



Governor's Council on Economic Expansion: Meeting #6

Date: 10/18/2021
Minutes prepared by: Jenny Poole, Department of Human Services
Location: Virtual

Attendance

- Jeffrey Ettinger, Co-Chair, Hormel (formerly)
- Paul Williams, Co-Chair, Project for Pride in Living
- Scott Burns, Structural
- Brett C. Carter, Xcel Energy
- Joe Fowler, Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council
- Jodi Hubler, Medical Alley Association
- Brenda Hilbrich, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota
- Neel Kashkari, | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
- Marcus Owens, African American leadership Forum; Linking Leaders
- Tuleah Palmer, Blandin Foundation
- Joo Hee Pomplun, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
- Nonoko Sato, Minnesota Council on Nonprofits
- Traci Tapani, Wyoming Machine
- Bharti Wahí, Children's Defense Fund
- Penny Wheeler, Allina Health
- Steve Grove, Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Jodi Harpstead, Department of Human Services
- Roslyn Robertson, Department of Labor and Industry

Agenda

2:00 PM	Meeting convenes
2:00 PM – 2:10 PM	Welcome and update on guiding principles
2:10 PM – 3:00 PM	Panel: Economic insight and viewpoints from groups and communities identified by the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Melanie Benjamin, Chief Executive, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe• Brenda Hilbrich, Executive Vice President, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota• Marcus Pope, Incoming President, Youthprise

3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Introduction to mapping of priorities and themes
3:15 PM – 3:50 PM	Small group discussions
3:50 PM – 4:00 PM	Closing and call for further input
4:00 PM	Meeting adjourns

Next Meeting

Date: 10/25/2021

Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Meeting Notes

Meeting convenes

- Commissioner Roslyn Robertson started the meeting with the announcement that this meeting is fully virtual because an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent due to the health pandemic, pursuant with [Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.021](#).

Welcome and update on guiding principles

- Co-Chair Paul Williams explained that during this meeting and the next few meetings, Council members will work to clearly define the themes and priorities for their recommendations to Governor Walz. Staff have pulled together a mapping document that captures the insights, themes, priorities, and solutions that have been discussed by the Council up to this point. This will be used to build consensus and help the Council identify a few key priority areas.
- The packet of materials sent out prior to this meeting contained a document with the guiding principles as discussed during the previous Council meeting and refined by the Co-Chairs and Commissioners. These will be used to help the Council filter the collection of ideas put forth and guide the final decision-making process.
 - The idea is to have recommendations that are cross-cutting and address multiple needs. Quality of life is a spectrum, and addressing multiple needs may not explicitly be needs that cross multiple priority areas, but could be solutions that raise people through multiple parts of that spectrum.
 - The guiding principle regarding innovation was put forth as an invitation to think outside the box to address the issue that current programs do not necessarily have equity.
 - Education and housing were reiterated as concepts that impact multiple parts of one's life. Education needs to be a more sustainable model that starts building the pipeline of successful members of the workforce into the future.
 - Co-Chair Paul Williams liked the key concept of sustainability, and noted that, since this cannot be addressed as a short-term strategy, it may be better suited to the second half

of this Council, where they are charged to look at longer-term sustainable shifts that need to happen.

- The Council needs to be cognizant of these principles when thinking about ARPA funds, but also remember that these funds are not separate from the state budget. The ARPA funds cannot be used for some populations, so to make the biggest impact, the Council needs to think about recommendations for both immediate needs and long-term investments. The long-term sustainable changes will be a good focus for the second portion of this Council.

Panel: Economic insight and viewpoints from groups and communities identified by the Council

Reflecting on the pandemic

- Marcus Pope, Incoming President of Youthprise, explained that the pandemic has been both a challenge, but also a source of opportunities. While working with indigenous, low income, and minority youth in Minnesota, Youthprise saw a significant worsening of emotional and social health, and a rise in gun violence following the combined challenges of the COVID health pandemic and the civil unrest following George Floyd's death. This period also offered the opportunity to think holistically about what people need in order to maintain a healthy community, where they can thrive and deal with challenges.
- Melanie Benjamin, Chief Executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, shared that the last 18 months have had a devastating impact on the Mille Lacs Band's economy. With the loss of their major source of income, they also lost services and the ability to support members. The band had to find other ways to sustain itself and protect its members, as well as keep a close eye on their safety and health.
- Council Member Brenda Hilbrich, Executive Vice President of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, described the major barriers faced by health care and other frontline workers. Those professions are predominantly filled by women, people of color, and immigrants; and not represented by unions, causing wages to lag behind other sectors. Over the past 18 months, it has been really obvious that, across the board for health care and other frontline workers, they are underpaid and overworked.

