



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON WORKFORCE AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Meeting 5

August 27, 2025 | Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Council Members Present: Council Leadership, Co-Chairs Sen. Eddie Settle, Sec. Lee Lilley and Pres. Jeff Cox

Present: Andrea Allard, Mark Bolton, Chad Bouffiu, Steven Mange, Trey Michael, J.B. Buxton, Wendy Walker Fox, Anna Perkinson, Dr. Travis Reeves, Sherry Carpenter, Tammy Simmons, Eric Shoults, Edsel McDonald, Lauren Woodruff representing Jennifer Allen, Jessica Swencki representing Cecilia Holden, Dr. Thomas Walker, Tom West, Karen Wade

Absent: Rep. Vernetta Alston, Sen. Val Applewhite, Brian Floyd, Rep. Matthew Winslow

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Senator Eddie Settle commenced the meeting by expressing gratitude to all attendees for their continued support and active engagement. Senator Eddie Settle then recognized Pres. Cox for his extensive and dedicated service to the state of North Carolina. He highlighted Pres. Cox's impactful career, noting his leadership roles as a community college president and superintendent across multiple counties. Senator Settle congratulated Pres. Cox on his upcoming retirement. In response, Pres. Cox expressed sincere gratitude for the kind words and support and officially confirmed that his retirement would take effect on June 30, 2026.

During the meeting, the group transitioned to review the minutes from the previous session. Senator Settle acknowledged that the minutes had been distributed in advance. Senator Settle initiated the formal process by presenting the minutes as written. Thomas Walker moved to approve the minutes, and Dr. Travis L. Reeves seconded the motion.

Workforce Development Grant and Strategic Planning Update

Secretary Lilley opened the meeting by expressing his appreciation for the Council's ongoing work and shared several key updates from the North Carolina Department of Commerce. First, he announced the kickoff of the department's statewide economic development strategic planning process, which occurs

every four years. This new plan will build upon the previous “First in Talent” plan, refining it to address the most pressing and promising opportunities across the state. To ensure the plan is grounded in community needs, the department has launched a series of nine public listening sessions, including one in each prosperity zone and one statewide online session, facilitated by NCImpact at the UNC School of Government. These sessions are designed to gather meaningful input from residents about where strategic efforts should be focused, particularly in support of community-based economic development. Secretary Lilley encouraged Council members to participate and share the sessions within their networks and welcomed feedback at any time.

The second major update was the NC Department of Commerce’s receipt of a \$4 million federal Pathway Home grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. This funding will support workforce development for individuals nearing release from state correctional facilities and county jails. The initiative aims to equip these individuals with job skills and connect them to employment opportunities through the NCWorks system, both before and after their release. The Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) will lead the project in partnership with three local workforce development boards Charlotte Works, Foothills, and Western Piedmont as well as the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction.

Secretary Lilley also acknowledged the Council’s achievement in submitting its 11 strategic goals to Governor Stein on time, with the public report posted on June 30. Since then, subcommittees have been meeting virtually to begin developing strategies aligned with those goals. He emphasized the importance of this next phase, noting that the goals naturally led to discussions about actionable strategies, responsible parties, and feasibility. The Council aims to have draft strategies ready for review and approval by the next meeting, with annual progress reports due to the Governor at the end of each calendar year through 2028. Secretary Lilley expressed gratitude to the teams working on strategy development and underscored the critical role these strategies will play in achieving the Council’s long-term objectives.

Secretary Lilley mentioned that the goals are time-limited and measurable. He reminded everyone of the difference between what the Council is seeking in goals and strategies. He provided an overview of each subcommittee and the goals they are responsible for and then asked the subcommittees to report out on their progress subcommittees starting with the Education and Credential Attainment Committee.

Committee Overview

The Council is divided among four subcommittees, based on the 11 goals. The Education and Credential Attainment Committee is focused on education and credential attainment, addressing goals one through three (of the [Report on Workforce Development Goals](#)). Committee two, the Work-based Learning and Apprenticeships Committee, is responsible for goals four, five, and ten. Committee three, the Employer Engagement and Strategic Partnerships Committee, is tasked with goals six, seven, and eight. He extended appreciation to the experts supporting this initiative and gave special thanks to members serving on multiple committees for their willingness to share expertise across groups.

