**Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Advisory Board**

***Meeting Minutes***

**Department of Economic and Community Development**

June 1, 2021

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

***via Teams Meeting***

**Attendance**

* Board Members Present: Colin Cooper, Mike Rocheleau, Kelli Vallieres, Don Balducci, Chris DiPentima, Shane Eddy, John Zoldy, Beverlee Dacey
* Board Members Absent: Emir Redzic
* Quorum: Yes
* Stakeholders: Todd Berch (DOL), Bernice Zampano (DOL), Eleanor Lennon (DOL), Patrick Flaherty (DOL), Ron Angelo (CCAT), Paul Striebel (CCAT), John Glidden (CCAT), Mary Bidwell (CSCU), Mike Stimson (CONNSTEP), Richard DuPont (Housatonic Community College)
* DECD Staff: Carmen Molina-Rios, Michelle Hall, Beth Trenchard

**Welcome & Introductions**

Colin Cooper opened the meeting at 10:33 AM.

**Minutes (Vote)**

Chris DiPentima moved to have the April 6, 2021 meeting minutes approved. Mike Rocheleau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Portfolio Update**

Colin Cooper noted there were no new expenditures. Colin provided a funding status for the major programs. There remains a current balance of unallocated administrative funding of approximately $2.3M.

**CT Labor Market Overview**

Colin Cooper introduced Patrick Flaherty – the Director of Research and Information at the CT Department of Labor. Mr. Flaherty provided an overview of the current labor market. Highlights included:

* Currently over 8 million job openings in the country.
* Currently in unique situation nationally with both the unemployment rate and job openings high at the same time.
* Gotten back over half of the jobs lost in CT during the pandemic.
* Manufacturing is the 4th largest sector in CT.
* Employment numbers for manufacturing reflect a predominantly older (ages 55-64), male dominated workforce.
* Demographic employment data highlights the opportunity to recruit a younger, female workforce into manufacturing careers.
* Currently 5,439 job postings in CT for manufacturing positions, higher than pre-pandemic levels.
* Opportunity to fill gaps in manufacturing through job fairs and technical assistance for older workers applying for new positions.

Discussion ensued among Board members.

**Governor’s Workforce Council Workforce Strategic Plan:**

**Update on Regional Sector Partnerships**

Kelli Vallieres provided an update on the implementation of the Regional Sector Partnerships with Business Leadership being a core strategic priority within the Workforce Strategic Plan. The goal is to build a dynamic workforce through a system of regional sector partnerships that integrate businesses’ needs with supporting parties. There are Regional Sector Partnerships in each region of CT – with one to two partnerships currently being launched in each. The specific industry selections are a work in progress, but currently planned:

The North Central region will focus on Technology, with its second industry to be determined.

The Eastern region will focus on Manufacturing first, Healthcare second. The South Central region will focus on Manufacturing and then Bioscience. The Southwestern region will focus on Manufacturing, with Data-dependent, tech-enabled as its second industry. The Northwest region will focus on Manufacturing, with its second industry in Healthcare launching later in 2021.

Each partnership is chaired by two organizations: typically, the workforce development board in the region, along with a chamber of commerce, business sector association or educational partner. If companies are interested in becoming involved with a Regional Sector Partnership, the points of contact are the presidents of the regional workforce boards.

In July, half-day working sessions will be held with the partners for businesses to engage at a high level. Kelli noted that they are in the process of determining what the 90-day “wins” will be to share the accomplishments at the workshops. They will also address what needs to be added to make the partnerships even more robust. She is hoping to bring all of the partners together annually to share what is happening in each region.

**College Connections (Vote)**

Mary Bidwell discussed the status of the current College Connections program. The program provides manufacturing training for Juniors and Seniors in comprehensive high schools throughout the state. Upon completion, students can earn up to 17 college credits and are half way to earning a manufacturing Certificate at one of the community college advanced manufacturing centers. The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) provides funding for a portion of the cost for tuition, books and transportation for these students to participate in the program. In the 20/21 school year, only Housatonic and Asnuntuck had programming – Naugatuck Valley was unable to offer the program due to the pandemic. All three colleges plan to offer the program in the 21/22 school year. Approximately $350,000 of the original MIF funding allocation has been expended to date. Ms. Bidwell requested Board approval to continue the program utilizing the unexpended funding. Mary Bidwell also requested the opportunity to offer the program at other community colleges and high schools throughout the state.

A discussion ensued among Board members. As a result of the discussion, the following was voted upon:

*Approval to continue the College Connections program through June 30, 2022 utilizing the unexpended MIF funding and expand the Program at additional community colleges and high schools.*

Mike Rocheleau motioned and Don Balducci seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Program Update: Apprenticeship Program**

Todd Berch provided an update on the Apprenticeship Program. Activities to date include: 275 applications have been received – with 232 approvals. A total of 803 new, registered apprentices – which includes 199 new, registered pre-apprentices. $9.5 million has been obligated to the program and an additional $830,000 has been used for program administration. Mr. Berch noted that a small portion of the funding has been used for credentialing – the majority has been used for wage subsidies.

**Other Business**

Colin Cooper discussed that the next steps related to the MIF website will be to canvas what has been done and determine how to build upon that effort. The website will be discussed further at the August Board meeting.

Mr. Cooper noted that the Governor’s budget is due on June 9th. Pending legislative approval, it is DECD’s goal to have the MIF funding be included on the agenda for authorization at the next meeting of the State Bond Commission.

**Meeting Adjournment**

Colin Cooper requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris DiPentima moved the motion and Don Balducci seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Cooper closed the meeting at 12:00 PM