



Solutions Driven Committee

of the West Michigan Works! Workforce Development Board

April 12th, 2024

12:00pm – 1:00pm

Committee Charge: The Solutions-Driven committee will focus on addressing barriers to implementation of talent, business, and retention solutions. The committee will serve as a sounding board for director-level staff, offering consultation and constructive feedback while brainstorming potential strategies and new approaches. Together, the committee and staff will seek ways to operationalize solutions to regional issues in alignment with the board's vision.

Committee Chair: Jordan Clark

Agenda

Call to Order

Public Comment:

- None.

Approval: October 13th, 2023, Meeting Minutes

- All approve.

Report and Follow-up: Retention Solutions

- Onboarded a new manager: Jennifer Summers
- A SWOT analysis was conducted with Retention Solutions Network employer members and adviser committees.
 - Input from the last Solutions Driven Committee meeting, along with employer members, was included in the SWOT analysis.
 - A comprehensive analysis was created, and it has been used to help plan the Retention Solutions future state and how to effectively promote it better.
- West Michigan Works! will soon finish up this strategy and develop strategic guidance for the Retention Solutions Network that will help determine its future state and work towards our goals over the next three years.
 - This will include improved data elements and improving the value that we have for member employers.
 - Overall, how we are getting the word out about Retention Solutions Network, which was a topic of discussion during the last Solutions Driven Committee meeting.
- Retention Solutions Network was connected with the 311 team at the United Way.

Discussion Topic: Digital Literacy

- **Background:**
 - Digital literacy falls under the customer and system focus strategies within our Strategic Plan.
 - West Michigan Works! has been using the Digital NorthStar.
 - It is an online platform that allows an individual to take a preassessment to determine their level of digital literacy. The preassessment consists of basic digital literacy.
 - West Michigan Works! offers open computer labs to individuals.
 - West Michigan Works! has a full-time staff person that can help the individual navigate.

- A few different platforms are also being used for the refugee population, depending on what services the individual is requesting.
 - ESL learning
 - Digital literacy navigation through NorthStar or other platforms
 - Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) – platform for individuals that have received a credential in their home country and need help to recertify their current credentials, or to have their credentials recognized in the US.

- **Questions for Discussion:**

Digital Literacy for refugees, immigrants and English Language Learners is available through community-based organizations such as Samaritas, Office of Global Michigan, Bethany Christian Services, Read Muskegon, the Literacy Center of West Michigan in addition to the resources currently being provide by the WMW Resource Navigator.

- What is the most effective way to leverage the resources available in this space?
 - How do employers evaluate their staff for digital literacy? Can individuals be connected with resources in the community to help with digital literacy as part of the onboarding process?
 - Individuals that struggle with digital literacy during the application and assessment process may not be able to communicate their barriers because they won't complete the digital application and/or be contacted for an interview.
 - Adult Education – there currently isn't a specific curriculum or guide followed for digital learning, but it is being discussed with Adult Ed providers in the area.
 - Does West Michigan Works! Provide onsite for individual?
 - Does West Michigan Works! offer space in other locations?
 - Does Adult Ed offer a more robust curriculum?
 - Can current providers and community providers be leaned on more?
 - A resource list of organizations would be helpful for employers and job seekers, and then establish how to obtain assistance from these organizations regarding digital literacy.
 - West Michigan Works! Business Solutions is not hearing from employers that digital literacy is a challenge. Is there an unknown concern on the employer's side, or should efforts be focused on the job seeker end before they are employed?
 - Can a test or assessment being provided during employee onboarding that can assess digital literacy, with resources and guidance being provided if necessary.

Digital literacy may significantly affect how businesses operate, especially in terms of collaboration and communication, which are two vital elements of any successful company. Employees who haven't yet mastered digital fluency (the capacity to comprehend and apply technology to daily tasks) may struggle to effectively communicate with their coworkers in various contexts utilizing techniques that may be unfamiliar to them. This can thus hinder internal productivity and present difficulties for online collaboration.

- What shortfalls are employers seeing in their talent pools that could be incorporated into existing programs to make sure talent is prepared to enter the workforce? In what ways could WMW help companies foster digital literacy in the workplace?
 - Digital application process.
 - The challenge of new technology within the current workforce.
 - How do you make sure staff are efficient with the implementation of new technology or something more advanced, it can cause reluctance to change?
 - Perhaps it's not a specific system or technology, but it's more the adaptability skills and knowing enough of the basics to not being fearful of technology. How can we help people get to this space?
 - Simulators – choose the most common platforms employers use and create a "dummy account" for people to work through. How do we entice individuals to engage in these?

Online free resources are available to help job seekers with basic computer skills, software skills and simple technology usage however they do not currently address the fast-paced advancements of cell phone technology, Microsoft SharePoint, video calling, or Artificial Intelligence (AI).

- What are the digital literacy resource gaps identified by local employers? Would a micro certificate like WorkReady address some of these gaps and better equip job seekers for employment and growth opportunities? How might we better partner with Adult Education providers to provide digital literacy alongside ABE and ESL instruction?
 - Find individuals before they start an online application to see if they are capable of completing it. How do we accommodate individuals with disabilities and language barriers? Can West Michigan Works! assist with this?
 - Is there a basic assessment that can be implemented into West Michigan Works! eligibility paperwork to identify digital barriers, and then refer the individual to resources/trainings as part of programming? Assessing individuals from the start could be built into program engagement to ensure an individual is capable of completing an online application.
 - Can digital literacy be added part to the WorkReady curriculum and not be a separate assessment/certificate?
 - A digital literacy assessment for MRS would be helpful.
 - The new generation appears to be confident with technology, but the age group of 35–50-year-olds still appears to still struggle with digital literacy.
 - The West Michigan Works! talent survey does indicate age discrimination so there's an assumption that digital literacy could play into this.

Next Meeting: June 14th, 2024

Adjourn