



NCWorks Commission Business Session

August 12, 2020

Go To Meeting Webinar

1:00 – 2:00 P.M.

Raleigh, NC

Minutes

Present: Secretary Tony Copeland, Chair Tom Rabon, Josh Arant, Brock Ashburn, Anita Bachman, Shawn Brown, Sherry Carpenter, Mel Chernoff, Scott Daugherty (William Roper), Chris Egan (Mandy Cohen), Jessica Englert (Governor Cooper), Jeff Frederick, Christopher Gergen, Steven Hunt, Annie Izod, Suzanne Johnson, Himanshu Karvir, Paul Lawler, Maureen Little (Bill Carver), Candace Lowry (Machelle Sanders), Marti Matthews Martin, MaryBe McMillan, Trey Michael (Mark Johnson), David Miller, Olalah Njenga, Stan Sherrill, Walter Siegenthaler, Ronnie Smith, Kim Toler, and Pam Townsend

Absent: Ronnie Smith, Jim Van Camp and Osceola Ellis

Opening Business

Department of Commerce Secretary Tony Copeland welcomed the NCWorks Commission members and those attending the third quarterly NCWorks Commission business session. Secretary Copeland commented that many businesses are hiring and have shown great flexibility and innovation during this challenging time. On July 1, 2020, Governor Cooper announced that Centene, a *Fortune 50* provider of managed care services, will create its East Coast regional headquarters and technology hub in Charlotte. This will bring 3,237 new jobs and an investment of more than \$1 billion by 2032. Centene's positions will offer salaries that average more than \$100,000 per year.

NCWorks Commission Chair Tom Rabon began the meeting and acknowledged the recent tragic events of racial injustice in our country, emphasizing that *everyone* deserves the chance to advance or participate fully in our economy. Following, he recognized several commission members that have been in the news for achievements and workforce efforts around COVID-19. Peter Hans was congratulated for his recent position as the president of the UNC System and Jeff Frederick for his recent board member appointment to the National Association of Workforce Boards. Chair Rabon acknowledged Anita Bachmann and UnitedHealthcare for their \$1 million grant to six N.C. community-based organizations that expand access to care and address the social determinants of health for uninsured individuals and underserved communities in their capacity to fight COVID-19. He praised Josh Arant and MAKO Medical Laboratories for their success in developing into one of the top COVID-19 testing labs in the country and N.C. State AFL-CIO president MaryBe McMillan for publicly voicing support of the *HEROES Act* to help keep essential workers safe and secure by authorizing federal actions related to workers' rights and public health.

Chair Rabon informed the members about the *Reimagine Workforce Preparation Grant*. The NCWorks Commission is designated as the project lead along with partners: the N.C. Association of Workforce Development Boards, the N.C. Community College System, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) and Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD). The proposal centers around distance learning and the biotech industry. The grant was announced at the end of June, and the application was due on August 24, 2020.

Minutes Approval: Chair Rabon called for a motion to approve the minutes as written from the May 13, 2020 meeting. Jeff Frederick made the motion, Sherry Carpenter seconded the motion; having no discussion, the motion passed, and the minutes were approved.

Workforce Development System Report

Jessica Englert, Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary for the Division Workforce Solutions (DWS), reported that DWS staff, as well as staff at the central office, NCWorks Career Center staff, N.C. Workforce Development Board staff, and all our partners have continued to provide vital services to the state under the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty-four of the 88 career centers are open to serve customers in person, while the rest are providing services virtually. Local area workforce development boards have been focused on phased approaches to reopening the career centers to the public in a safe environment. Cloud-based phone call management systems through Amazon Web Services have been installed in the centers, so now anyone can call 1-855-NCWORKS and be connected to a career center near them. The NCWorks Training Center is using technology to plan the first virtual *NCWorks Partnership Conference* in October. Other innovations going on statewide at the local level are virtual hiring events and drive-through job and resource fairs.

A recent focus of DWS has been the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment* (RESEA) program, restarted in July in a new, virtual format. RESEA delivers regularly scheduled services to people who are currently unemployed and need help finding a new job and opportunities for training scholarships. Career center staff help jobseekers to explore careers and training and to develop a reemployment plan via appointment over the phone or in-person. The goal is to help people succeed in the job market while protecting public health. So far, more than 3,000 virtual appointments have been completed while also serving other customers outside of RESEA.

To assist with reemployment, DWS was awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor a \$6 million national *Dislocated Worker Grant* for COVID-19, using funds from the federal *CARES Act*. They are partnering with 14 local workforce development boards that serve 59 counties. Program participants receive career training and credentials or are placed in temporary employment. Temporary employment positions include contact tracers, thermal screeners, and humanitarian positions, such as delivering meals and medicine to senior centers, or general labor positions that include sanitizing public park equipment and buildings to stop the spread of COVID-19. In closing, Assistant Secretary Englert shared they see evidence that workers of color have been hit harder by unemployment compared to their white counterparts. At DWS, they will continue to examine their own practices and staff training to ensure that all North Carolinians are served in an equitable manner.

