

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
June 16, 2020, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Cindy Dozier, Molly Pitts, Tim Reader, Kelle Reynolds, Ellen Roberts, Nathan Van Schaik

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Nathan Van Schaik	Explore the idea of incorporating job listings into the RMRI website with the Communications Subcommittee.
Tim Reader	Reach out to the workforce centers to thank them for their help, request a factsheet on their services, and invite them to join the Subcommittee.
Molly Pitts	Reach out to Angela Boag to identify someone at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to participate in a workforce capacity workshop.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM WORKFORCE CENTER CALL

Meeting participants discussed their takeaways from the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee's call with workforce center representatives. Their comments are summarized below.

- The workforce centers on the call were from the San Luis Valley and Cortez.
- The Alamosa Workforce Center was able to hire an entire workforce for the Blanca Forestry Products mill, which is an impressive feat.
- The services that the workforce centers offer would be helpful for hiring employees in the wood industry, particularly in rural areas. Some of the specific services that workforce centers offer that would be helpful include organizing hiring events, collecting applications, and conducting testing.
- Some businesses have reported that they were not successful when they partnered with workforce centers. These reports seem to indicate that success varies when partnering with workforce centers. Having a successful partnership with the workforce centers requires knowing the right people and building relationships. Workforce centers may also be more successful when hiring for general labor needs; although, they may have the ability to hire a more technical workforce if relationships are developed.
- The discussion with the workforce centers was beneficial because it increased the workforce center's awareness of forestry jobs.
- Although the workforce centers can help with the logistical tasks associated with hiring people, they did not have many ways to implement new and innovative ideas to recruit people to the industry. RMRI should play a role in promoting new ideas and innovative techniques to recruit people to increase workforce capacity.
- Blanca Forestry Products is a unique business in Colorado's wood industry. The starting pay and benefits package that Blanca Forestry Products offers is higher and more comprehensive than what other businesses across the state can offer. Still, the process for hiring employees can be reproduced for other businesses across the state.
- Workforce centers in highly populated areas, like Denver, may be less interested in helping a wood products business hire employees if the business is only hiring a small number of people at a time.

WORKFORCE CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE STRATEGY DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee's strategy and approach to addressing workforce capacity challenges now that they have had a discussion with the workforce centers. Their comments are summarized below.

- There are several categories of challenges related to workforce capacity. One category is finding the seasonal workforce for contracting work and helping contractor businesses retain some staff year-round. Another category is related to making sure employees have the right training in high-tech equipment and increasing the number of people with the right skillset to operate forestry machinery. The third category is how to use innovative techniques to recruit and attract younger people to the industry.
- If the workforce centers cannot identify someone in their database with the appropriate skillset for a job (e.g., truck driver), they do not have the tools to go out and actively recruit someone with that skillset. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee should explore opportunities to educate/recruit someone with the right skillset if the existing workforce does not already exist.
- In addition to partnering with the workforce centers, it may be helpful to identify a community college that could potentially incorporate a curriculum into their programs. There are innovative programs that exist across the state, such as the Colorado Springs center that trains K-12 students in secondary wood manufacturing. There are also heavy equipment trainers in the state. There may be an opportunity to host a webinar with community colleges and some of these other training programs to talk about strategies for building a workforce with the right skillsets.
- Reaching out to young people through 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) programs may be one way to introduce young people to the wood industry. People with an agricultural or ranching background know how to operate heavy machinery, which may serve as a good foundation for learning how to operate high-tech forestry equipment.
- One challenge with recruiting young people to the industry is that forestry students out of undergraduate programs have many options for careers, some of which are not in forestry at all. Some of these undergraduates may be interested in staying in the forestry field if there are opportunities for them to do so.
- The RMRI website could serve as a place to list jobs from RMRI partners. There could be a link on the website that goes to the workforce center database with more details on the posted job. The website could also have additional information on job training programs. The website would have to be set up so that it is sustainable to manage into the future. Nathan Van Schaik can explore the idea of incorporating job listings into the RMRI website with the Communications Subcommittee.
- Northern Arizona University (NAU) is developing an operations training center. They received a grant for this work, so they are well-funded. In the short term, the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could help people with hiring needs at a smaller level while they learn from NAU's process, success, and challenges.
- There is a small number of operations training centers in the United States. Having an operations training center out of NAU would be beneficial in Colorado. There may not need to be an additional center in Colorado because Coloradoans could feasibly attend a training program in Arizona for 12 weeks. Instead of having a Colorado training program, it may be easier to generate funding to send people to attend the training program in Arizona.
- NAU is conducting a survey of contractor businesses. The geographic reach of the survey in Colorado will only include Southwest Colorado for now. With additional funding, NAU could

expand its survey across the state. There may be an opportunity for NAU to partner with the Office of Just Transition to expand its geographic reach.

