



## **NCWorks Commission Quarterly Business Session**

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Nutrien Employee Center

MS Teams Event Webinar | 1:00 – 2:00 P.M.

Aurora, NC

### **Minutes**

#### *Present:*

Andrea DeSantis (Governor Roy Cooper), Chair Tom Rabon, Chief Deputy Secretary D. Jordan Whichard IV (Secretary Machel Baker Sanders), Broxton Ashburn, Shawn Brown, Sherry Carpenter, Chris Egan (Secretary Kody Kinsley), Jeffrey Frederick, Christopher Gergen, Suzanne Johnson, Candace Lowry (Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell), Himanshu Karvir, Mike Okun, Rodney Carson, Paul Lawler, Olalah Njenga, Cheryl Richards, Kim Toler, Byron Hicks (Peter Hans), Stephen Con Hunt, Gilda Rubio-Festa, Matt Myer attending for Bruce Mack (Bill Carver), Tammy Simmons, Pam Townsend, Nikki Nissen, John Wesley Davis IV, Hugh Allen, Daniel Briggs, and Annie Izod

*Absent:* MaryBe McMillan, Ronnie Smith, Cynthia Speight, Leslie Walden, Hope Williams, Marti Matthews Martin, Kristie VanAuken (Superintendent Catherine Truitt), Jim Van Camp, and Stan Sherrill

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North Carolina Department of Commerce Chief Deputy Secretary Jordan Whichard welcomed the commission members, designees and guests to the final quarterly business session meeting of the year. He reported several workforce accomplishments achieved across the state; North Carolina held the first in-person NCWorks Partnership Conference since 2019, with almost 700 attendees from around the state. During the Partnership Conference, Governor Cooper's NCWorks Awards of Distinction were presented to several outstanding recipients. Additional accomplishments around the state included a federal grant for nearly \$10 Million from the U.S. Department of Justice called the First Step Act Initiative, which will be led by the N.C. Department of Commerce in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor to support the reentry of justice-involved individuals into the workforce. To date, North Carolina has announced more than 25,900 new jobs and \$17.4 billion in new investment this year. North Carolina is investing billions of dollars in job creation with forward-thinking projects involving renewable energy, electric vehicles, and 5G networks. Chief Deputy Secretary Whichard also highlighted several American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants recently awarded to 11 Local Area Workforce Development Boards, which will help jobseekers and small businesses with training and other services in response to the tight labor market. He closed by highlighting several initiatives across the state directed at making sure veterans remain an integral part of our workforce.

## **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Chair Tom Rabon thanked Nutrien and Kim Toler for hosting the meeting and welcomed the commission's newest staff member, Veronica Howard Green, Director of Local Innovation. He also congratulated Olalah Njenga, CEO of YellowWood Group on receiving the Women Business Owner of the Year Award during the National Association of Women Business Owners annual board installation and awards gala.

Other highlights included an announcement regarding Wake Technical Community College and the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University partnership agreement to foster degree completion and career development in Information Technology and Biotechnology programs.

Chair Rabon updated the commission on the growth of Wilmington's Cape Fear Community College, where New Hanover County Commissioners recently voted to purchase an \$11.9 million building to expand the college's Allied Health programs and triple the size of its Nursing graduates. He shared Governor Cooper's announcement of \$7.5 million in federal funding for the Finish Line Grants. This project provides funding for students who face unexpected hardships such as medical bills, car repairs, and loss of childcare. The Finish Line Grant program will continue through the North Carolina Community College System. Chair Rabon also highlighted the manufacturing industry in North Carolina, which grew at a rate of 14% last year and is ranked as the 5<sup>th</sup> largest manufacturing economy in the country.

Lastly, Chair Rabon shared that NC Workforce Development Leadership Initiative at NC State University launched on October 10-11, 2022, and involved five regional teams from across the state. These teams include representatives from economic development, workforce development, and local government. The chair also thanked Dr. Annie Izod for teaching the Workforce Development Finance class and contributing to the success of the initiative.

## **August Minutes Approval**

Chair Rabon asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 10, 2022, quarterly meeting. Shawn Brown made the motion to approve the minutes and Gilda Rubio-Festa seconded the motion. There being no corrections, the minutes were unanimously approved as written.