Committee four, the Governing and Aligning a Future-Ready Workforce Committee is focused on goals nine and eleven. Secretary Lilley again acknowledged the subject matter experts contributing to this effort. Before turning the floor over to Committee representatives, he offered another brief reminder about the distinction between goals and strategies. Goals are broad, long-term objectives, while strategies are specific, time bound, and measurable actions designed to achieve those goals. He shared an example from MyFutureNC, which includes a strategy to support local school districts, colleges, and universities in increasing FAFSA completion rates. This example illustrates the type of evidence-based strategies the Council aims to develop. With that, Secretary Lilley invited Tom West to present updates from the education and credential attainment subcommittee.

Education and Credential Attainment Committee

Tom West, representing the Education and Credential Attainment Committee, provided a detailed update on its work focused on goals one, two, and three: education and credential attainment, workforce readiness, and lifelong learning. The committee's primary aim under goal one is to increase the number of postsecondary degrees, certificates, and licenses, especially among individuals who may not traditionally envision such futures for themselves. For workforce readiness, the committee seeks to align educational outcomes with employer needs while also ensuring that the types of employers North Carolina aims to attract are matched with the educational preparation of its citizens. Lifelong learning efforts center on promoting continuous training and professional development.

The committee has met twice, on July 16 and August 4 and plans to reconvene on September 8. After initial broad discussions, the August meeting focused on strategies to achieve goal one. Four key strategies were identified: improving data systems for interoperability and credit transfer; enhancing funding mechanisms, including financial support for testing and licensure; expanding healthcare workforce pipelines through targeted financial aid for roles like CNAs and licensed nurses; and increasing access to educational opportunities through personalized and digital guidance systems. A fifth strategy emphasized work-and-learn models, such as apprenticeships, one-stop service centers, and credit for prior learning.

Policy recommendations included aligning with the newly enacted workforce legislation and funding the costs associated with obtaining and retaking credentialing exams, addressing a common barrier for students who exhaust financial resources before completing certification requirements.

For goal two, the committee proposed that every graduate should complete courses leading to transferable credit or credentials, such as dual enrollment, career and technical education (CTE), AP/IB courses, and work-based learning. Regarding goal three, the strategy discussed was ensuring that every student has access to at least one postsecondary pathway whether through the workforce, military, community college, or a four-year institution. The committee also reviewed the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and State Board of Education's strategic plans as part of their alignment efforts.

Challenges identified include the need for digital learner records (digital transcripts), licensure reciprocity to ease mobility into the state, and financial barriers to workforce entry highlighted by the high costs of preparatory courses for professions like law, teaching, and healthcare. The committee also discussed the

importance of balancing student choice with guided pathways and considered how government could better match private sector incentives to attract talent into critical professions.

Next steps include conducting a follow-up survey, finalizing top strategies for each goal, especially goals two and three and continuing alignment with DPI and the State Board's strategic plans. Tom West concluded by passing the discussion to Wendy Walker Fox.

Work-based Learning and Apprenticeships Committee

Wendy Walker-Fox provided a comprehensive update on the work-based learning and apprenticeship committee, which is focused on goals four, five, and ten. She highlighted the strong engagement and diverse perspectives within the group, particularly from business and industry partners, which have been instrumental in shaping practical and impactful strategies. The committee began by analyzing survey data to identify barriers to apprenticeships, work-based learning, and state government hiring. These barriers were categorized for both employers and learners. Employers face challenges such as limited awareness of programs, administrative complexity, and a disconnect between workforce development and the pace of business, along with insufficient incentives. Learners, on the other hand, encounter transportation and financial obstacles, stigma around non-degree pathways, restrictive eligibility criteria, and a lack of career exploration opportunities.

In response, the committee discussed several strategic concepts. These included doubling the number of registered apprenticeships, launching targeted marketing and awareness campaigns, expanding inclusive and cohort-based models inspired by successful initiatives like SEED and BioWork, and securing state level incentive funding through tax credits, grants, and subsidies. Additional strategies to boost participation in work-based learning included streamlining workforce system processes, promoting pre-apprenticeship and training models, and aligning county level workforce ecosystems. The group also emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the value proposition to employers.

Looking ahead, the committee plans to refine its strategies through continued survey feedback and collaboration. A key focus of the upcoming September 17th meeting will be a deep dive into state government hiring strategies to ensure alignment with broader priorities and maximize impact. The overarching goal is to finalize a strategic plan by mid-October for presentation to the full Council and the governor. Walker-Fox concluded by expressing gratitude to the committee members for their openness, creativity, and commitment to developing actionable strategies that will help remove barriers, expand opportunities, and strengthen North Carolina's workforce pipeline.

