



NCWorks Commission Quarterly Business Session

Wednesday, November 8, 2023

Western Carolina University A.K. Hinds University Center | Webinar

1:00 – 2:00 P.M. | Cullowhee, N.C.

Minutes

Present:

Chair Tom Rabon, Andrea DeSantis (*Governor Roy Cooper*), Broxton Ashburn, Daniel Briggs, Shawn Brown, Sherry Carpenter, Rodney Carson, John Wesley Davis, Chris Egan (*Secretary Kody Kinsley*), Jeffrey Frederick, Christopher Gergen, Byron Hicks (*Peter Hans*), Stephen Con Hunt, Suzanne Johnson, Himanshu Karvir, Candace Lowry (*Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell*), Cameron McDonald, Nikki Nissen, Olalah Njenga, Mike Okun, Cheryl Richards, Dan Segovia, Tammy Simmons, Cynthia Speight, Sandra Thompson, Kim Toler, Pam Townsend, Kristie Van Auken (*Superintendent Catherine Truitt*), Hope Williams, and Annie Izod

Absent:

Hugh Allen, Paul Lawler, John Loyack (*Jeff Cox*), Marti Martin Mathews, Ronnie Smith, Jim Van Camp, Leslie Walden, D. Jordan Whichard IV (*Secretary Machel Baker Sanders*)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chair Tom Rabon welcomed the NCWorks Commission members and guests to the fourth and final quarterly business session of the year. He thanked the staff of the A.K. Hinds University Center at Western Carolina University (WCU) for hosting the meeting.

Chair Rabon introduced Rich Price, Executive Director of Economic Development and Regional Partnerships at WCU. Rich shared WCU updates and its role as a principal partner in economic and workforce development across the region. He explained the university's continuous engagement with stakeholders across western North Carolina to ensure WCU is a catalyst for economic growth and stability. He shared his enthusiasm with the General Assembly's decision to provide an appropriation of 100 million dollars to WCU to expand its engineering program.

Chair Rabon thanked Rich Price for his opening remarks and continued by thanking Principal Chief Michelle Hicks and the Tribal Council of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, as well as Terri Henry, Director of the Tribal Employment Rights Office, and Gerard Ball, NCWorks Veterans Employment Representative for hosting the NCWorks Commission and providing a tour of Cherokee. He expressed his appreciation for learning about the economic and workforce opportunities within the community.

Chairman Updates

Chair Rabon recognized several workforce development updates since the August 9th business session meeting. Rabon shared that myFutureNC and the NC Workforce Credentials initiative was recently named a PIE (Policy Innovators in Education) Network finalist for an “Eddy Award” in the category of Best Collaboration. Chair Rabon further explained the state’s educational attainment goal is to have 2 million North Carolinians aged 25-44 to hold an industry-valued credential or degree by the year 2030.

Rabon also shared North Carolina’s designated Main Street and Small-Town Main Street communities have leveraged more than 5.2 billion dollars in public and private investment in their downtown districts since 1980. During the 2022-23 fiscal year, North Carolina’s Main Street programs leveraged \$684,637,060 in local public and private investment and saw 365 new businesses and nearly 3,000 jobs added in their downtown districts.

Chair Rabon shared that Medicaid expansion will launch on December 1st, granting access to health care coverage to about 600,000 North Carolinians who did not qualify before. Medicaid Expansion increases the eligible population of adults aged 19-64 who have incomes up to 138% of the federal poverty level. Chair Rabon explained, “expansion gives health care coverage to single individuals making under about \$20,000 a year. Medicaid expansion will be transformative for access to health care in rural areas, while helping veterans, working adults and their families, and bringing billions in federal dollars to the state.”

The U.S. Department of Labor recently announced Hope Renovations (one of the NCWorks Local Innovation grantees for 2023) was awarded a **Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Grants** in the amount of \$713,892. Chair Rabon congratulated Nora Spencer and Hope Renovations for their efforts in serving the communities in central North Carolina!