Opportunities or strategies critical to economic recovery

- Brenda Hilbrich shared a video of frontline workers testifying about the ongoing challenges they are experiencing because of the pandemic. The shortage of people working in nursing positions and the health care industry is feeding workers' desire to leave. It is important to think about how to retain the current workforce, not just attract new workers. People need to be incentivized to continue to work in underpaid industries through increased wages, one-time retention bonuses, or training and upskilling.
- Melanie Benjamin explained that, though tribes do not historically have strong partnerships with state and federal governments, the current governor's administration has been particularly supportive of American Indians. Reservations are lacking basic community supports such as transportation, safety, and broadband, which limits their ability to improve. One-time funding is particularly good for addressing the most prominent needs in a community, so has to be strategically invested to build opportunities.

- Marcus Pope offered both tangible, specific strategies, and aspirational strategies. He thinks there needs to be an assessment of systemic barriers, and specific supports tailored to target those barriers. Providing opportunities through the education system such as an easy pathway to getting a driver's license or an integration of work and education through an "earn and learn" model, will be key to supporting youth to enter the workforce. There are already existing programs that are not being used optimally, and addressing long-term how to better utilize them, such as taking full advantage of the education tax credit, will be important. Marcus noted that young people see the need for societal transformation, and that they want to contribute to the solution. He charged the Council to find formal pathways to increase the civic engagement of young people in communities all across the state, and to use their fresh perspective to identify and improve slow-moving or ineffective processes.

Questions from Council

- When asked about youth employment participation and how it was impacted by the pandemic, Marcus Pope shared that approximately one-fourth of young people stopped working or going to school during that time. Young workers are concentrated in the industries that were hardest hit by the shutdowns, and were the first to get laid off. Though there are more youth being hired now than usual due to the tight labor market, employment rate needs to be looked at in conjunction with livable wages. There is a common misperception that young people are not supporting a family with their income. Early work experiences strongly impact an individual's future work experiences, so investments should be made in entry-level jobs to support people as they enter the workforce. Youth need to also be trained to advocate for themselves in the workplace.
- Marcus Pope was asked for specific policies and programs that would immediately benefit young people. His first suggestion was to provide foster youth who are aging out of the support system with modest resources to decrease their likelihood of entering homelessness. He also recommended thinking about transforming the outdated education system model, and including youth in that process. Some key improvements to education would be encouraging dual enrollment in both high school and post-secondary classes, and increasing the maximum age at which a person can secure a high school diploma using credit they already earned, as opposed to starting over with the GED process.
- Melanie Benjamin shared that American Indian elders are able to retain people who are providing care, but are not able to find new people when needed. She noted that there needs to be a solid plan about how to improve housing, education, and broadband access, as these are supports that cross multiple parts of life. Investing in youth to increase their workforce participation and provide them with education and on-the-job training opportunities will also be key.
- When asked for her final thoughts on economic expansion and specific opportunities for the ARP funds, Brenda Hilbrich said that there needs to be an investment in service-level health care jobs. Those jobs are overlooked and underpaid, and need to be infused with some sort of incentive for people to enter and stay in that sector. There is work that is historically undervalued because of the people who hold those jobs, and that inequity needs to be addressed before the system can improve.

Introduction to mapping of priorities and themes

- In the packet of materials sent out prior to this meeting, a draft document mapping recurring topics and themes was provided. This document has been fed by small group discussions, large group conversations, and the initial priorities shared by Council members.
- The goal of this document is to cleanly provide back to the Council the ideas and topics that they have shared and identified as essential during the first five meetings. It will be updated regularly with new input and information from the Council.

Small group discussions

Additional themes and thoughts

- There is a difference in need between new programming and existing, working programming that can be scaled-up.
- The Council would like to hear more from the Commissioners about the ideas identified last spring, and which initiatives were or were not funded. Tracking of all ARP spending would be good to see.
- A bucket of green energy, green jobs, or energy more broadly needs to be added.
- Understanding whether the economy is in stabilization mode or rebuilding mode will help identify more impactful solutions.
- Innovation should be used to make sure that areas that are already lagging are not forgotten and fall further behind.
- The Council is currently focusing on how to spend the ARP funds, but needs to also think about potential policy changes.

Overarching concepts

- Create access for disenfranchised communities regardless of which strategy is chosen.
- Sort solutions based on whether they lend themselves to having a meaningful impact through one-time dollars. Solutions that need ongoing attention and support will be better suited to the second half of the Council.
- Use rural as a component of each theme instead of a separate bucket.
- Community transformation needs to be part of the cultural discussion.
- Interventions should be considered under the umbrellas of short-term, long-term, and policy-specific.

Closing and call for further input

- The next step is to move from broad themes and principles to specific ideas. Council members were asked to provide any ideas via form submissions between this meeting and October 24, 2021.
- Voting and consensus building will take place after ideas have been integrated and shared.
- Co-Chair Paul Williams reminded the Council that this first phase is about shorter-term recommendations to the Governor, and that the second phase is when longer-term, systemic changes should be suggested.