**Question 12, Update on incumbent worker training to support CTE-related activities:** *Describe how the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core programs to align and support services with programs and study authorized under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.*

 In addition to the content of the original local plan regarding this question, NEMOJT is making available incumbent worker training dollars authorized by the State to school districts under a new initiative called the Talent Development Program (TDP). The aim of making this program available to districts is to help support additional school personnel to train and certify as work-based learning coordinators, industrial technology teachers, and other CTE-related staff to help strengthen resources and curriculum associated with programs of study, career and technical skills, and connections between schools and the employer community.

**Question 14A, Employer engagement update:** *Describe how the local area board will facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers, and the employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs;***and**

**Question 14B,** *Describe how the local area board will support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local workforce development area.*

The Northeast WDB’s Skilled Trades Career Pathway committee has engaged a number of small and large employers in the exploration and development of career pathway opportunities within the construction sector. The committee has elected to begin with developing a skilled trades career awareness campaign aimed at students and their influencers (teachers, counselors, and parents), with a special emphasis on engaging underrepresented populations including women and girls. The core committee includes representatives from such large companies as Ulland Brothers and Minnesota Power/Allete and small business intermediaries such as the Northern Minnesota Builders Association and Chambers of Commerce. Additional members on this committee represent the trades themselves (Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union #589, Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers Union 1 MN/North Dakota, and AFL-CIO, all of whom are active members of either the Iron Range Building and Trades Council or the Duluth Building and Trades Council) that represent all construction trades in the region. Additional private sector employers will be engaged in the development of the messaging and implementation of this campaign moving forward.

 In addition, together with the Duluth WDB, the Northeast WDB has sponsored a series of workshops for employers focusing on the topics of recruitment and retention to support both boards’ goals of better business engagement. This series was kicked off with a regional event in February 2018 to highlight demographic challenges and emphasize that employers must think outside the box to successfully find the workers they need. The kick off was followed by a April 18, 2018, session focused on recruitment strategies that featured a keynote address and a panel of four employers who have found success with a variety of creative recruitment strategies. A session on retention strategies will be on May 16 with a similar format. Both sessions are being duplicated on the same day in two different locations to help employers from the farther reaches of the region attend.

 The workforce solutions series was a strong collaborative effort between many regional partners on behalf of both boards, including economic development, higher education, and workforce service providers. The planning committee included partners such as the City of Duluth, the College of St. Scholastica, NorthForce, DEED, the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, the Head of the Lakes United Way, the AFL-CIO, Northspan, Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training, APEX, and the UMD Center for Economic Development. Additional sessions on topics like diversity and equity in the workplace may be offered in the future contingent upon the feedback received after all sessions.

**Question 14C, Update to coordination with economic development:** *Describe how the local area board will better coordinate programs and services with regional economic development providers.*

Since the development of the original local plan document, Board representatives have been involved in several activities with regional economic development entities, including the recent initiative to bolster applicants for three call-center organizations on the Iron Range. IRRRB, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, the state department responsible for oversight of taconite production tax-funded economic development initiatives, invited Workforce Center partners to collaborate on a strategy to increase awareness of and the number of individuals who applied for a myriad of open positions for which recruitment has been challenging. An event bringing together these regional employers (Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Anthem, and Delta Airlines) for the first time occurred in April 2018. This collaboration between economic development and the Workforce Center system has demonstrated the cohesiveness between these two systems to address employer needs and is now considered a model for future industry-specific initiatives.

NEMOJT and AEOA also collaborated with IRRRB on the development and delivery of a fast-tracked welding program at the request of local employers. Together with Mesabi Range Community and Technical College and AdvancedMN (the customized training enterprise of the Northeast Higher Education District, a consortium of 5 regional community colleges) and using NEMOJT’s Talent Development Program for incumbent workers and referrals from Workforce Center programs and local employers, this welding initiative successfully trained 17 individuals and serves as a possible model for additional industry-specific training programs as requested by employers.

IRRRB recognizes the importance of early career exposure as a foundation for effective long-term economic development and has awarded a grant to NEMOJT to administer the Career Exploration Fund to support career exploration activities for students and schools. This fund covers expenses related to transporting students to career exploration events and activities, associated substitute costs for when teachers are involved, and sponsorship of career-themed events such as the annual Science and Engineering Festival that attracts over 1,200 7th graders from across the region, and Construct Tomorrow which offers hands-on exposure to a variety of trades to 11th and 12th grade students.

Lastly, economic development representatives are now involved in several of the working committees of the NEWDB, including the Skilled Trades Career Pathways and Equity and Diversity committees. These representatives are also members of the Governor’s Workforce Development Board which demonstrates a unique connection between economic development and the public workforce development system on local, regional, and state levels.

**Question 16B, Incumbent worker training update:** *Describe how the local area board will ensure that eligible providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and job seekers.*

Since the development of the original local plan, the Talent Development Program (TDP; the area’s incumbent worker training program operated by NEMOJT) has taken off. Since its inception in PY16, TDP has assisted nearly 40 companies by supporting the training of over 560 employees. Industries served include healthcare, manufacturing, construction, IT, mining, retail, engineering, and non-profit entities. TDP has also been successfully used for consortiums of similar employers to shared training across organizations, a model we hope to expand in the coming years. A sample of training that has been supported with TDP includes leadership training, special boilers license, occupational safety training, dementia care, customer service, welding, and a maintenance apprenticeship.

**Question 16D, Update on services to individuals with disabilities, including youth:** *Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system will comply with section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities;***and**

**Question 18:** *Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local workforce development area, including youth with disabilities, which description and assessment shall include identification of successful models of such youth workforce development activities.*

In addition to the response to this question in the original plan, NEMOJT has since begun providing services under the VRS Pre Employment and Training Services (PreETS) initiative as required under WIOA. As a natural offshoot to our successful Career EdVenture initiative, NEMOJT youth career counselors are focusing on providing career exploration and work readiness resources to students with disabilities who participate in special education. Since this fall, NEMOJT counselors have delivered a host of classroom workshops on topics such as understanding learning styles and how those styles relate to the world of work, knowing when and how to advocate for one’s rights and needs, and understanding how the brain works related to school and the world of work. Work readiness, determining career interests, and understanding the local labor market are also routinely offered in special education classrooms in addition to the provision of one-on-one counseling and strategy sessions. NEMOJT youth counselors also regularly participate in transition meetings with parents, special education students, and VRS transition coordinators throughout the region to ensure students with disabilities are connecting to workforce system services and resources.

In addition, VRS staff is actively engaged in the NEWDB’s equity committee, which in part will focus on ensuring consistent and quality services to individuals with disabilities across the regional Workforce Center system. This committee is also responsible for identifying and developing staff development opportunities for system staff which could include strategies on more effectively working with individuals with disabilities, including youth.

**Question 22, Update on coordination with ABE:** *Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local workforce development area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under title II.*

The Regional Manager of AEOA’s Adult Basic Education program is now a member of the NEWDB’s Skilled Trades Career Pathway committee to ensure that career pathways efforts are aligned with adult education.

**Section D: System Operations and Attachments**

**Question 11, Update on integration of Veterans services staff:** *How are DVOP and/or Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) staff integrated into the overall service delivery strategy in your Workforce Centers?*

Local DVOP and/or LVER staff are also integrated into the service delivery of large-scale dislocated worker projects, including ensuring that participants are aware of Veteran employment and training services and staff as well as facilitating group informational and support meetings for dislocated Veterans.