



## **NCWorks Commission Quarterly Business Session**

Wednesday, August 14, 2024

McKimmon Center, N.C. State University | Webinar

1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. | Raleigh, N.C.

### **Minutes**

#### *Present:*

Chair Tom Rabon, Brock Ashburn, Daniel Briggs, Shawn Brown, Rodney Carson, Sherry Carpenter, Wesley Davis, Robert Doreauk, Chris Egan (Secretary Kody Kinsley), Christopher Gergen, Byron Hicks (Peter Hans), Steven Hunt, Suzanne Johnson, Himanshu Karvir, Paul Lawler, John Loyack (Jeff Cox), Candace Lowry (Secretary Pamela Cashwell), Marti Matthews Martin, Darla McGlamery, Nikki Nissen, Olalah Njenga, Dayson Paison (Governor Roy Cooper), Cheryl Richards, Tammy Simmons, Cynthia Speight, Gregory Thompson, Sandra Thompson, Kim Toler, Pam Townsend, Kristie Van Auken (Superintendent Catherine Truitt), D. Jordan Whichard IV (Secretary Machel Baker Sanders), Hope Williams, and Annie Izod

#### *Absent:*

Chris Arabia, Jeff Frederick, Sharene Pierce, and Ronnie Smith

---

### **Welcome and Workforce Development Updates**

Chair Tom Rabon welcomed the commission members and guests to the [third quarterly business session](#) of the year and expressed his appreciation for the McKimmon Center and North Carolina State University for hosting the meeting. He also commented on how much he enjoyed the preceding workforce tour of the Wake STEM Early College High School in Cary.

Chair Rabon reported on several new workforce developments since we last met in May. North Carolina was named the fifth most visited state for tourism in 2023, up from sixth place in 2022. North Carolina has 227,200 tourism-supported jobs, and nearly 43 million visitors, according to research commissioned by Visit North Carolina. Additionally, for the fifth year in a row, North Carolina ranks in top three states in which to do business. CNBC named North Carolina as the second-best state to do business thanks to our well-trained and diverse workforce, booming economy, and strong business environment.

Since our last meeting, Governor Cooper announced that the Retailer, Ross Stores, Inc. will create 852 jobs in Randolph County. The company will invest \$450 million to build a Southeastern region distribution center in the City of Randleman. Amrep Manufacturing Company, a producer of waste collection trucks, will expand its operations, adding 170 jobs and investing more than \$21 million in Rowan County. Novo Nordisk plans a \$4.1B investment to create new medicine manufacturing facility in Johnston County. The investment marks the largest single life science investment in North Carolina history. It tops the \$1.8 billion investment announcement in 2016 from Novo Nordisk for one of its facilities in Clayton. The project is expected to create 1,000 new jobs in Johnston County. Morinaga

America Foods, Inc., the manufacturer of Famous HI-CHEW Candy Will Expand Operations in Orange County with an investment of \$136 million. The company reports it will create 204 jobs in Mebane. In the most recent development, IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. (NASDAQ: IDXX), a global leader in pet healthcare innovation, will establish a new manufacturing plant in Wilson County, creating 275 jobs. The company will invest \$147 million in Wilson.

The first youth apprentice program for registered nurses in North Carolina has concluded this year with a remarkable achievement of 22 local students committed to apprenticeships at Northern Regional Hospital in Mount Airy, while an additional 19 have signed to continue their employment with Northern Regional Hospital through the Surry-Yadkin Works program. Alamance Community College has broken a 12-year-old record by bestowing associate degrees, diplomas and certificates on 1,468 graduates – 341 more than the previous record set in 2012. Additionally, Winston-Salem State University has been selected as one of six new bioprocessing training hubs that will provide free training to help grow the workforce for biomanufacturing and pharmaceutical industries in North Carolina. The training hubs are designed to offer short, hands-on courses on the manufacturing of biopharmaceuticals free of charge to an inclusive and diverse population from underserved and distressed communities, including historically excluded populations.