- Instead of focusing on statewide initiatives, the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could work at a local landscape level to identify solutions that could then be replicated in other areas. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could focus their efforts on the Four Corners region first and then use the processes and lessons learned as a model moving forward.
- RMRI will not be in Colorado forever. There is a need to develop strategies that will create a workforce that is resilient to changes in administration and legislatures. Considering that workforce centers are a part of Colorado's State government, working with the relevant state agencies to develop a cohesive statewide plan and strategy will help develop a resilient wood industry workforce. Some of the relevant state agencies include CDLE, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Colorado State Forest Service, Department of Local Affairs, and Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- There is a need for both near- and long-term strategies to address workforce capacity challenges.

WORKFORCE CAPACITY WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed hosting a workforce capacity workshop. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Alamosa Workforce Center could help teach other workforce centers about the nuances in hiring for forestry jobs in a statewide workshop. Because workforce centers are a program within CDLE, there may be an opportunity to have a workshop among workforce centers at the state agency level to distribute the lessons learned from Alamosa across the state. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could identify which workforce centers should participate in the workshop by determining whether they are in an RMRI priority landscape.
- Any solutions identified at a statewide workforce capacity workshop could provide benefits to the three focal area landscapes (Southwest Colorado, Upper South Platte, and Upper Arkansas). Connecting RMRI focal area landscape partners with their local workforce centers may not be as effective as implementing solutions from the statewide perspective.
- The next steps for a workshop are to identify people from the CDLE, Department of Higher Education, and DNR to participate in the workshop and begin to develop a strategy. Molly Pitts will be talking with a representative from the Office of Just Transition and can gain information on their interest in a workshop during their conversation. She can also reach out to Angela Boag to identify someone at CDLE to participate in the workshop.
- The workshop would likely be virtual, considering that state agency staff have strict mandates on participating in in-person meetings.

ACTION ITEM UPDATE

Meeting participants shared updates on their action items from their meeting on May 21. Their comments are summarized below.

- Molly Pitts received a list of RMRI partners who are engaged in training programs from Jamie Nogle. Some of the partners on the list, like conservation corps, can help fill some positions, but not all.
- Kelle Reynolds sent a bidders list from each of the National Forests in Colorado to Molly Pitts. Molly Pitts and Tim Reader are working on developing an industry survey, and the bidders list will help guide the distribution of that survey.
- Mike Preston has transitioned off of the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee but had action items to reach out to Kate Greenberg of the Colorado Department of Agriculture and

Colorado Mountain College. Ellen Roberts will be joining as many Subcommittee meetings as she can to represent Southwest Colorado but will not be able to follow up on Mike Preston's action items.

RMRI UPDATE SLIDES DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed what they wanted to include in their updates slides for the full RMRI meeting on June 23. Their comments are summarized below.

- Samuel Wallace and Heather Bergman have been preparing a slide deck to update RMRI partners on the activities of the subcommittees.
- The slides for the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee's update should include information on NAU's efforts to establish an operations training center.
- The slides should include the key takeaways from the discussion between the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee and the workforce centers.
- There will not be a formal request of RMRI partners to provide funding to extend the geographic reach of NAU's survey at the June 23 meeting until Molly Pitts and Tim Reader have had more time to discuss the survey distribution strategy.
- Molly Pitts will give the update during the full RMRI meeting on June 23.

NEXT STEPS

- The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee will determine when they should meet again after Molly Pitts reaches out to state agency representatives to request their participation in a workforce capacity workshop.
- Tim Reader will reach out to the workforce centers to thank them for their help, request a factsheet on their services, and invite them to join the Subcommittee.