

**NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL
CEDS Committee Meeting
In Person and Virtual Meeting
August 22, 2024
APPROVED MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

Angela Cleveland called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

2. Attendance (V = Virtual)

Members Present:

Tracy Hutchens, Michelle Beaudin, Mike Morin, Miguel Moralez, Nate Reichert, Benoit Lamontagne, Jason Achmoody, Anne Duncan Cooley, Tim Josephson, Allan Reetz, Mary Lougee, Jen Nakhla, Steve Fortier (V), Sarah Weiling(V), Jessica Cyr (V), Erin Talcott (V), Chuck Henderson (V).

Staff Present:

Glenn Coppelman, Angela Cleveland, and Taylor Roy

3. Presentation (Cultivating and Embracing Equity, Diversity and inclusion in the Workplace Jenn Nakhla and Mary Lougee)

Allan Reetz began the presentation with facts about their Hanover Co-Op. There are 4 stores, 2 auto service centers, production kitchen, and an off-site administration office. Second largest trade Co-Op in the US.

Mary Lougee started with the first step in the recruiting process, making sure that everyone who wants the job is able to apply. This means having multiple forms of application both online and hard copy. Are these visually impaired options? This also means making sure you have ADA compliant access to your building and computers on site to complete the application. By using multiple modes of advertising like podcasts, radio, newspapers, online, flyers, etc... it will reach a larger audience.

Once the application is received. The person(s) reviewing the application should be unbiased and hiring managers should have proper training to avoid this. It is important that the applicant is chosen based on their skills and nothing else. You need to think about how you will contact the applicant if they don't have a phone or email, and how many rounds of interviews you think they're willing or able to attend. If the applicant is chosen, how will you work with their needs for an interview? Will it be online or in person and where will the interview be? What time is the interview?

What if they work a 9-5 and can't make it during "standard" hours? These are all important things to consider.

Before you hire someone be sure to review company policies and assess your workplace. Be aware of barriers and policies that may prohibit someone from being hired. For example, a policy that prohibits anyone from being hired if they have a felony on their record can exclude a large group of people. Making the workplace a right fit for applicants is also crucial. This might include hallways and entrances being ADA compliant or tailoring workplace settings for neurodivergent learners. This also means thinking about different generations and what they might want some may prioritize childcare while others might prioritize health insurance or retirement. How will they benefit from changing your policies, and what might they want? Are there benefits that aren't used often that could be changed or replaced?

You want to offer training programs to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion at the workplace. Managers and partners should also be completing trainings, this is a great way to lead by example and become immersed in aspects of the job you may not always think about. You should have repeat trainings on topics like unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive communication. We want to be able to recognize that everyone is different along with their needs. It is important to learn how to communicate with a multitude of people from different backgrounds.

Jenn Nakhla stepped in and discussed training details further. She recommended developing a Why. Why is this training needed and how do they align with our goals? DEI training never really ends and it's an ongoing discussion. With different backgrounds comes different ideas which can contribute to workplace resiliency and flow. Many of these training courses have an in-person and online option. They are also scheduled at different times so multiple groups of employees can attend and receive the same training no matter what department they work in.

Set expectations and objectives for the training sessions. Managers should be completing training as well to set the tone. This also makes feedback and accountability clear when goals aren't met. You want to enhance innovation and competitiveness by having the most knowledgeable, experienced, and driven employees across all generations. This includes mentorship programs, training sessions, and cross-generational teams.

Start with what you're already doing. How can you fold in concepts and goals that you have? How about manager training and incorporating different forms of communication? There are organizations that can help with training and implementing training programs.

Training solutions include effective communication. This means adapting to different communication styles, cross-cultural communication, and giving and receiving feedback. Emotional intelligence which is understanding your own actions and behaviors and the impact they have on others. Unconscious bias helps avoid

misconceptions that can lead to subtle acts of exclusion. Graceful recovery, knowing when to say you messed up. Just own your mistakes! And lastly mentorship when looking up to managers they should be completing the same training and be up to date on DEI.

There are many different types of training from in-person, online, informal, and many more. It may depend on what type of training you're doing, who will be attending, and what the objectives of the trainings are. How often they will be done in the year and what time they will occur are all important factors to consider when trying to reach the largest audience at your workplace.

If you want to implement this in a small workplace but might not have the capacity you can reach out to the Co-op or other partner organization that would be willing to assist you. As a Co-op they would be happy to come to any company. They are here for others and that includes DEI training sessions and micro-sessions.

4. Approval of Minutes

June 21, 2024 Minutes: Motion to approve by Tim Josephson. Second by Tracy Hutchens. Approved unanimously.