### **May Minutes Approval**

Chair Rabon asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 8<sup>th</sup> quarterly business session. NCWorks Commission member Sandra Thompson made the motion to approve, and member Shawn Brown seconded the motion. There being no corrections, the minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Chair Rabon introduced Wendy Johnson, senior workforce development analyst of the NCWorks Commission, who presented the 2023-2024 annual program review.

### **2023 – 2024 ANNUAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

A 2023-2024 Annual Program Review one page infographic was provided to the NCWorks Commission members as part of their meeting packet. Wendy acknowledged that the 19 education and workforce programs from across the state participated in the survey and provided valuable insights as to how they are serving individuals and businesses. She thanked Laura Murray for creating a great dashboard that made the data easy to digest.

Most of the programs are using the NCWorks App and offering services virtually. 14 of the 19 programs surveyed requested to receive training on NCcareers.org. 11 of the 19 programs provided work-based learning opportunities to individuals and assisted with six employers in providing work-based learning.

The top five services to individuals are: job search assistance, resume assistance/writing, interview preparation skills, career assessments and career coaching. The top five services for employers are: job applicant screening, recruitment/job fairs, training, information on tax credits, federal bonding related to hiring, and work-based learning. The top three industries served are: manufacturing, health care and social assistance and information technology. The top five populations served are: adults ages 25 – 54, adults over age 55, unemployed individuals, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities, including low-vision or hearing impaired. Overall program impacts were: 1,413,396 individual receiving services, 37,338 employers receiving services, 5,117 apprenticeships enrollments, 1,145 offering paid internships, and 2,162 offering unpaid internships. Wendy ended the presentation by pointing out that several educational and workforce development programs have significantly expanded their virtual service offerings. Local school districts have increased their capacity to serve students remotely, while state agencies have adapted their policies to accommodate virtual interactions.

Chair Rabon thanked Wendy for an informative report and turned the floor over to the commission's committee chairs for report updates.

### **Committee Updates**

#### **Skills and Educational Attainment Committee**

Chair Sherry Carpenter reported that the committee met the day before and received an update about a new initiative of nclIMPACT, a partnership between Our State, Our Work and the NC Community College System. Both groups have teamed up to provide an interactive, employability course and innovative marketing campaign that offers new insights into opportunity youth and others. The committee also received an update on the NextGen Governor's Page Week, which is August 26-29. Eight registered NextGen participants will receive the opportunity to learn about state government and policy proposals, job shadow, tour government buildings and historic sites, and meet with government officials to discuss how their work impacts North Carolina.

Other reports included updates from the NC Community College System, NC Workforce Development Board Association Directors Council, and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). DPI's results from their analysis of Portrait of a Graduate research with LEAD confirmed that durable skills, which encompass a variety of soft skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, and employability characteristics, such as work ethic and professionalism, are essential to every occupation and are needed to meet employer demand.

Lastly, a subgroup of the committee met last month to discuss interest for the development of a NCWorks Commission Career Pathway Alignment Toolkit. The guide would assist the workforce development boards and career centers in the framework of their certified career pathway programs. It would include information on the best practices, such as bridging programs with other pathway systems, model programs, unique pathways, recommendations, research and resources. The committee also met with Dr. Jenni Harris, director of business services, Division of Workforce Solutions, to discuss alignment with their sector partnership toolkit and academy program curriculum. The committee will continue to explore the need for this resource.

#### **Employer Leadership Committee**

On behalf of Chair Jeff Frederick, NCWorks Commission Executive Director Dr. Annie Izod delivered the Employer Leadership Committee report. In meetings, the Employer Leadership Committee has discussed the Employer Needs Survey, Employer Forums, Reentry Guilford, opportunities for work-based learning, and the workforce tour for the Wake STEM Early High School College. For the Employer Needs 2023-2024 Survey, Josh Levy provided a presentation to the committee on the key survey findings. The survey collection ended in February, with Survey #1 receiving 1,919 responses and Survey #2 receiving 381 responses. LEAD has been analyzing the data and building a Tableau dashboard to display results. The survey has been conducted every two years since 2014. It is led by LEAD and managed by the NCWorks Commission, and the survey data is collected by phone via the Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services at NC State University. The survey consisted of 5 samples: All employers, manufacturing, healthcare, construction, and STEM. The survey key findings: hiring difficulties eased from 2021 and are now at pre-pandemic levels, employability issues dominate the reasons for hiring difficulties, the barriers to employment are important to consider, opportunities to grow work-based learning, and childcare policy interests remains high. Furthermore, it revealed that most employers are optimistic about future business conditions. The full report will be presented at the November 13<sup>th</sup> NCWorks Commission meeting in Hickory.

