Superior Business & Industry Leaders Forum Notes
September 24, 2008

Attendance – 34
Bd mbr: Beth Carlson
Admin: Bob Meyer, Diane Vertin, Craig Fowler, John Will, Kim Olson
Leaders from the community

- Diane Vertin welcomed the group and introduced Beth Carlson.
- Beth Carlson introduced Bob Meyer.

Input was given by key leaders in response to the following questions:
1. What are you willing to share about your business or community plans for the future (that might impact WITC’s planning)?
2. What educational, training, or recruitment issues do you face in accomplishing those plans?
3. In your view, how can WITC best serve your business/community?

a. Communicate Future Jobs Availability
   From a financial standpoint, we look at this region as one that has exponential growth over the next ten years. WITC needs to step up and reach into the school systems to let them know the plum jobs that will be available.

b. Partnering with Minnesota, K-12, Manufacturing Jobs
   Arrowhead Manufacturing Fabricators Association is ready with a dance card for Bob Meyer to come into the schools to introduce himself to the K-12 partners (ex. Proctor High School) and help people/parents to realize the opportunities in that sector. They will help Bob Meyer do that.

c. Manufacturing Machinists Needed
   As a manufacturer, we are in a period where there is an insufficient supply of manufacturing machinists. WITC needs to tell the kids this is a positive area to be in and that it is not a dirty job. WITC has been great and accommodating. The manufacturers just don’t have enough trained people to come up from the supply chain to fill the jobs.

d. Train our own Residents
   Our shipyard brought up shiploads of gulf workers. Rather than having to bring people from that far away, we need to train our own residents for what the need is.

e. Minnesota Mining (Iron Range) – Manufacturing Initiatives
   WITC is in a perfect place at an ideal time to run with this and keep pace with the need to grow and serve this community. There are 6 billion manufacturing opportunities.

f. Continue to Work with the Working Poor, Jails, and Prisons
   We have a great opportunity to reach into our community to help the working poor increase their skills and to also reach into our prisons and jails to help them become productive citizens in our community and transition into the workforce. He appreciates what WITC has done.

g. Careers in Sales are Undervalued
   One area that is missing at UW-S and WITC is sales. People who are in sales make the highest income; however, it is never talked about. It is absent from the discussion that a career in sales is a career in prosperity. This is a skill and a craft that is undervalued. Underlying in this economy is sales. WITC needs to look at that area.

h. Partner with UW-Superior – Transportation
   There is an opportunity to partner with UW-S and the transportation program.
i. **Partner with Superior High School (and UW-S) - Interpreters and Signers**
   The superintendent noted that WITC is already partnering with the high school. We’ve received some successes. It is very difficult to convince the students and parents to take the manufacturing career path. He can see that expanding – they are working with UW-S.

   Is there a chance to get interpreters and signers? Is there a way to have a training center in this area? As technology changes, he can see us partnering. Staff are techno illiterate and we should be looking at how we can create a technology consortium between WITC, UW-S, and the high schools in the district, and how to integrate technology in the curriculum & assessment around student achievement. He thanked WITC and UW-S and thinks we have a great start.

   Signing (for the hearing impaired) and language interpreters are needed – we have six different people moving into the district due to the opportunities. German, Romanian, Hmong, and Spanish are the languages needed.

   The UW-S Chancellor noted that it would be good if they could work together with WITC to provide that kind of service. We need to be somewhat selective and reasonable in what we can and can’t do.

j. **Increase Partnerships with Non-Profits**
   We have a number of people in the room that work for the not-for-profit sector. Most people are aware of the fact that people do profit from having non-profits in the community (they provide essential services in the public and private entities). They have enjoyed having staff and board personnel from affordable health care, health and human services, and affordable housing opportunities to gain employment. There is an appreciation and willingness to continue to work with WITC to keep programs relevant.

k. **Partnership Opportunities - Oral Health and Dental Health**
   We need an oral health clinic here as there is a real deficit in our community. This is an area we could partner up for an underserved population.

l. **Partnership - Early Childhood**
   The early childhood community serves children, prenatal to five years old, and there is federal funding is for this area. We need workers who take the 40 hour course (ECE) in Early Childhood, all the way up to a baccalaureate degree. They want to partner with UW-S and WITC so that people can come in from the entry level and move through the system of over a period of time. They appreciate the facilities that we freely offer to them.

m. **Forestry/Logging**
   They are really grateful for the great staff at Superior.