Employer Engagement and Strategic Partnerships Committee

Dr. Travis Reeves provided a detailed update on the Employer Engagement Committee, which is focused on goals six, seven, and eight, with each centered on strengthening employer involvement in workforce development. He began by acknowledging the strong participation and consistent attendance of subcommittee members, with special thanks to Annie Izod for her organizational support. The

subcommittee has convened three times and has made significant progress in developing strategies to meet its ambitious objectives.

Goal six aims to engage 50,000 employers to partner with the Governor's Council, with the goal of creating 50,000 additional apprenticeships. The committee has been actively discussing how to recruit businesses, reduce barriers to participation, and simplify the process to make it more accessible for employers. A recurring theme has been the need to make engagement easy and appealing for businesses.

Under goal seven, the focus is on establishing and expanding coordinated partnerships between education systems, workforce agencies, and employers. The committee explored how to leverage existing structures, such as the business advisory Councils within each Local Education Agency (LEA), and how to better connect these Councils with community colleges and local businesses to enhance collaboration and resource alignment.

Goal eight involves developing statewide, sector-based workforce development strategies for key industries, including advanced manufacturing, education, and healthcare. The subcommittee reviewed successful models, such as the healthcare sector partnership led by the North Carolina Chamber's Center for Workforce and Health. Two major takeaways emerged: the need to incentivize employer participation and the importance of providing technical assistance, especially for first-time employer participants. This could include mentorship programs and training to help businesses effectively support apprentices and students.

Looking ahead, the committee will focus on drafting evidence-based strategies and ensuring that all goals are supported by measurable outcomes. Dr. Reeves emphasized the challenge of simplifying complex systems and processes to make them more accessible, acknowledging that while the task is difficult, it is essential for meaningful progress. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the subcommittee members for their dedication and hard work before passing the discussion to Karen Wade.

Governing and Aligning a Future-Ready Workforce Committee

Karen Wade delivered an update on the progress of subcommittee Four, which is focused on two strategic goals: goal nine, integrating AI skills development into sector strategies and work-based learning to build a future-ready workforce, and goal eleven, launching a coordinated statewide public outreach campaign to boost participation in workforce development programs. She expressed deep appreciation for the committee's members, especially those with expertise in technical and communication fields, and thanked Kristie VanAuken and Caroline Sullivan for their leadership.

The committee has held two meetings so far, concentrating on brainstorming the scope of each initiative and generating ideas that will soon be refined into actionable strategies. For goal nine, the group explored several innovative approaches, including launching a statewide AI challenge to encourage citizens to engage with AI tools, compiling an inventory of AI initiatives across North Carolina's colleges and universities, and developing competency models that align with K-12, higher education, and

workforce pathways. Additional ideas included normalizing AI in classrooms with ethical guidance, integrating AI literacy into apprenticeships and employer-facing programs, and offering short-term certifications through community colleges. The committee also discussed leveraging partnerships with NC State University, the Department of Information Technology (DIT), and industry stakeholders.

Regarding goal eleven, the team focused on designing a public outreach campaign aimed at increasing workforce program participation among rural residents, veterans, justice-involved individuals, people with disabilities, and other untapped talent pools. They considered how to frame messaging around NCWorks Career Centers and the NCcareers.org platform as central workforce hubs. Other strategies included enhancing professional development for NCWorks staff, building on the 2020 “Work on What’s Next” campaign, promoting tools for rural communities and job seekers, and developing consistent messaging that reflects North Carolina’s workforce ecosystem.

Karen concluded by noting that the committee will continue refining these strategies in upcoming meetings and plans to present finalized proposals at the next full Council session. She thanked all participants for their contributions and turned the discussion back to President Cox.

Council Progress Update

Pres. Cox expressed his deep appreciation for the impressive work being done by the subcommittees. He commended their dedication and the quality of the strategies being developed, noting that the Council is making strong progress toward the goal of having all draft strategies completed by mid-October. Pres. Cox emphasized the importance of this timeline and thanked everyone for their continued hard work and collaboration.

