

Networks Northwest
CEO's Report, February-March 2017

Items that are not on the board agenda but are worth noting.

UpNorth Trails

Our UpNorthTrails.org web site received the Governor's Award for Innovative Tourism Collaboration. Fifty-three organizations were involved across 21 counties of Northern Michigan with the goal of promoting all trail systems together. The coalition was led by Networks Northwest and the Northeast MI Council of Governments. The site is unique and comprehensive, covering 5,358 miles of trails for all kinds of uses. In addition to supporting the tourism industry, the site supports the broader goals of economic development across the region.

UI Reform Update

In follow up to my last board report, the Governor's Talent Investment Board (GTIB) unanimously passed a resolution requesting that the state's Talent Investment Agency (TIA) pursue the steps necessary to implement the proposal made by the Michigan Works! Directors in 2014. This would create a requirement that individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance make use of the Michigan Works! services to speed up their return to work. There's a lot of work needed to make it happen, but at least we now have a directive!

Newton's Road

Our first Newton's Road program manager, Jeanna Michalek is on board and going strong. In late March, students from Northwest Lower Michigan showcased their creativity and 3-D printing skills at the Newton's Road Gutter Car Derby in Traverse City. The students raced their 3-D printed cars down plastic gutters to see which ones would go the fastest and furthest. They also competed for best design. Watch the video of the event via this link to see how excited the kids were and the depth of their exposure to STEM careers.

<http://www.networksnorthwest.org/main-site/news/news-article.html/645/>

Newton's Road was selected for a presentation on talent pipeline development for the Governor's Education and Economic Summit to be held in April in Grand Rapids.

Communications Approach

As some of you may know, we have used Flight Path Creative for much of our website and other major communications projects for the past several years. Recently Matt and I made the decision to put the company on a contract to do more of our weekly communications activities, including social media, graphic design and other routine duties. Our goal is to have a more unified approach to all our agency communications, to simplify design and achieve more consistency, and to reduce overall costs. We eliminated one internal position in this change process, but have retained our internal roles of media contacts, news releases, video stories and other elements. We are using an easy project management tool with Flight Path Creative to transmit work back and forth, and it's going very well.

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG)

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) students in the Char-Em ISD's Welding Program at East Jordan had the opportunity go on Talent Tours at Moran Iron Works and the Industrial Arts Institute in Onaway. Along with touring both facilities, the 14 students were able to bring their welding gear

and participate in demonstrations with the staff at the Industrial Arts Institute. The Industrial Arts Institute offers premier comprehensive trade programs that prepare students for skilled trades careers. Another example of the JMG activity we're doing in collaboration with our region's three Career Tech programs was the Work Ethic Panel attended by students at the Wexford-Missaukee Career Tech Center in Cadillac. The students asked the employers questions about a variety of work related topics including attendance, dress code, and cell phone usage.

Veterans' Job Fair

We held our third annual Jobs for Vets hiring event March 21 in Traverse City. More than 60 local employers with immediate job openings participated. Northwest Michigan Works organized the event which also included 11 veterans' service providers.

Conferences

Matt represented all of us during March at the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) annual conference and also at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) annual conference in Washington. They were held back-to-back and offered him an opportunity to visit federal elected officials.

USDOL is holding "WIOA Convening" conferences in three locations across the country and Michigan has been asked to make several presentations. I will be presenting in two sessions during April having to do with business as the primary customer of workforce development.

The annual Michigan Works! Conference will be held in early October in Mt. Pleasant. This year there will be even more emphasis on a "track" relevant to board members. Please let Denise or me know if you are interested in attending.

Federal and State Budgets

Uncertainty in federal and state funding levels is nothing new to us. With every change in administration on either level, and with every up and down in the economy, we expect change and we adapt. Right now we have virtually no information about how the proposed cuts in the federal budget will affect us, except that we are hearing that our major WIOA programs will not be affected nearly as much as some of the ancillary programs funded by USDOL. On the state level we do see a proposed cut in our PATH program in the governor's budget. But like usual, we also see opportunities and I'll keep you posted as they emerge. I will be communicating with all our staff via a video blog on our Intranet to allay any fears about major budget reductions and keep them up to date with anything we learn along the way.