5. CEDS Amendment- Comments and Vote

The updated CEDS Amendment (Industry) was sent out prior to the meeting for review. Angela mentioned there were a few comments made during the 30-day comment period and changes were made accordingly. Angela asked if there were any questions or concerns with the new addition. There were none.

Tim Josephson motioned to adopt the Amendment as follows for incorporation into the CEDS report. Second by Michelle Beaudin.
Unanimously approved.

Tim Josephson motioned to forward the Amendment as follows to the North Country Council Board of Directors for a vote. Second by Benoit Lamontagne.
Unanimously approved.

6. Participant Share Out

The meeting ended with participant "introductions" and share out.

Tracy Hutchens (Upper Valley Business Alliance) other than trying to hire someone were working with the Upper Valley Art Alliance which started in 2004 and recently we learned they're going out of business. We are assisting them with an art collab with about 20 organizations in the fall. Major art organizations on both sides of the river are participating and there will be reduced program prices in September and October. On another note, last year we participated in a National Arts for Economic Prosperity Study and found that the Upper Valley is seeing \$18 million in

over 300 jobs. This is a significant part of our economy. Through co-operative extension were a test case for a tourism study and it's about performing strategic plans for rural tourism. We're putting out a survey soon and it also will include Sullivan and Grafton County. When the study is completed, they should have a GIS map with key location points like restaurants, trails, hotels, and everything around tourism.

Michelle Beaudin (GRDC) is focused on their Microenterprise Program and is looking to connect with 40 small businesses in the area with five or fewer employees to provide them with direct grants for equipment and expert consultants. Secondly our Family Childcare Pilot Program is reaching out to family providers and offering them resources. Two providers so far have been awarded, one needed to re-paint and another was awarded funds for a new play area fence. We will also be providing them with computers because many state websites are not accessible from a mobile device.

Mike Morin (Northern Forest Center) is the new NH/VT Program Director and is based in Bartlett, NH. It is my job to help serve a broader region and connect others to help serve communities as a whole.

Miguel Moralez (US Small Business Administration) has an event happening on September 12th which is called the Lunch and Loan in Lancaster. We're hoping to expand this into other regions in the North Country. Some of our loan programs are constipated so you should get applications before the third probation.

Nate Reichert (City of Lebanon) said they will have 700 units of new housing on the September 9th agenda and 475 will be for a major brickyard project behind the high school. On 60 Spencer Street they're creating 60 units of affordable housing. We also have 140 that are a part of the Woolen Mill Project that are seeking amendments to their permits. There are three lots in West Lebanon and we're trying to configure them into a new businesses model. They're trying to create a traditional first floor business with 444 floors of apartments above, and they're looking for partners willing to take on a large project like this. They have two studies for major zoning changes happening in town as well. We have lots of workers but no place to live in our region.

Benoit Lamontagne (NH BEA) We're helping the new ownership of Bond Optics find resources that the state offers. PSI Plastics is expanding and we're assisting them with the funding from EDA and Northern Borders. In Coos County we're working on the Balsam's project to get that up and running from security to financing. Lastly the New Hampshire/ Canada Trade Council will have their annual meeting at the Mountain Washington Resort on November 18th and 19th.

Jason Achmoody (Woodsville Guarantee Savings Bank) looking to advocate for those who need help from WGSB. We want to bring money back to our

communities and work with local businesses for assistance. Deposits are very significant for our economy.

Anne Duncan Cooley (GRDC) has a new loan officer that has been trained over the summer and can help with startups. She is looking for ways to connect all these groups together and start a revolving construction loan that can go back to local banks. There is also a lot of interest in ADUs and creating more housing in the region.

Tim Josephson (UVLSRPC) shared that UVLSRPC is working as an LDD for Northern Border Catalyst Program to help get programs in the area on track. Many towns are looking for master plan assistance. One of the struggles is getting people in town to think regionally. The state of NH is so small that we need to think about more towns than just our community.

Alan Reetz (Hanover Food Co-op) shared that his work is focused on affordable workforce housing, equitable transportation, and agriculture. Currently he is focused on reducing his hours and having his team tackle more of his responsibilities.

Glenn Coppelman (North Country Council, Carroll County Broadband, CEDC)
CEDC Hat: Their executive director is stepping down and they're looking for a new one.

Angela Cleveland (North Country Council) North Country Council is updating the Regional Plan and would love if you or anyone you know will take the survey. We're working on housing and we received two different funding pots: one from Congresswoman Kuster and one from the HUD Grant that all of the RPCs received to update their Regional Plan. We're looking at ADUs and focusing on how we can incorporate them into our region. We want to potentially build a toolkit on how homeowners would do this themselves. FEMA money is also potentially available for those who have experienced a federal disaster like the rainstorms we just experienced. In Keene there is a Racially Rural summit in September and if you have a chance you should attend.

7. Adjourn

Angela Cleveland declared the meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.