NGA Presentation

Then the meeting transitioned to introduce the next segment, a presentation from the National Governors Association (NGA). Pres. Cox welcomed Sophia Yager, a senior policy analyst with NGA’s Workforce Development and Economic Policy Program at the Center for Best Practices. In her role, Sophia Yager provides technical assistance to governors and state policymakers on workforce and economic development issues. Her background includes serving as the Member Engagement Director at the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, where she led stakeholder engagement efforts, and as Deputy Director of the Vermont State Workforce Development Board under Governor Phil Scott. In that capacity, she oversaw strategic planning and alignment with both state priorities and the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Sophia Yager was invited to present an overview of federal-level actions relevant to the Council’s work, along with state-level strategies and examples specifically aligned with goals one through eight. Due to time constraints, the presentation would focus only on those goals, but Pres. Cox noted that NGA had also provided a comprehensive memo covering strategies for goals nine through eleven. That document has been shared with the appropriate subcommittee staff, who are continuing to develop strategies for

those remaining goals. Pres. Cox concluded by inviting the Council to welcome Sophia Yager to speak and noted that there would be time for questions and discussion following her presentation.

NGA Presentation Continued and Federal Workforce Policy Update

Sophia Yager opened her presentation by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to join the Council and commending the subcommittees for their impressive work. She noted that many of the themes emerging from the Council's strategy development efforts align with broader national trends and initiatives, and she hoped to offer additional insights to support North Carolina's planning around its eleven strategic goals.

Sophia Yager provided a brief overview of the NGA, explaining that it is a bipartisan organization representing the nation's 55 governors. The NGA offers policy development and implementation support across twelve policy areas and advocates for governors' priorities in Washington, D.C., through its government relations team.

Before diving into state-level strategies and examples, Sophia Yager shared a federal policy update to help contextualize the Council's work. She referenced President Trump's recent executive order on workforce and apprenticeships, which emphasized reform and streamlining of federal workforce and education programs. Key themes included improving data collection and transparency, promoting non-degree credentials and industry-aligned training, and setting a national goal of creating one million new active apprenticeships. The executive order also called for scaling and enhancing the registered apprenticeship model.

Sophia Yager then discussed the federal response to this executive order: the release of **"America's Talent Strategy"** by the Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Education. This strategy outlines five strategic pillars, including expanding registered apprenticeships to new industries, consolidating and streamlining federal programs, increasing accountability through performance metrics, enhancing transparency of outcomes, and promoting flexibility and innovation. She highlighted the use of waivers and other mechanisms to allow states to experiment and tailor programs to their unique needs.

Outline: Federal and State Workforce Development Strategies

I. Federal AI Initiatives

- President's AI Action Plan and executive order on youth AI education
- Emphasis on integrating AI into workforce and education systems
- Federal support for:
 - Innovation and expansion in workforce development
 - Reskilling displaced workers
 - Expanding AI-related registered apprenticeships

II. Agency Guidance and Funding

- U.S. Department of Labor guidance via WIOA to enhance AI skill development
- Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education to support pilot programs
- Use of WIOA and Economic Development Administration funds for AI training

III. Workforce Pell Initiative

- New federal program launching July 1 (next year)
- Extends Pell Grant eligibility to short-term training (8–15 weeks)
- Governors and state workforce boards to define eligibility criteria

IV. State-Level Strategy: Credential Attainment (Goal 1)

- Align industry credentials with labor market needs
- Strengthen data systems to demonstrate ROI for learners and employers
- Maintain dual lists of:
 - Industry-recognized credentials
 - In-demand occupations (in collaboration with labor market offices and employers)

V. State Models and Best Practices

- **Colorado:** Non-degree credential framework used across WIOA and state programs
- **Connecticut:** Career Connect initiative
 - Initially funded by \$70M in ARPA, now state-funded
 - Supports short-term credential training and wraparound services
 - Centralized portal integrates with WIOA case management for outcome tracking

Goal 2

For Goal 2, focused on credit and credential attainment for high school students, Sophia Yager suggested aligning with federal Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) metrics, which track credential attainment, credit accumulation, and work-based learning participation. She also recommended exploring funding mechanisms to help school districts reduce risk and expand dual enrollment opportunities, thereby increasing access to credentials for secondary students. These strategies, she noted, could significantly strengthen North Carolina's efforts to build a future-ready workforce.

Sophia Yager continued her presentation by offering strategic insights and examples to support North Carolina's goals around high school credential attainment and postsecondary pathways. She emphasized the importance of funding mechanisms to support both secondary and postsecondary institutions in

expanding access to credentials, whether through tuition assistance, administrative support, or incentives for school districts that meet credential attainment targets. She also stressed the need to prioritize underserved populations, such as students from rural or low-income backgrounds, by offering wraparound services and financial aid to ensure equitable access to these opportunities.