## **Presentation: North Carolina Veterans' Services**

In honor of "Employ a Veteran Week" and the Veterans' Day holiday, Victor Glover, State Director of Veterans' Employment Services for the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), U.S. Army retired Master Sergeant with 22 years of service and Mark Edmonds, Chief Operating Officer for DWS, U.S. Army retired Colonel with 28 years of service presented to the commission. They provided a comprehensive overview of Veterans' Services in North Carolina. Victor Glover reported there are 19.4 million veterans in the United States with a median age of 64 and nearly half of these veterans are currently in the workforce. He stated the reason many civilians enter the military is for benefits such as education that (in some cases) can be passed on to their children. There are nearly 750,000 veterans living in North Carolina and 91% of these are male. Victor Glover highlighted the support that veterans receive across the state through various initiatives with a focus on overcoming economic barriers such as homelessness and unemployment. He discussed several topics, including the increased emphasis on female veterans, programs for disabled veterans, the need for off-base transition, and the impact of veterans' treatment

court. Mark Edmonds highlighted other supportive measures designed for North Carolina veterans which includes the Governor's working group for veterans, North Carolina for Military Employment (NC4ME), Lumbee Tribe veteran-focused support, and the Female Veterans Table Talk Initiative. Both presenters shared a host of services including partnering with the military to provide transition services to men and women as they leave active-duty service term and return to civilian life.

## **Committee Updates**

### ***Skills and Education Attainment Committee***

Chair Sherry Carpenter reported that the committee won an NC Evaluation Fund Grant in a second-round submission for a \$50,000 grant in August 2022. After the application was conditionally accepted, the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways project was posted on the NC Project Portal, and the [NC Office of Strategic Partnerships](#) led a meeting for interested researchers to learn more about the project before they submitted their proposals. After a review of several proposals, a research team was selected from NC State University to evaluate the 41 NCWorks Career Pathways. The project is scheduled to start in December and end in the summer of 2023. The committee is also working towards aligning the pathways between the Local Area Workforce Development Boards, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina Community College System and is planning to conduct a separate study to review them. Chair Sherry Carpenter extended appreciation and thanks to Dr. Annie Izod, Tracie Ford, Wendy Johnson, Michael Hoskins, and the Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) for the support and leadership in obtaining the grant. This study will help inform the development of future NCWorks Career Pathways and in turn, help partners meet industry demand for skilled workers to assist North Carolinians in obtaining the necessary training to find jobs that provide a stable career and family-sustaining wages. The chair expressed her excitement in attending the upcoming joint meeting between the commission and the workforce development board directors meeting on December 9, 2022. The committee continues its work on updating the Goal 1 objectives for the commission's revised 2023-25 strategic plan.

### ***Employer Leadership Committee***

Chair Jeff Frederick reported the committee conducted seven employer roundtable events focusing on recruitment, development, and retention issues. These events were held statewide from July to September 2022. The committee is planning to hold a final roundtable with a small group of employers in the coming months. Chair Frederick thanked Cheryl Richards and the staff of Catapult. He expressed his appreciation to April Greene and Linda Hunter for coordinating and facilitating discussions and providing an excellent summary for the committee to follow and use as a guide.

Chair Frederick also discussed the committee's work to update the objectives for Goal 2 of the commission's revised strategic plan for 2023-2025. He stated the committee has put some excellent tools in place to plan and track success by using mechanisms to gather data from the Employer Needs Survey, Pulse Survey, and Employer Roundtables to inform on the progress of work being completed. He shared updates on leveraging employer data. The committee plans to continue using several tracking tools while working towards learning the number of statewide employers that provide training programs among other data. The committee looks forward to applying this data to create some measurable outcomes. During their research, the committee discovered that work-based learning opportunities were granted to 1,181 employers across North Carolina providing training for 2,187 North

Carolínians. The committee was happy to announce that one million dollars was designated for the North Carolina Job ready Workforce Investments grants and there are additional grants offered to Local Area Workforce Development Boards toward existing industry expansion and recruitment of new projects to the state. Additionally, he discussed the growth of 21 regional sector partnerships and 3 statewide industry sector partnerships. Chair Frederick concluded by reporting that all the Local Area Workforce Development Boards will have Salesforce licenses made available to them in the future.

