

**St. Charles County  
Workforce Development Board**

**Soft Skills Task Force Meeting**

**Mission Statement**

**The St. Charles Country Soft Skills Task Force, a sub-committee of the St. Charles County Workforce Development Board, is focused on creating more awareness about the soft skills gap in today's labor force, promoting the importance of soft skills training and recognizing soft skills success stories.**

**Committee:** Soft Skills Task Force (October 20, 2021)

**Attending WDB Members:** Ben Abbott, Emma Jane Fox, Erin Williams, Lauren Kolbe, Mark Dalton and Mike Hurlbert

**Attending Task Force Members:** Katie Vargas

**Staff:** Lori Myers

**I. Welcome/Introductions/Comments** – Erin Williams, Workforce Development Board Secretary

**II. Review of Minutes from April 21, 2021**

Emma Jane Fox made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Ben Abbott seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

**III. Review of 2021 State of St. Louis Workforce Report**

- Lori provided a brief overview of the 2021 State of St. Louis Workforce Report

**IV. Next Steps**

- Members of the Task Force discussed next steps for the group:
  - Ben Abbott discussed how the dynamic has changed. Employers can no longer be critical of applicants' soft skills. There is a critical need to fill entry-level positions. He suggested partnering with the St. Charles Community College to provide specific/customized training.
  - Lauren Kolbe discussed how employers are too stretched right now. She recommended tabling the committee.
  - Mike Hurlbert indicated he would like to hear from employers. At the recent Governor's Conference, Mike thinks there may be a way to partner with the State on addressing soft skills.
  - Katie Vargas indicated that soft skills are very prominent in K-12. Soft skills needs to start at the elementary school level.

**V. Member Updates**

- Katie Vargas discussed the Build My Future event that will be held in April 2022 at the Family Arena. She also shared that Francis Howell had about 50 students attend the recent Manufacturing Day event and they were all amazed and engaged.

- Ben Abbott discussed Permian Plastics labor shortages. They have quadrupled shift differentials.
- Lauren Kolbe indicated that this has been a year of recovery for KolbeCo. They are hiring remote workers and has open positions available. Industrial automation has been their biggest customer.
- Mike Hurlbert indicated that permits have been high. His department is also experiencing staffing challenges.
- Mark Dalton discussed how they are looking for people. Retirements are a big concern. They are recruiting more than they ever have in the past. He suggested that it is better to get an individual employed and then address soft skills.
- Emma Jane Fox indicated that the State and the TANF program have seen highs and lows with applicants. There have been more sanctions because people are not wanting to participate. TANF numbers are rising but not up to pre-pandemic numbers.
- Erin Williams discussed how Fort Zumwalt School District is struggling with support staff. They are having other staff fill in to drive buses. There is a lack of skilled-trades applicants. They are also having challenges with getting food to the schools.

## **VI. Adjournment**

**The next meeting to be determined.**