Sophia Yager highlighted Maryland's "Blueprint for Maryland's Future" as a model reform initiative. This comprehensive education overhaul includes a college and career readiness standard that students are expected to meet by the end of 10th grade. Once achieved, students can pursue one of three pathways: Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB), early college/dual enrollment, or Career and Technical Education (CTE) during their final two years of high school. The blueprint sets a bold goal: by 2030, 45% of high school graduates should complete an apprenticeship or earn an industry-recognized credential.

She also shared Montana's "406 Jobs Plan," named after the state's area code, which promotes four pathways to employment—career, college, military, and entrepreneurship—while aiming to eliminate barriers and focus on six high-demand sectors. The Montana Workforce Board is tasked with developing a strategic plan to implement this vision.

Goal 3

For North Carolina's third goal ensuring every high school student has a pathway to postsecondary education, employment, or military service, Sophia Yager suggested expanding career counseling and navigation supports, implementing career planning requirements, and offering guarantees or incentives to students. She emphasized the importance of tracking outcomes and establishing accountability measures to ensure students are placed in a pathway within 12 months of graduation.

Indiana's "Honor Plus Readiness Seals" program was presented as a compelling example. Each high school graduate receives a seal indicating readiness for one of three pathways: postsecondary education, employment, or military service. These seals come with guarantees such as automatic college admission, guaranteed job interviews, or entry into apprenticeship programs providing tangible benefits and reducing uncertainty for students.

Sophia Yager concluded this segment with Idaho's "LAUNCH" program, which addresses the challenge of retaining graduates in-state and improving postsecondary enrollment. The initiative covers 80% of tuition and fees for high school graduates pursuing training in in-demand careers at Idaho institutions. Early results show increased enrollment in both postsecondary and community college programs, particularly among economically disadvantaged students.

These examples and strategies, Sophia Yager noted, offer valuable inspiration for North Carolina as it works to build inclusive, effective pathways for all students.

Goals 4 and 5

Sophia Yager continued her presentation by offering a rich set of strategies and examples to support North Carolina's goals around expanding registered apprenticeships, increasing work-based learning, and deepening employer engagement. She began by encouraging states to explore opportunities to use

registered apprenticeships as a training model for public sector careers, noting that regulatory barriers and lack of financial incentives often hinder employer participation. She suggested funding intermediaries to serve as connectors between employers, training providers, and apprentices, and emphasized the importance of ensuring apprenticeships count as credit for prior learning to make them stackable credentials along a career pathway. She also advocated for investments in youth and pre-apprenticeships and stronger linkages between Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and apprenticeships, an area where North Carolina is already active through the NGA Youth Apprenticeship Policy Academy.

Sophia Yager highlighted Arizona's AZ Apprenticeship Initiative, which aims to double the number of construction and trades apprentices within three years using \$3.5 million in WIOA and ARPA funds. These funds support recruitment, retention, wraparound services, and pre-apprenticeship programs. She then shared Alabama's experience with financial incentives for employers. Initially, Alabama offered tax credits for hiring apprentices, but due to low uptake, they pivoted to a wage subsidy model. Employers now receive 50% wage reimbursement for apprentices working up to 480 hours and can also access \$10,000 grants to bring technical instruction in-house.

On the topic of work-based learning, Sophia Yager stressed the importance of robust data systems to track participation and outcomes, and making reporting easier for employers and school districts. She recommended integrating work-based learning into career readiness standards and offering academic credit for such experiences. Wraparound supports like transportation and childcare were also highlighted as essential for enabling participation, especially among adult learners.

She cited Nevada's legislation requiring state agencies to develop a work-based learning program for grades 7–12, which includes elective and dual enrollment credits. Montana's Stars Act was another example, offering financial incentives to school districts to boost postsecondary credit attainment, credentialing, and work-based learning.

Sophia Yager also addressed inclusive workforce strategies, spotlighting New York's Partnership for Inclusive Internship. This initiative, aligned with Governor Hochul's executive order, installs a coordinator in the state's disability office to create internship opportunities for people with disabilities in state government, working closely with vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Goals 6, 7, and 8

Turning to employer engagement, Sophia Yager emphasized the need for a unified outreach strategy across state agencies to reduce employer fatigue and improve tracking. She recommended leveraging existing forums like chambers of commerce and workforce boards, and collaborating with economic development partners to align workforce efforts with business attraction strategies. She also suggested employer pledges, such as Maryland's Apprenticeship Pledge launched by Governor Wes Moore, which aims to recruit 500 new employer partners and 5,000 apprentices within a year.

