

Main Street Montana – Energy and Utilities KIN
Group A – Workforce Issues
Conference Call
December 10, 2014 – 10:00 a.m.
Minutes

PARTICIPANTS: Frank Morehouse, Group A Leader, CEO, Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU) and Ann Jones, V.P. Human Resources & Customer Service, MDU
Rich Budde, V.P. Corval Group
Senator Alan Olson, Sanjel, Field Representative
Don Prevost, General Manager, Lower Yellowstone Electric
Craig Wilkins, CEO Vizn Energy

Tom Kaiserski (Main Street liaison) introduced the conference call participants followed by explaining the mission of today which is to identify the two highest priority work force issues on which to focus. This will then be presented to the full group (possibly in February 2015).

Morehouse began the discussion by asking call participants to describe workforce issues facing their companies which resulted in a number of challenges, questions and ideas expressed as noted below.

Challenges:

- Recruitment and Retention - finding, attracting and retaining good workers.
- As the employees retire, companies do not have the employees with the technical expertise that is required in some positions leaving a huge gap in the workforce.
- Getting entry level positions up to speed and then holding onto the experienced employee until they are trained.

Questions:

Should there be a coordinated effort by the industry for employee recruitment and retention?

How best can we standardize energy industry job training such that the skills imparted will meet requirements across the entire industry.

Ideas:

- DECA Program
 - Craig will look into a contact person at the state level and report back to the group.
- Funding for interns
 - Montana previously received federal grant within Dept. of Labor. Look at duplicating - Rich Budde and Craig Wilkins have good case studies to share from their positive experience with this program
 - MDU is vastly expanding its internship programs - look at leveraging private industry funds with government funds to create a large internship program.

- MDU's Professional Development Program
 - Create a rotational Technical Development Program (possibility)
 - Considering recruiting in rural towns offering to pay vocational training expenses.
- Recruitment Targets
 - Native Americans
 - Junior and High Schools – form teams to go into schools regarding interest in growing Montana's workforce
 - Workers let go from retiring coal fired power plants in other states
- Customized training with schools
- Recognize varied company needs: some companies are training for a specific temporary job while others are training for a career.
- Scholarships
- Creative Scheduling, e.g. Sanjel schedules workers at 15 days on / 6 off to facilitate workers whose homes are remote from their workplace.
- Some companies have successfully recruited from out of state while others have found a better investment recruiting and training local /Montana workers.
- Getting the Word Out (marketing):
 - Is there a message that we can get to vocational / technical schools asking them for information on what they are doing so that it can help Group A's efforts.
 - Websites were discussed as a tool available for job / career marketing efforts – a couple were discussed from which Group A may draw some ideas including the Montana Contractors Association job website – [Let's Build Montana](#) - while Department of Labor has a [Montana Career Information System](#) that assists with directing individuals through a specific career pathway plan, free of charge.

There were four Subject Statements considered in this call; Group A identified items #1 & #3 (bolded) as the top priorities for this KIN to pursue. Group A also identified internship programs along with apprenticeship programs as important to support and identified supporting those programs as priority long term workforce development actions for Montana:

- 1. Identify actions that can be taken to increase and enhance the availability of an energy workforce for Montana.**
 - i. Near Term (6-9 months)**
 - ii. Long Term**
 - a) Support apprenticeship and internship programs**
2. Identify actions that can be taken to coordinate and align the needs of employers with curriculum and programs in our pre-school/K-20 system (including community and tribal colleges).
- 3. Identify actions that can be taken to expose students in our middle and high schools to career opportunities in the energy and utilities industry.**
4. Support apprenticeship and similar programs.

Conclusion – Frank Morehouse agreed to summarize the results of this call at the next full KIN meeting. Rich Budde agreed to be 2nd in command, the meeting then adjourned.