Meeting Minutes
Subcommittee on Economic Development
December 3, 2020
Virtual Meeting
3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Member Attendance (9/12)
Bel Leong-Hong (Chair), Vince Difrancisci, Brian Dysktra (for Marty Rosendale), Brian Israel, Mathew Lee, Christine Ross, Gregg Smith, Troy Stoval, and Steven Tiller.

Staff Attendance
Dr. Greg von Lehmen (University of Maryland Global Campus, Assigned Staff to the Maryland Cybersecurity Council)

Meeting Summary

1. The chair welcomed the members. Since several of the members were new, she asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. A quorum was announced. The minutes for the subcommittee's 29 April 2020 meeting were called and approved unanimously on motions duly made and seconded.

3. The chair then opened the discussion of the core questions on the agenda, asking members to comment on them from the perspective of their organizations. How has COVID affected their initiatives for supporting and growing the State's cyber sector? Have current circumstances hindered their missions? What are their organizations thinking about the State's cyber sector and how to grow in in the post COVID future?

Christine Ross, Maryland Chamber of Commerce.
• The Chamber's focus has been on getting COVID-related information out to the membership via webinars (e.g., how to access State and federal support programs, and manage stress, among other topics). These sessions are archived for the membership to access at any time.
• The normal advocacy work for the membership continues. The Chamber is actively supporting additional relief from the State and federal governments and is getting ready for the upcoming session of the General Assembly.
• The Chamber Foundation has kept its eye on the ball and continues to grow the teacher extern program. The program places teachers in companies across industry sectors, including cybersecurity, so that they can carry what they learn back to the classroom.

Greg Smith, Cybersecurity Association of Maryland (CAMI).
• CAMI has continued to run events although in a virtual format. The leadership has been part of some of these events to talk about cybersecurity best practices.

- The Association has been active in informing its membership about the PPP program.
- CAMI largest effort during COVID has been the launch of its Cyber Swat Team to help companies across Maryland that have been breached. The Association received a grant from the Maryland Department of Commerce to market the service.
- The Association's next big effort will be on cyber workforce development. CAMI is working closely with Senator Hester and her Subcommittee on Workforce development that is part of the Maryland Cybersecurity Council. A workforce survey has been released to the CAMI membership to obtain a more granular understanding of needs to inform education and training. CAMI can serve as the hub for an effort to move the needle in workforce development. Part of this effort will involve a focus on diversity, connecting individuals in under-represented groups with opportunities for training and mentorship.

Brian Dykstra, representing Marty Rosendale and the Maryland Tech Council.
- The Tech Council is developing a new inclusion initiative focused on STEM. Reaching all groups is critical to meeting workforce development needs.
- The Tech Council's efforts related to cyber workforce development remain unchanged. COVID has not slowed those efforts.
- With a view to the upcoming State legislative session, the Tech Council's principal message is to do no harm. Companies are struggling and cannot sustain additional pressure.

Troy Stovall, TEDCO.
- The State and the nation will innovate out of the economic dislocations that COVID has produced. They are focused on how to support the next big wave in innovation.
- TEDCO is working with the Tech Council on its inclusion initiative. It will use seed funding and RBII with supportive programs to promote this objective.
- TEDCO sees itself as about collaboration. Working closely together makes the ecosystem stronger.
- To this end, TEDCO is excited about creating an AI-driven ecosystem map that will identify resources that start-ups can leverage.

Vince Difrancisci, Maryland Department of Commerce.
- Mr. Difrancisci noted that he is new to the Department and still getting his feet on the ground.
- The State has a robust set of incentive programs but navigating these can be difficult. There has been discussion about creating a dedicated staff role to help firms connect with programs of use to them.

Steven Tiller, Ft. Meade Alliance (FMA).
- COVID has affected FMA. A goal of the association is to offer networking opportunities and it has shifted events to a virtual format.
- A major initiative is FMA's report on workforce development that was just released. The report focuses on how to build technology into K12 learning to increase the throughput into STEM postsecondary programs and other learning opportunities that will prepare students for tech jobs.

- Mr. Tiller observed that with COVID he has seen some benefits—e.g., the convenience of doing depositions without traveling. But there are other impacts: what happens with the commercial real estate market and how well will schools adapt to using technology for remote learning?

Mathew Lee, CEO, FasTech.
- Addressing the impact of COVID on his operations, Mr. Lee noted that his firm has been moving systems to the cloud to support teleworking.
- He has also taken a lead role in connecting Korean/American firms affected by COVID with information. The Korean community and AAPI businesses in general are not keyed into mainstream American news but follow the AAPI media. They are not aware of CAMI, TEDCO, the Tech Council or what the Maryland Chamber offers. His goal is to get them involved in the ecosystem.