Presentation: Annual Program Review

James Bain, deputy director of the NCWorks Commission, provided a summary of results from the annual program review. The NCWorks Commission, in compliance with *Session Law 2012-131*, reviews and evaluates the plans and programs of the 19 workforce development programs administered by the

Department of Commerce, the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Administration, North Carolina Community College System Office and the Department of Health and Human Services. The Commission collects data to determine funding levels, how funds are distributed, target populations, services to individuals, services to employers, program goals, performance measures, and types of outreach strategies as directed by the law. This year, a variety of questions centered around agencies responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were added to the survey.

Nearly all the agencies surveyed are taking a proactive stance on COVID-19 by quickly shifting resources in response. Several agencies reported they have received funds specifically for emergencies caused by the pandemic. For example, the North Carolina Community College System received *CARES Act* funding through the N.C. General Assembly. The system office has allocated this additional funding to colleges and programs to support students, workers, and businesses around our state. Agencies have also reported that they have dramatically increased the number of services provided virtually and online; shifted staff roles and responsibilities to meet the surge in demand for related emergency services; and that program participants have received additional funding due to COVID-19. For instance, eligible children on *Work First* cases were awarded an additional \$265 each to help alleviate some of the financial burdens the pandemic has caused to the families.

Committee Reports

The *Governance and System Alignment Committee* Chair Hope Williams reported that the U.S. Department of Labor has mandated that major *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) policies administered by DWS shall be approved by the NCWorks Commission. These new “Commission Policy Statements” will be drafted by DWS to ensure compliance with current WIOA rules and regulations, prior to being submitted to the NCWorks Commission for approval. DWS will issue “Operational Guidance Notices” that will not require NCWorks Commission approval but will carry the full weight of NCWorks Commission Policy. The committee hopes to submit a commission policy statement review and approval process at the November 18th NCWorks Commission meeting. The Commission will need to approve the conversion of some existing DWS policy statements to Commission policy statements, such as *Finish Line Grants* and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.

The *Employer Leadership Committee* Chair Jeff Frederick reported that Jenni Harris, executive director of business services at the Department of Commerce, shared WIOA performance data elements and a workforce proposal to be included in commerce incentive proposals to prospects who may locate in North Carolina or expand in the state. The proposed name is *NC Job Ready Workforce Investment Grants*. This policy will provide the ability to capture data better; allow the opportunity to address our economic development and workforce development needs better; enhance collaboration with economic development and workforce development on data, information and projects looking to locate or expand in North Carolina; and offer more consistent and compliant data with federal requirements. The DWS Planning Unit is working on policy for the grant.

Local Innovation Committee Chair Mel Chernoff reported updates on two workstreams: 1) For *Spotlight on Local Workforce Innovation*, efforts are being made to target programs and initiatives tailored to workforce recovery during COVID-19. GuilfordWorks on Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and the City of Charlotte’s *Mayor Youth Employment Program* (MYEP) are the next initiatives to be featured. Each will showcase ways in which programs are providing virtual services and resources for jobseekers and those most affected during this time. 2) Chair Chernoff discussed the *NCWorks Local Innovation Fund*. Each grantee has been provided a program extension by DWS to ensure completion of program goals. Each grantee utilizing the program extension is to provide an updated plan on program goals and a timeline

to the NCWorks Commission and DWS. The committee members look forward to reviewing those updates once finalized. It was agreed to postpone evaluation of these grants until next year.

The *Skills and Education Attainment Committee* Chair Sherry Carpenter reported that in keeping with the committee's new focus on efforts to reengage and retrain North Carolinians unemployed due to COVID-19 back into the workforce, committee members from various entities shared how the pandemic has changed their organization's workforce needs and what their organizations are doing to support individuals in their ability to be employed or trained. For example, the Piedmont Triad Regional Council, with partners, are conducting business as usual but added more virtual services for individuals and COVID-19 training for employers. They are working with the City of Winston-Salem on their *Mask the City* initiative, where employers complete PPE training to reopen their businesses and receive some supplies in return.

NCCareers.org

Chair Carpenter discussed the recent launch of the *NCCareers.org Career Information System*. This comprehensive tool helps guide people in their career choices. It offers skills and interest assessments for people in all stages of their careers, the ability to explore occupations and local job openings, and the capability to identify education and training opportunities tailored to an individual's career interests. It connects with the universities and community colleges and provides current, live data.

Career Pathways Recognition

Chair Carpenter announced that the newest NCWorks Certified Career Pathway to be recognized is the ***Agriscience/Biotechnology Career Pathway***, established by the Northeast NC Career Pathways Partnership. The partnership consists of the Northeastern, Rivers East, and Turning Point workforce development boards. The collaboration also includes 11 NCWorks Career Centers, nine community colleges, three universities, 27 local education agencies, more than 100 employers, and a wide variety of community support agencies, covering 20 counties in Northeast region of North Carolina.

In the Northeast, 195 businesses fall under the pathway for biotechnology, and more than 2,000 businesses under agriculture. With agriculture being the top industry in North Carolina and biotechnology projected to grow 10 percent over the next 10 years, employers and partners in the Northeast recognize the value in this new certified pathway. North Carolina now has a total of 39 certified career pathways.

Closing Business

In closing the meeting, Chair Rabon asked members if there were any new business or discussions. There being none, he thanked everyone for their participation and informed all that the next NCWorks Commission quarterly business session will be another webinar on November 18th, 2020. The 2021 Commission meeting dates are February 10th, May 12th, August 11th, and November 10th. Chair Rabon adjourned the meeting at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Izod

Pending approval on November 18, 2020