   There are some opportunities to do some things to assist people in the small businesses that serve the logging and forestry industry. Helping some of these people be successful in business (business savvy), providing general training programs, and a wide range of other opportunities would be appreciated.

n. **Soft Skills**
   There is a lack of soft skills at the high school and collegiate level. We need to consider a course in soft skills as a core component to cover things like how you speak with your manager, and how you answer your phone (kids are on their cell phones and don’t have to have those conversations that we had to have).

o. **Job Centers**
   The job centers might want to locate with WITC and work closely with employers through WITC.
p. Minnesota Opportunities
WITC has an opportunity by being directly across the border from Minnesota. We need to consider how we articulate and acknowledge the deficiencies each one has and build upon the strengths of each other (ex. UW-S – transportation; UMD – engineering). Cross-bridge relationships have worked and we would like the educational institutions to have this too.

q. Technologically Skilled Staff
The government is in a downsizing situation. It’s critical if we are going to provide the services that we are going to do, that we get more technologically-skilled staff. The area that is critical is computer technology and/or IT people (that kind of expertise). The competency that we need is not out there.

r. Emergency Response Training
An emergency manager noted that WITC provides the fire/EMS training for the towns villages and rural areas. However, there are a lot of people (elected officials in towns and villages) who don’t understand their positions and who need to understand emergency response as required by the federal mandates. These people need help/support by providing them with some education and a way to access it. Craig Fowler talked about the mobile fire training trailer that we are taking throughout the entire district. We are working to get it certified as a live burn center. Training for officials on some of the federal mandates is something we are probably not addressing. People don’t know what they have to do to get in that. Emergency management, homeland security, help with policy support, and incident command issues (knowing what to do) are other areas where training is needed.

s. Professional Development - Keep Great Workers
There is a great respect that the region has of WITC, which speaks highly of this great institution. Classes and tests are important, but you need to have a good workforce. Provide professional development opportunities and nurture the good staff – without doing those things it’s hard to have “great” staff. The staff are well connected to the community and WITC needs to take that step to see why this is the case and what they can do to embrace it. You need to keep your good workers. Staff development and working internally with your assets is something that was suggested.

t. Welding Academy – Recruiting for Available Jobs
The Welding Academy demonstrates the amount of cooperation between economic development, and that kind of service is very important. We are almost at full employment here and we don’t have the bodies to fill the labor pool that is available. How do we recruit and start to bring people up and to get them to stay here? How do we coordinate this holistic approach to bring people up here to provide the training?

u. Target Marketing in the Hub Zones
Our business sits right in the middle of the hub zone. Can we have some target marketing within the hub zone? Without the development of the skills it’s hard to place the people. There has to be some basic element that takes place first before starting in a position in the hub zone.

v. Long-term Care (Disabilities)
Long-term care redesign is happening here for people with disabilities, which is going to be a regionally-based effort. The people with disabilities will have the choice to live in an institution or in their own homes. Long-term care workers will increase as people with disabilities remain in their homes. It could provide flexible scheduling close to where people live. Note: There is not a provider network for this.

w. Nurses
In the 10-county area, the need for nurses is prominent. The elderly population will continue to grow, which means more nurses will be needed.
x. **Partner - Industrial Arts for Teachers**  
Throughout Minnesota we know there is an extreme shortage of teachers having an adequate amount of training in the industrial arts area. We need Bob Meyer's guidance on how we can bring more of those qualified people to the high schools in Minnesota as well as in Wisconsin. How do we partner to produce more tech ed educators to fill the educational needs in our area?

y. **K-16 Initiative**  
The K-16 initiative has fallen by the wayside. Bob Meyer would like to help.