Finally, she highlighted North Dakota's Regional Workforce Impact Program, initially funded by ARPA and now sustained by the legislature due to its success. This model demonstrates how strategic investment and employer engagement can drive scalable workforce development outcomes.

Sophia Yager concluded her presentation with a series of strategic insights and examples focused on regional coordination and statewide sector strategies. She began by highlighting North Dakota's Regional Workforce Impact Program, which initially allowed one collaborative application per region, requiring employer involvement and a 25% local match. Due to its success, the program was expanded using state general funds and now permits multiple applications per region, maintaining the employer participation and matching requirement.

Additional NGA Insights/Information

For regional alignment, Sophia Yager emphasized the importance of providing local partners with Labor Market Information (LMI) to guide strategy development. She suggested using trusted entities like local workforce boards to coordinate efforts and recommended asset mapping to identify regional strengths and gaps, especially in industry aligned training. She also encouraged peer-to-peer sharing among regions to replicate best practices and support struggling areas.

Wisconsin's Regional Career Pathways initiative served as a model for regional collaboration. Initially funded by philanthropic dollars and later expanded with state funds, the program established regional collaboratives composed of employers, educators, and workforce partners. These groups conducted LMI assessments, developed career pathways aligned with local industries, and acted as advisory bodies to school districts during implementation.

Turning to statewide sector strategies, Sophia Yager advocated for blending federal, state, and private funding to support sector partnerships. She stressed the importance of using these partnerships to validate career pathways and credentials, and recommended selecting appropriate intermediaries such as workforce boards, community colleges, or anchor employers to lead efforts in specific industries or regions. Technical assistance should be provided to ensure consistent performance across the state, and sector strategies should be integrated into broader workforce and education plans with uniformity in priority sectors.

She then shared Kentucky's Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund as an innovative funding model. The program matches every private or philanthropic dollar with state funds, resulting in a \$13.8 million investment in 2024 that supported 800 healthcare scholarships. Recipients must commit to working in Kentucky for up to two years, matching the duration of their tuition support.

Finally, Sophia Yager presented Minnesota's "Drive for Five" initiative, Governor Walz's flagship workforce development strategy. It targets five key industries technology, trades, caring professions (healthcare and childcare), manufacturing, and education. The state invested \$20 million across three areas: competitive grants for training providers, grants for trade associations and chambers to engage employers, and funding for local business service representatives in every workforce area. These efforts aim to build robust sector partnerships and align training with industry needs statewide. Sophia Yager wrapped up by inviting questions from the Council.

Discussion

As the meeting ended, Pres. Cox expressed gratitude for the wealth of information shared, particularly by Sophia Yager from the National Governors Association (NGA). He opened the floor for questions, prompting a deeper discussion on metrics and accountability. Dr. Travis Reeves emphasized the importance of measuring what truly matters, arguing that current accountability models such as the ACT, which counts for 20% of high school performance metrics do not reflect the diverse postsecondary paths students pursue. He advocated for a shift in what is measured to better align with workforce readiness and economic mobility, suggesting that meaningful change in education and workforce development requires redefining success metrics.

Pres. Cox agreed, noting that the Council is well-positioned to recommend new accountability measures that reflect the state's workforce and apprenticeship goals. He mentioned the upcoming State Board Planning Summit in September, where alignment between strategic plans from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the community college system will be discussed.

Pres. Cox then asked Sophia Yager for legislative recommendations based on North Carolina's goals. She responded that funding is a critical area requiring legislative support, especially for expanding apprenticeships and work-based learning. She also pointed to regulatory reforms that could reduce barriers to licensure and improve employer engagement. Additionally, she suggested legislation to clarify roles and responsibilities in coordination efforts, such as incentivizing school districts to participate in work-based learning and establishing clearer metrics.

Secretary Lilley closed the meeting by thanking Sophia Yager and the NGA for their broad-spectrum analysis and insights, which offer valuable models for North Carolina to adapt. He also acknowledged Dr. Reeves for his compelling remarks on accountability and expressed appreciation for the Council's diverse representation, including regulatory and legislative voices. Secretary Lilley reminded members of the next in-person meeting scheduled for November 6th in Raleigh and encouraged them to submit feedback on committee work by September 10. He concluded by thanking Council members, NCWorks Commission participants, subject matter experts, and staff for their continued dedication and contributions. He asked for any further business, there being none, he then adjourned the meeting.