In reaction to some of the remarks, Mr. Dykstra commented that it must remain a major objective during COVID to help businesses find liquidity. The CARES Act was very effective. He also observed that COVID could be leveraged to Maryland's advantage. Companies are telling people that they can work from anywhere, and people are beginning to move. Could the State and other groups mount a campaign to move to Maryland?

Ms. Leong-hong noted that there were some common themes across the comments:
- There has been focused communication by member organizations about programs available to help, like PPP.
- All the member organizations have embarked on workforce development initiatives that have a diversity element.

Given that workforce development is critical to economic development, she asked two questions about collaboration:

The first was whether the members would find it of value to collaborate with the Council's Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee. Ms. Ross, Mr. Tiller, and Mr. Smith offered comments. The alternatives were occasional joint meetings or leveraging members who have a foot in both subcommittees to keep each subcommittee abreast of what the other is doing. The sense of the members was that the latter would be more efficient.

The second was how to get collaboration at a more general level. She observed that there are so many workforce development initiatives, the impact of which are often uncertain. These include internships, externships, apprenticeships, exchanges, and myriad degree and certification programs. Would collaboration produce more focus, coordination, and help identify the best strategies for workforce development? Could collaboration at a more general level be transformational?

Mr. Dykstra added that among these workforce development programs are those that aim to transition individuals from non-technical to technical positions. Catalyte is an example of a firm that provides such a pathway to entry-level tech jobs.

Mr. Stoval concurred that in light of COVID many people want to reposition themselves to get onto a tech pathway. But workforce needs exist beyond the entry level. Workforce-building strategies should include badging and certifications and not simply degrees.

Mr. Difrancisci noted that organizations are trying to develop talent through their own programs. For example, DoD has had a difficult time retaining talent. An internal initiative to address this is the DoD STEM Training Corps that will send employees to 12 or 13 institutions for STEM training. Efforts like these are valuable, but what is needed are solutions that scale.

Mr. Smith agreed that the number of initiatives make it difficult to be aware of them all. But he noted that there are challenges to collaboration. Organizations have different charters. They are all pursuing the same State or federal dollars. Political dynamics can also be a difficult to negotiate. In key cases, it has resulted in offers of help being left on the table.

Ms. Ross concurred with Mr. Smith's remarks and asked if there were common interests that the leading industry associations in the State could coalesce around. An example might be more powerful State messaging around the 'buy Maryland' program to in-state businesses.

Mr. Israel observed that part of the messaging should be modelled by what Maryland State and local governments do. He noted that the City of Baltimore engaged a firm from another state to help it recover from the ransomware attack.

Mr. Dykstra stated that in principle "buy Maryland' is a good program, but the required paperwork makes it a nonstarter for most businesses.

Ms. Leong-hong asked how this could be remedied, whether a statutory or regulatory change was needed, and whether the subcommittee could help craft a solution.

Mr. DiFrancisci stated that he would be most willing to meet with members of the subcommittee or others to understand the roadblocks to using the program. He would take up proposed solutions with his chain of command.

Returning to the discussion of workforce development, Mr. Dykstra noted that academic programs that he is familiar with are slow to change and continue to teach programming languages that are falling into disuse rather than teaching the emerging languages.

Mr. Tiller observed that there are five points in the FMA workforce report and four of them address the point that Mr. Dykstra made. The change needs to start at the high school level. Part of the challenge is the State's school funding formula. It is based on headcount and does not take into account that STEM programs are more expensive to support. There is also a need to create pathways into STEM related careers by students in other disciplines, like the liberal arts, who have critical thinking skills and different perspectives that would make them good analysts. He suggested that if just one or two of the recommendations in the FMA report could be implemented, it would have a major impact in the State.

Mr. Stoval added that changes must happen at the postsecondary level, particularly the four-year schools and institutions offering graduate programs. These schools are less entrepreneurial. Their focus is almost exclusively on degrees while they should be offering substantial opportunities for badging and shorter-term credentials to enable individuals to respond more quickly to the skillsets needed by industry. He observed that community colleges are more aligned with workforce needs and can pivot more quickly.

Ms. Ross noted that she sits on the board of a community college and is involved in developing its strategic plan. She agreed that getting community colleges across the State together with business leaders could be an effective strategy for addressing workforce needs.

Ms. Leong-hong thanked the members for their substantial contributions and made a number of comments to wrap up:

- The subcommittee would rely on Mr. Smith to keep it abreast of discussions within the Workforce Development Subcommittee. He is working closely with the Senator Hester and her subcommittee and is best positioned to serve as liaison. Mr. Smith noted that CAMI's effort with Senator Hester and her subcommittee was just starting and that he did not have much to add at this juncture.

- She asked the members to come back to her with recommendations for 2021 and beyond. What initiatives should the subcommittee get behind? Beyond those suggested by the day's meeting. What might the post-COVID economy will look like? Could there be new target markets for Maryland firms?

With no further business, the subcommittee adjourned at 4:30 pm.

[Note: These minutes were approved by the subcommittee at its 02 June 2021 meeting.]