



Meeting Minutes: MERC Committee

May 18, 2022

Committee Member Attendance

- Bradley Benson – M Health-Fairview
- Kate Dean – Essentia Institute of Rural Health
- Miranda Gilmore – Fraser Integrated Healthcare
- Kimberly Lakhan – College of St. Scholastica
- Kathleen Macken – Allina Health
- Lisa Dutton (for Rebecca McGill) – St. Catherine University
- Robert Miner – Allina Health/Abbott Northwestern
- Christine Mueller – University of Minnesota
- Michelle Noltimier, Chair – HealthPartners Institute
- Sheila Riggs – University of Minnesota
- John Rodewald - Park Nicollet Health Services
- Thomas Satre – CentraCare Health
- Troy Taubenheim – 1st Vice Chair - Metro Minnesota Council on GME
- Meghan Walsh – Hennepin County Medical Center
- Lynda Welage – University of Minnesota

Not in Attendance:

- Felix Ankel – HealthPartners Institute
- David Dahlen – Mayo Clinic
- Roger Dearth – Mayo Clinic
- Deborah Mayland-Poyzer – Fairview Health System
- Rebecca McGill – St. Catherine University

Health Department Staff: Cirrie Byrnes, Susan Castellano, Nitika Moibi, Zora Radosevich, Diane Reger

Agenda Items

- Welcome – Michelle Noltimier, Chair
- Workforce Data Source Overview – Nitika Moibi
- Legislative Proposals on Healthcare Workforce – Zora Radosevich, MDH

- Grant Updates — MDH Staff
 - Medical Education and Research Costs (MERC) Grant
 - Plans with DHS – Zora Radosevich, MDH
 - Current Grant Cycle – Diane Reger, MDH
- Future Meetings (Web Based Teleconferences, 1 – 3 p.m.)
 - Monday, August 15, 2022
 - Wednesday, November 16, 2022
- Topics
 - Submit topics to committee chairs or MDH staff

Teams meeting called to order by Chair Michelle Noltimier at 1:03 p.m. She welcomed all participants to the meeting.

Workforce Data Source Overview:

- Nitika Moibi highlighted the health care workforce provisions that are still under consideration by the Legislature. She stressed that this committee should continue to chart the direction on how best to use the data available to identify/remove any kinks in the pipeline to grow the health care workforce. She reviewed some of the data that can be found on MDH’s Health Care Workforce Data Portal. She reminded committee members that this data covers 22 separate provider types, but that currently there is no specialty-specific data available. If interested in that, please contact the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care and this data can be pulled.
- Other data sources include State Level Licensing Boards and Administrative Records; MDH Health Workforce Surveys; Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) Workforce data; DEED Job Vacancy data; DEED Employment Projections; and Real Time Talent Job Postings. Other data sources can be found through DHS’s Leading Age Collaborative (Long Term Care Association) and SLEDS. For demographics and details, MDH’s Health Workforce Surveys are a rich data source.
- Nitika mentioned that the MERC Workforce Subgroup should continue their discussions on workforce supply and demand and collectively voice their concerns to the legislature next session.

Legislative Proposals on Healthcare Workforce:

- Zora Radosevich, MDH, gave an update on the status of the current legislative proposals. They include the Rural Training Tracks and Rural Clinicals Grant, Workforce Research, International Medical Graduates (IMG) Grant impacting site-based clinical training, mental health supervision needed to diversify the healthcare workforce along with the training of licensed providers and extending Loan Forgiveness programs to add/diversify the healthcare workforce especially targeted at working in rural areas across the state. She mentioned that these clinical experience bills were included in the House omnibus bill and have not been heard by the Senate. She will continue to update MERC members as these proposals move through the legislative process.
 UPDATE 6/15/2022: The Legislature adjourned on May 23; proposals that passed the Legislature included \$1.6 million in additional funding for loan forgiveness for mental health professionals and \$1 million in one-time funding for a new health care professionals mental health grant program. The clinical experience provisions were not included in the final bills.

Medical Education and Research Costs Grant – Plans with DHS and Current Grant Cycle Updates:

- Zora Radosevich reported that in discussions with DHS, state funding will continue to be used to support MERC funding for FY23, and that DHS had a proposal to the Legislature to ensure the state portion of the funding for MERC would continue to be available should CMS not approve an extension through FY24 while a new formula is being developed.
UPDATE 6/15/2022: This proposal did not pass; work will continue on a proposal for consideration by the Legislature in 2023.
- Zora mentioned that the legislative session is due to end next Monday, May 23.
- Diane Reger reported a total of \$59,127,000 in MERC funding this grant cycle. She reviewed the MERC formula with committee members. There was a total of 533 training sites that applied, 119 didn't applied in the prior grant cycle with 55 of those applying for the first time. Of the 533 that applied, a total of 321 sites were eligible for funding through 315 different teaching programs at 23 sponsoring institutions.
- Diane reminded committee members that Sponsoring Institutions now have 60 days to send MERC funding to the sites. They must go through the Grant Verification Reporting (GVR) process which is due June 30. The Grant Verification Reporting process is also required for 50 clinical sites. The site GVRs are due by July 15. This grant cycle must close by August 1 with the next grant cycle opening August 15.
- Also reported was that Laura McLain, who assisted with the MERC expenditures process this year, has now left the department. The analysis Laura was working on will be reviewed over the summer. Some committee members expressed interest in receiving these expenditure reports. Diane explained that training site representatives have access to reports showing the data they submitted within in the application portal. Those reports can be download in Excel format. Diane felt there might be confidentiality issues with the State sharing detailed expenditures across organizations, but she will look into sharing non-identifying reports after she reviews Laura's reports. Members then indicated that they would discuss the sharing of identifiable expenditures with a group of systems who might be willing to provide their Excel reports to one another.

Other:

- Christine Mueller noted that often times preceptors employed in health systems receiving MERC funds are not aware of the MERC program and its intent to offset a portion of the time they spend with students as preceptors. She also queried how the MERC funds are being used to support clinical teaching by the health systems.
- Brad Benson brought up the need for further discussion on expanding specialty GME and incentivizing funding programs that lose money such as child neurology, mental health and children's care. Michelle Noltimier noted that this issue might fit best in discussions at future workforce subcommittee meetings. Possibly other specialties might fit under this category also.

Future 2022 Meetings:

- August 15 and November 16
- 1 – 3 p.m.
Via Teams

- Agenda and call-in information will be posted on the [committee website](#) a week before the meeting. Submit possible agenda items to the Committee Chair and/or MERC staff.

With no further business, Chair Michelle Noltimier adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.