Chair Rabon shared that Governor Roy Cooper recently announced Provalus, an IT services company, will create 92 jobs in Columbus County. The company will invest \$500,000 to establish operations in the City of Whiteville. Additionally, Governor Cooper recently traveled to Tokyo with state officials and economic development leaders to promote global investment in North Carolina. Nearly 30,000 North Carolinians work for Japanese-owned companies, with several thousand more scheduled to start in the next five years. These include Toyota, HondaJet and Fujifilm. After Governor Cooper returned from Japan, Toyota announced plans to invest an additional 8 billion dollars in its electric battery manufacturing site in Randolph County, including hiring another 3,000 employees!

Other updates included Epsilon Advanced Materials, a global provider of synthetic graphite used in electric vehicle batteries, will build its first U.S. manufacturing facility in Brunswick County, creating 500 jobs. The India-based company will invest \$649.9 million in this project.

Lastly, Rabon informed the Commission that Governor Cooper has proclaimed the week of November 6th as “Employ A Veteran Week” in North Carolina. Chair Rabon said, “this is a great time to thank our veterans, and to recognize the incredible talent and skills they bring to the workforce. Many NCWorks Career Centers across the state are holding job fairs and other events to connect veterans to new jobs and other services.” He added that career centers serve veterans every day.

Recognition of Member Accomplishments

Chair Rabon congratulated NCWorks Commission Member Olalah Njenga on being named the 2023 Lewis Shattuck Small Business Advocate of the Year Award by the National Small Business Association. Olalah was honored during the opening luncheon of the NSBA Washington Presentation in September 2023.

Congratulations were also extended to NCWorks Commission Member, Jeff Frederick, who was the recipient of this year's Bill Ragland Private Sector Award for Outstanding Achievement in Workforce Development. Jeff was honored during the NCWorks Partnership Conference in October in Greensboro.

Chair Rabon proclaimed the 2023 NCWorks Partnership Conference a big success, with about 700 people attending. Rabon shared that he was honored to help present the NCWorks Awards of Distinction on the Governor's behalf.

Action Item

The first action item of business was the approval of the minutes from the August 9th meeting. Chair Rabon asked for comments or corrections. Having none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Shawn Brown, then seconded by Jeffrey Frederick. There was no opposition. The minutes were approved as written.

Committee Updates

Skills and Education Attainment Committee

Chair Sherry Carpenter presented updates on the NC Career Pathways Evaluation Study. The committee received an update on the study and the findings of the report will be presented to the Commission in February 2024. Carpenter shared that the subcommittee met in September to discuss the results of the career pathways survey. The goal of the survey was to understand how to better leverage services to assist individuals seeking to attain credentials and to secure family-sustaining wages. All 20 Workforce Development Board directors completed the survey. Chair Carpenter stated the inaugural NextGen Governors Page Week was a success. There were nine participants from Capital Area WDB NextGen program. Next year, the committee wants to extend the opportunity to all the NextGen programs throughout the state. Chair Carpenter cited plans to organize a webinar early next year to inform employers on the hiring advantages of previously justice involved persons and the various reentry programs available to help make that connection. Lastly, the committee learned that North Carolina was awarded an NGA (National Governors Association) technical assistance grant to develop and increase youth apprenticeships. Some of the goals are centered around the alignment of our work across Commerce, DPI and NCCCS to assist businesses in hiring youth apprentices. Kristien Van Auken and Dr. Annie Izod are involved in the NGA initiative.

Chair Carpenter turned the floor over to Kristie Van Auken to present updates on the CTE Summer Career Accelerator program. She shared information regarding funding that came from the US Department of Education which was a proportional allocation of nearly 36 million dollars to various public-school districts around the state. In closing, Chair Carpenter reminded the Commission about the

Annual Joint Meeting of the NCAWDB Executive Directors Council and NCWorks Commission to be held on December 8th.

