

Networks Northwest
CEO's Report, June-July 2017
(Items that are not on the board agenda but are worth noting)

June 30 Lay-offs

Because of the decreases in funding that I described in my June staff report, we did lay off nine employees as of June 30, 2017. Seven of those were in our Michigan Works department and two were from Community Development. These layoffs were extremely difficult to do, as all nine were valued employees and filled roles that were important to our programming. Unfortunately, we don't know yet if that is the "end" as our FY18 revenue figures are still evolving. For example, we still do not have our PATH Program allocation for Oct. 1. However, we are staying creative and looking ahead to new types of programming that are in keeping with current and new demand/needs, which may bring new budget opportunities.

Newton's Road

Newton's Road is going strong! We now have two staff members coordinating a great deal of activity designed to promote STEM careers to youth and their parents. In addition to our 3D Printer program in 40 schools, our Gutter Derby competition, and various other activities that have been underway for a while now, we have several new initiatives that are really exciting.

Newton's Road has been selected to host 2 classes for the Interlochen Home School Group. We are offering one class in programming and one class in 3D printing. Both of these classes are full at the 20 student maximum. This is a great place for us to pilot our approaches and continue hands on experience working with students. We will also use projects from these classes to fit into the competitions that we offer throughout the year.

Watch this fall for four events starting in October called Teen Science Café. Scientists from all over the country will be here to meet with youth in an informal setting to talk about their careers in science and to encourage the kids to pursue science classes.

Another new STEM promotional event is being prepared for December, called Invention Convention. This has been described as a "science fair on steroids." Besides the research and demonstration normally seen in a science fair, this also entails the creation of an invention. Students can progress from our regional event to the state and national competitions.

Defense Growth Program

We have received an enhancement to our Business Development mix with the addition of a three-year grant to support business growth in the defense sector. This initiative will involve our PTAC and SBDC programs, as well as our Michigan Works Business Services, to help identify and provide technical assistance to companies that have the capacity and capabilities to grow through increased defense sector work. Thanks to Anne Helbig, Business Development Coordinator, for her success in obtaining this grant.

Upcoming Business Trainings

1. A Cyber Security workshop will be held on September 21. This is presented by our Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) and our Small Business Development Center (SBDC), in partnership with the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (MMTC).
2. On October 12, we're hosting the TARDEC for its first-ever visit to Northern Michigan.

TARDEC is the U.S. Army's Research, Development and Engineering Center for all Ground Vehicle and Ground Vehicle Systems technology and integration. TARDEC also serves as the Department of Defense's agent for all ground fuels and lubricants specifications; water supply and wastewater treatment; tactical military bridging; construction equipment; and material handling equipment. This represents a lot of opportunity for our region's businesses, and we plan to have at least 200 companies targeted for this event. Our PTAC program and our Michigan Works Business Services Team will be identifying manufacturers that have Research & Development or Prototyping capabilities.

Look for more information on both of these offerings on our web site at networksnorthwest.org.

Social Media Plan

We have had a Hope College student on site this summer as a communications intern. One of his major projects has been the development of a complete Social Media Plan to enhance our marketing and communications. He will soon lead our entire staff on training for implementation of the plan. We've been very impressed by this young man, who happens to be the son of board member Bill Kennis. (Good job, Bill!)

Workplace Wellness

We're in the process of completing this year's round of mini-grants to eight companies to develop Workplace Wellness programs. You'll receive a report after the work is complete. One of last year's companies – Tent Craft of Traverse City - recently won a statewide award given by the Department of Health and Human Services for the Workplace Wellness program they put into place last year through our grant and assistance.

Apprenticeships

Traditional and non-traditional apprenticeships are the latest trend in workforce training approaches. We're excited about that because, in our experience, any training that combines classroom work with on-the-job training is the most effective approach. Terry Vandercook recently reorganized our Michigan Works staffing to put our Apprenticeship Coordinator into our Business Services Team, in order to get more companies interested and to enhance our demand-driven approach. I'm happy to say that our Apprenticeship Coordinator currently has 41 companies actively engaged in developing potential apprenticeship opportunities.

Adult Education News

We received our competitive federal grant for Adult Education with a 20% increase over last year. This is the funding we combine with the state aid per pupil funding in order to run a comprehensive regional program.

We continue to look for ways to increase access for adult learners in our most remote communities. A good recent example of success is the creation of a Learning Lab access point at the Ellsworth Moms & Tots Center, where students will also receive child care while they are participating in adult ed.

Our Adult Ed Coordinator, Christy Nelson, has succeeded in arranging half price public transit tickets for students going to one of our Learning Labs via BATA, Benzie Bus or CATA.

Jobs for Michigan Graduates

Our Jobs for Michigan Graduates (JMG) Program has won the “5 of 5 Award” for the second year in a row. That means we performed above the benchmark for all five of the program’s performance measures. I didn’t realize this was a big deal until I learned that only about 35% of the JMG programs achieve this goal.

Housing Summit

We will hold our third annual Regional Housing Summit on October 16 at the Hagerty Center in Traverse City. This time the focus will be on demographics and how the changing population mix affects housing needs in communities. Please watch your email, our website, or newsletters for information about how to register.

Education/Tech Ed/Employment Pilot

Thanks to board member Jeff Jennette, Superintendent of the Wexford-Missaukee and Manistee ISDs, and Terry Vandercook, our Director of Talent Development, we should soon have a state-funded pilot program to move adults from Wexford and Manistee Counties through a process of Adult Education, Career Tech Education, and into employment with a program that is modeled after a similar pilot in Muskegon. Stay tuned for more information to come!

Save the Date!

Please put a SAVE on your calendar for Tuesday **December 5, 2017**. We are planning the **Business & Talent Summit: The Impacts of Technology on all Sectors**, which will focus on the ramifications of advancing technology on small businesses, as well as on education and training needs for the future workforce. We’ll have a big name keynote speaker and some impressive panelists. More details to come.