

MEDA WORKING GROUP
Advancing REMOTE WORK in Montana

Tuesday, April 7, 2020 - 9AM

Zoom Meeting

Participants: Anne Boothe, Chair; Sara Hudson, Christie Williams, Brian Obert, Aaron Pratt, Lance Robbins, Annmarie Robinson, Tina Oliphant, Kev Campbell, Barbara Stiffarm, Julie Emmons, Jasmine Carbajal, Shanny Spang Gion, Elisa Fiaschetti, Tara Mastel, Tori Matejovsky, Kerry Racine, Erin Weisgerber, Liz Ching, Sara Calhoun, Paul Tuss, Geoff Feiss, Brianna Vine, Erin Lutts, Martina Pansze, and Gloria O'Rourke.

Welcome

Anne Boothe, Working Group Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Updates

- o [Remote Workforce Toolkit](#), Montana Department of Labor & Industry. Anne expressed thanks to Kathleen O'Leary, Deputy Commissioner and her team for getting this done. Erin Weisgerber commented that the toolkit defines remote work, provides resources to begin remote work, templates for employers, etc. MEDA and others can link to toolkit and share as appropriate.
- o Recap of regional "starting point" meeting held in Havre October 2019 – Paul Tuss, Bear Paw Development (see revised Remote Work in Montana white paper attached.) Paul shared that any considerations for remote work and what we thought was important six months ago seems trite compared to what we are living and experiencing. Paul said what is important is what happens moving forward. The fall meeting discussed policy considerations, employer relationships, communications with other remote workers, etc.

In moving forward, Paul thinks legislation could be compiled that would make remote work easier and accommodating.

New Opportunities

- o Please review this article shared by Russ with MATR – ["the cat is out of the bag" - a silver thread in this pandemic.](#)
 - Martina is working on an article regarding remote work such as the pro's and con's and what needs to be done to ensure everyone can work remotely.
 - Aaron Pratt said hiccups are in the delivery of telemedicine. Legislation at the state and federal level needs to be modified to deliver health care over the internet. Some physicians cannot bill if conducted via internet.
 - Erin Lutts noted this new reality is causing a focus on fiber.

Immediate Opportunities – current Montana efforts that do or should include remote work

- o Anne and Erin Lutts (Geoff Feiss will be asked) will work on exploring policy issues for remote work/broadband access. Other states have broadband offices or a statewide policy in place.
- o What about an ad campaign to encourage remote work in Montana? Elisa said this new situation is going to cause people to realize they can work from anywhere. It would make sense to adjust Montana marketing to spotlight this option. This working group will work on a piece and share it with GOED. Committee: Tina Oliphant and Anne Boothe.

- o Cross marketing; Anne is working with the state libraries to include them in economic development resource sharing.
- o Barbara Stiffarm hopes Montana will use all that has been learned in the past few weeks. What are we doing to promote remote work with our employers in this current situation? How are we offering remote work opportunities? Bring it back around to how can we use this to build our communities.
- o Tori said she is all for remote work but there is terrible internet service in Wolf Point.
- o Erin Lutts said there are also the situations where communities are sitting on high fiber and don't know they have it.
- o Julie has worked remotely for years. She uses satellite internet; remote work is very different in Eastern Montana. She has a son-in-law who recently moved from Seattle and remote works successfully.
- o Shanny noted there are inequities of remote work. Acknowledge it may not be a good fit for all industries; outline how it works best.
- o Create common talking points regarding remote work. Use the white paper and simplify it for press releases.
- o Annmarie: BSTF has funded fiberoptic studies. Marketing could be entertained with a planning grant.

Other – NexGen project, more.

- o Gloria provided an update on the Montana Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools project. Montana's key economic development tools have not been updated in over 20 years. This project is all about learning what is working, what needs to change, and what new tools are needed. Listening sessions have been held all across the state; a survey was also conducted. The draft rollout of the study should be available by the end of May.

Action Items – what/who

- Marketing Flyer to encourage moving to Montana for remote work – Anne, Tina, MDLI
- Contemplate legislation to make Remote Work easier in Montana, i.e., physicians not able to charge for telemedicine at times.
- Create talking points for promotion of Remote Work.

Next meeting: in three months (July)

- Update on action items and NextGen of Economic Development Tools