Employer Leadership Committee

Chair Jeff Frederick shared that NC Commerce Labor Economic and Analysis Division (LEAD) finalized a new method for extracting employer samples for the Employer Needs Survey. LEAD and NC State University have completed two contracts, the survey portion, and the data sharing agreement. The committee recently heard an update on sector partnerships which was provided by Dr. Jenni Harris and Ginger Brick. Chair Frederick stated the Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions will offer Sector Partnership Planning Grants to local workforce boards. These grants can pay for the planning and support of new or existing Advanced Manufacturing partnerships. Boards may apply individually or jointly with other nearby boards. Best practices were outlined by Ginger Brick from the Cape Fear MFG Partnership. There are nearly 40 companies who routinely engage in the needs of manufacturing in the Cape Fear region. The companies promote manufacturing in the region and work with three community colleges in the area on training needs. There are quarterly meetings of the entire partnership which are well attended.

Local Innovation Committee

Chair Cynthia Speight remarked the committee recently submitted a spotlight on a local innovation which shared information about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians tribal employment rights office or TERO, which works to customize career pathways focused on an individual's personal interests and skills. The intention is that participants who complete the program will contribute their talents and skills to the tribe and community with a renewed sense of purpose. The Spotlight article focused on the Mother Town Healing Program (MTHP), the TERO Job Bank and the Work Experience (WEX) program.

Chair Speight also shared that NCWorks 102 training was provided to both Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board/Opt-In, J.E.T staff and Capital Area Workforce Development Board/Hope Renovations staff. The training assists with the documentation of grant outcomes. The grantees will present updates at the December 4, 2023, Local Innovation Committee meeting.

Governance and System Alignment Committee

Chair Egan stated the Governance and System Alignment Committee last met on October 17th. During the meeting, the committee reviewed and discussed two new (revised) Commission Policy Statements- CPS 11-2021, Change 1 - Eligible Training Provider Guidelines, Penalties, Appeal Process and Performance Reporting and CPS 06-2022, Change 1 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Monitoring/Oversight of Local Area Workforce Development Boards. The change to CPS 11-2021 includes updates for the following: definition of Out of State Providers, documentation needed for eligibility determination, required performance data for continued eligibility, insufficient performance data, and it provides information on the appeals process. The change to CPS 06-2022, updates the procedures for the exit conference between the Local Area Board staff and the DWS monitors, and it establishes a preliminary response period where questions or issues can be addressed after the exit

conference and updates the possible extended timeframe for the issuing of monitoring reports based on the preliminary response period. Chair Egan then turned the floor back over to Chair Rabon.

Approval of Commission Policy Statements

The Commission voted unanimously to approve both CPS 11-2021, Change 1 Eligible Training Provider Guidelines, Penalties, Appeal Process and Performance Reporting and CPS 06-2022, Change 1-Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Monitoring/Oversight of Local Area Workforce Development boards.

Veterans Services Presentation

Chair Rabon introduced Gerard Ball, Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program/Local Veteran's Employment Representative for North Carolina Department of Commerce in the Southwestern Region of North Carolina and thanked him for his military service. Mr. Ball discussed services provided across the state and explained there are 52 NCWorks Veterans Services positions within the state which cover all 100 counties. He shared information about services provided to homeless and disabled veterans, as well as countless other veterans and family members in need. Additionally, he shared information about the Mountain Community Career and Resource Expo, Buncombe County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), and the Smoky Mountains Veterans Stand Down. Mr. Ball informed the Commission that per capita, Native Americans have the highest service rate in the military, about 19.4% compared to about 14% with other populations in the United States. Chair Rabon thanked Mr. Ball for his informative presentation.

Closing Remarks

NCWorks Commission Executive Director, Dr. Annie Izod, announced that the next NCWorks Commission Business Session meeting will take place on February 14, 2024, in Raleigh at the McKimmon Center. The May 2024 and November 2024 locations are yet to be determined, with the August 2024 meeting occurring in Raleigh at the McKimmon Center. Dr. Izod also informed the Commission that staff recently recorded a Board Member Orientation which covers information needed for new or existing board members. A Microsoft Teams channel was also created with a folder for documents referred to during the orientation. She advised Commission members they will soon receive an email with links to the channel and the webinar.

Chair Rabon closed the meeting by thanking everyone at Western Carolina University and Cherokee, as well as audience members. He then adjourned the meeting and wished everyone safe travels on their return trips. The meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Annie Izod

Approved on February 14, 2024