A subcommittee of the Employer Leadership Committee recently partnered with the Department of Adult Correction and the NC Community College System Office to explore opportunities for job training and apprenticeships for reentry individuals. Commission member Tammy Simmons led this effort for the first convening in Guilford County. There are six companies that are ready to meet again to learn more

and start the process of implementing their reentry apprenticeship program. The next meeting will be September in Greensboro.

As a follow up from the Employer Needs Survey report, the NCWorks Commission is partnering with the 20 Local Workforce Development Boards to conduct employer forums across North Carolina with local employers to collect valuable information that can be used to recommend workforce development policies and strategies. The forums include employers and other local area stakeholders from economic development, community colleges, and service providers. The forums are 90 minutes and cover a range of questions including topics on workforce planning, economic development, and roles of workforce development organizations. Optimally, they have asked the local areas to invite only 8-12 employers, and to limit the number of stakeholders to no more than four so to avoid distractions. The sessions will be completed by September 30<sup>th</sup>. The commission will hear a final report on the forums in November.

### **Local Innovation Committee**

Chair Cynthia Speight reported that the Local Innovation Committee maintains an active agenda with innovative practices and last met on August 6<sup>th</sup> when they discussed upcoming webinars and presentations, including the presentation of the two grantees and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Evaluation Group-Strategic Evaluations which discussed their Mid-Point report. The committee continues to provide technical assistance as needed to Local Innovation grantees.

The committee hosted the webinar series, *The Local Workforce Boards' Innovative Best Practices - Using Innovative tools and Resources to reach Individuals and Businesses*. The next webinar will be on August 27<sup>th</sup>, *The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace*. In the works is a webinar focused on the childcare challenges and their affect in the workplace.

Additionally, a \$125,000 reentry grant was awarded to Rivers East WDB for the Keeping It REEL (Re-Entry Entrepreneurship and work-based Learning) program. This grant will seek to train people who were formerly incarcerated to build new careers and potentially start their own businesses. Partners include Rivers East Workforce Development Board and the local NCWorks Career Centers overseen by the board, Pitt County Reentry Council, Pitt Community College, the East Carolina University Crisp Small Business Resource Center and NC IDEA. An additional \$25,000 was set aside for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party Evaluator.

### **Local Innovation Grant Presentations**

The first presentation was from Building Hope – “Preparing Gender Minorities for Careers in Construction” with Capital Area Workforce Development Board delivered by Jasmin Volkel and Sarah Campbell. Hope Renovations, a Chapel Hill-based nonprofit organization, provides pre-apprenticeship training in construction trades, case management to help resolve employment barriers like childcare, internships and additional coaching services to help women succeed on the job. The grant allows Hope Renovations to expand services beyond Orange County and support the training of approximately 40 participants. The participants complete a trades training program, WBL/internship, and a career development program to learn workplace safety training, education, and employability skills for entry-level employment in the skilled trades and construction industry. They can receive three credentials: pre-apprenticeship, NCCER Core, and OSHA-10 certifications. Expected outcomes: 40 women from CAWD service area graduate from the program’s five-week trades training program (8 have completed the training); 30 participants complete the program’s four-week internship program (8 have completed so far); and 20 participants participate in the career development program, including one week of classes, and 6 group career coaching sessions bridging the transition from training to employment (8 have completed). The second presentation was OPT-IN and J.E.T. “Creating Opportunities for Youth” with Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, given by Deisy Vazquez and Ricky Iniguez. OPT-

