

Recommendation #6

Sub-committee: Education and Workforce

Submitted by: Krista Knigge and Mark Stephenson

Below are recommendations to the Dairy Taskforce 2.0 committee to consider as they put forth recommendations to support the dairy industry relating to the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (WDVR):

1. Retire the current Existing Business policy.
2. Update and reinstate the Existing Farm Toolkit. The Existing Farmer toolkit process permitted the WDVR to provide services to approximately 80-100 farmers with disabilities each year. With this WDVR assistance, 95% of those farmers were able to continue farming for at least five or more years. WDVR's current policy has resulted in approximately 5 farmers receiving services each year.
3. We recommend adding a fee schedule to the Existing Farm Toolkit that would assure the WDVR that the historical \$1-\$1.5 million expenditure for farmers per federal fiscal year would again be the norm.
 - The 2014 \$9.4 million cited by WDVR as the amount that they spent on 164 farmers with disabilities was one of the reasons for creating the Existing Business policy. The \$9.4 million expenditure was due to a 100% increase in the number of farmers with disabilities DVR typically serves. This surge in numbers was due to WDVR activating individuals from a wait list including farmers with disabilities.
 - In an analysis of 177 farm cases, the WDVR's average farmer case service expenditure was approximately \$36,000.
 - A fee schedule to reflect that WDVR covering 100% of the costs up to \$36,000.00 and a 50/50 cost share between WDVR and the farmer for costs over \$36,000. This aligns to a similar fee schedule in WDVR's Self-Employment Start-up Toolkit.

Additional information:

Another driving force for the creation of the existing business policy was WDVR's concerns about a 15% unfunded mandate which requires WDVR to spend approximately \$10 million on students/youth with disabilities. DVR has met this mandate for the last 3 years. In federal fiscal year, 2018 DVR spent nearly \$11.5 million on pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) statewide for students ages 14 to 21, exceeding their spending requirement by nearly \$2 million. In federal fiscal year 2016, Wisconsin DVR was the first vocational rehabilitation agency in the country to meet Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Acts (WIOA) Pre-ETS spending requirement.

At this time the WDVR, has over \$10 million carryover dollars.

Recommendation #17

Sub-committee: Education and Workforce

Submitted by: Paul Scharfman

This recommends the State of Wisconsin assist rural businesses who pursue healthy workplace practices.

1. Help fund rideshare-type programs to get people to work.
2. Help fund health insurance.
3. Help fund childcare.
4. Stipulate that all funding comes with the requirement that participating businesses must not discriminate in hiring or pay level against anyone on the basis of race, creed, religion, or criminal background.
5. Stipulate that all funding comes with the requirement that participating businesses must train their management and supervisors in the “soft skills” of managing a diverse workforce (such training will be partially funded by the State and offered by UW Extension or it’s designates).
6. Help fund a social media/articles that explain this program to the public.
7. Promote the program through Department of Workforce Development.

Rationale: There is a “hidden workforce” in rural Wisconsin. These are people who want to work but who cannot overcome the barriers to work on their own. Freeing them to join the workforce would benefit them, their community’s businesses and their community.

1. There is evidence that at least 10% of rural households hold an adult who wants to work but is prevented from doing so. This is borne out by the fact that most rural households have more than one adult yet most have fewer than two vehicles. It is further borne out by surveys done in Dodge County which indicate that 40% of the population is at or below ALICE income levels and over 35% of such households have an adult who wants to work but can not do so.
2. The primary barriers to work, at least in Dodge County, are healthcare, transportation and childcare.
3. ALICE households, at least in Dodge County, say their biggest concern is mental health: anxiety, depression, anger management and related issues.

Taken together, these facts suggest there is a “hidden workforce” in rural Wisconsin who would enter the workforce if employers were better able to:

1. Offer health insurance including mental health
2. Teach “soft skills” (feelings matter, shame/fear have no place in the workplace) to supervisors and preach “kindness” to every employee (we assume good intentions among all people and the ability to help the team until proven otherwise).
3. Only exclude from hiring those job candidates who will make their teammates unsafe. This implies acceptance of handicapped people, part-time workers, properly screened ex-offenders, and people of all races, creeds and religions.
4. Offer door-to-door rideshare
5. Facilitate childcare (something on which our Company is only now starting to research).

Recommendation #24**Sub-committee:** Education and Workforce**Submitted by:** Rene Johnson*Dairy internship program*

We recommend the development of a Dairy Internship Program to attract college and tech school students to production agriculture as a career option. The internship program will be offered through extension agents and technical colleges across the state of Wisconsin, they will help to develop, support and host the business in the process. UW-Extension Agents and representatives from Wisconsin Technical colleges will assist hosting businesses in outlining a project, creating a list of responsibilities, wage and work schedule.

We envision the internship process as follows:

The internship process:

- A host business comes forward with the desire to have an intern.
- The Extension Agent or educator helps the dairy outline an internship project, job duties and expectations. In addition a work schedule and time frame for the internship are outlined. At this time the hosting business is learning things that will assist them with the intern and also with basic employee management. Specifically focusing on:
 - Soft Skills – basic management practices to encourage a positive work environment. How to interact with employees in a constructive manner and ways to encourage development within your company and the agriculture industry. Develop a kind, patient a safe work environment. Establish real tools for the employer to work with to encourage positive relationships with their employees and family members.
- The internship is posted at colleges and tech schools looking for applicants. The local educators can help screen potential candidates for the host business and align a smaller group for interviews.
- The host business interviews and offers the internship to potential candidate.
- During the internship the extension agent/educator will check in monthly with the intern and host business.
- At the end of the internship the intern will present their learning and findings on the project to the host business and Extension agent/educator.

The Dairy Task Force is requesting funding for this project at the local and state level.