### ***Local Innovation Committee***

Dr. Annie Izod provided the committee updates in the absence of Chair Leslie Walden, who was unable to attend the meeting. The committee last met on October 5, 2022. Dr. Izod highlighted the new round of Local Innovation Fund grants, which will consist of two implementation grants for approximately \$225,000 each, with a separate portion designated in the amount of \$50,000 for a third-party evaluator to review the grants after completion. This round of grants will have a strong emphasis on technical assistance for the applicants. Applicants will be given the opportunity to submit applications on a rolling basis, allowing feedback and secondary support assistance for resubmission of the application if necessary. The funding will come from Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act state set aside funds, which will be administered by DWS and the Local Area Workforce Development Boards. The Local Area Workforce Development Boards will serve as the lead agency for the grants. The grants will be announced on Monday, February 13, 2023, with a webinar following on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, to allow for additional questions relating to the grants. The interactive webinar will allow feedback for anyone who is interested in applying for the grant. It will be recorded for later viewing. The grant applications will be due Wednesday, April 12, 2023, with the winning proposals to be announced on Wednesday, June 14, 2023. Dr. Izod asked attendees to follow up with the NCWorks Commission team if there were additional questions.

### ***Governance & System Alignment Committee***

Chair Chris Egan discussed the committee's edits to Goal 4 of the proposed 2023-25 NCWorks Commission strategic plan. He also highlighted the committee's review of *Change 1 to Commission Policy Statement CPS 06-2021* which provides Local Area Workforce Development Boards with guidance and procedures for customer behaviors which violate the NCWorks Career Center Code of Conduct. Chair Egan highlighted individual changes the committee recommended to the NCWorks Career Center Code of Conduct poster which is displayed in all NCWorks Career Centers across the state. He stated the committee voted to move the policy forward for a vote of acceptance by the full commission during the meeting.

Following Chris Egan's update, Chair Rabon moved to vote on Commission Policy Statement CPS 06-2021, Change 1. Chair Rabon asked if there were any comments or questions before the vote. As the motion was brought to the floor by the Governance and System Alignment committee, Chair Rabon asked for a vote of acceptance. The commission members then voted unanimously to accept *Commission Policy Statement CPS 06-2021 Change 1*.

### **NCWorks Career Center Certifications**

Dr. Annie Izod began by providing the commission with an overview of the certification process and details surrounding the certification criteria, which was created to ensure both physical and

programmatic accessibility of services for all customers. The career centers are assessed across the state every three years to ensure the career center system continues to provide high levels of quality services, seamlessly to job seekers and businesses, as well as to foster performance accountability and continuous improvement.

Dr. Izod further explained that all 22 Local Area Workforce Development Boards have submitted their career center certification applications. There are currently 16 LAWDB's that have been recommended to receive their certification for a current total of 57 certified NCWorks Career Centers. At the February 8, 2023, meeting, the remaining 6 Local Area Workforce Development Boards' 17 NCWorks Career Centers will be recommended for certification.

The commission then recognized 10 local areas that have recently completed their career center certification process. Chief Deputy Secretary Jordan Whichard and NCWorks Commission Chair Tom Rabon presented certificates to Cape Fear Workforce Development Board (WDB) (4 counties with 4 comprehensive centers), Centralina WDB (7 counties with 8 comprehensive centers), CharlotteWorks WDB (1 county with 1 comprehensive centers), Lumber River WDB (5 counties with 5 comprehensive centers), Rivers East WDB (5 counties with 4 comprehensive centers), Piedmont Triad WDB (7 counties with 3 comprehensive centers), Turning Point WDB (5 counties with 2 comprehensive centers), Northeastern WDB (10 counties with 2 comprehensive centers), Foothills WDB (4 counties with 3 comprehensive centers), and Regional Partnership WDB (5 counties with 4 comprehensive centers) local areas.

### **Meeting Wrap-Up**

Dr. Annie Izod stated a survey will soon be sent to all commission members asking if they want to stay with their current committee assignment or choose to serve on another committee, starting in early 2023, coinciding with the updated NCWorks Commission 2023-25 strategic plan. The survey will also include general feedback on meeting locations, workforce tour locations, and the work of the commission. She also reminded all commission members about the joint meeting with the North Carolina Association of Workforce Development Boards—Directors' Council meeting scheduled for December 9, 2022.

Chair Rabon thanked Nutrien for hosting the meeting and he also recognized the staff of the NCWorks Commission for all their hard work. He stated the next NCWorks Commission meeting will be held on February 8, 2023, at the McKimmon Center on the North Carolina State University campus in Raleigh, NC. With no further questions or comments, Chair Rabon then thanked the commission members for their participation in the meeting. There being no more new business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Annie Izod  
Approved on February 8, 2023