IN (Opportunity Internship) serves recent high school graduates by matching them with local employers for an eight-week, paid exploratory internship and involves three important components: Work Experience, Mentorship + Professional Development. Recently, the program was awarded the *Governor's NCWorks Awards of Distinction in Outstanding Innovative Partnership*. Similarly, J.E.T. (Jobs + Education + Training) program focuses on opportunity youth between the ages of 18-24, connecting them to quality employment opportunities that offer family-sustaining wages in Burke County. Participants receive mentoring and professional development and must follow the W.I.O.A. and/or the NextGen eligibility process. The impact of these programs in Burke County has resulted in the number of opportunity youth steadily declining in the last three years - 22.2% in 2022 to 18.2% in 2024. The program has 31 cumulative participants, 24 enrolled in WIOA, 30 employer partners and 32 certifications earned by participants. Both programs focus on outreach to communities of color. Partners include Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, The Industrial Commons and its affiliate program "Work in Burke," Burke Development, Inc., Western Piedmont Community College, Burke County Public Schools, NCWorks Career Center - Burke County, N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Meridian Specialty Yarn Group, Inc. Overall, the program impact is a steady decline in opportunity youth in Burke County the last three years.

#### ***Update from Strategic Evaluations, Inc.***

Dawayne Whittington, founder and director, Strategic Evaluations, Inc., provided the Local Innovation Grant Mid-Point Evaluation Report for both programs. He reviewed the logic model for Building Hope, with the long-term outcome of the project is to increase the number of women and non-binary individuals, and overall number of workers in the construction industry and to address gender pay disparities. The logic model for OPT-IN and JET long-term outcomes are to decrease the overall number of opportunity youth in Burke County, create a positive economic impact, and to create a community of alumni who will receive continued support and encouragement to be active citizens within Burke County. Both programs attribute their "secret sauce" for success to be their community partnerships. The models will continue to be observed on how they work and how they can be extended.

#### **Governance and System Alignment Committee**

Chair Chris Egan reported that the committee heard two presentations. The first part of the meeting was a presentation on the 2024 Annual Program Review Results by Wendy Johnson. According to North Carolina Session Law 2012-131, the NCWorks Commission is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the programs and plans of agencies operating federally or state funded workforce development programs. In North Carolina, five state government agencies (the Department of Administration, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Instruction, and the N.C. Community College System) administer 19 workforce development programs around the state. Wendy discussed several trends this year's survey has identified among these programs.

The second part of the meeting was a discussion on the USDOL/USDOE review and feedback process on the 2024—2027 WIOA Unified State Plan. James Bain, deputy director, NCWorks Commission, highlighted several areas of federal feedback, including compliance issues and technical assistance received. Additionally, he discussed how the final published version of North Carolina's WIOA Unified State plan incorporates the state's responses to this federal feedback for it to be fully approved and published.

Chair Rabon thanked the committee chairs for their informative reports and the Capital Area WDB/Building Hope team and the Western Piedmont WDB/ OPT-IN and J.E.T team for their presentations, along with Dawayne Whittington, from Strategic Evaluations.

### **Closing Remarks**

Next, Chair Rabon acknowledged the meeting dates document for 2024 and 2025 included in the commission members' packets and noted that the next quarterly meeting will be on November 13<sup>th</sup> at Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory, N.C., at the Workforce Solutions Complex.

Chair Rabon introduced Dr. Annie Izod executive director, NCWorks Commission, for a brief update.

### **Dr. Annie Izod's Remarks**

Dr. Izod reminded the members of the 2024 NCWorks Partnership Conference on October 9 – 11<sup>th</sup>, in Greensboro. There will be a commission member luncheon on October 10<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM, followed by the Governors Awards Banquet later that evening. If commission members are interested in attending, they are to contact James Bain, deputy director, NCWorks Commission.

Governor Cooper proclaimed August as *Leaders in Equitable Economic Development Month*. His proclamation encourages state leaders to make sure economic and workforce development resources are accessible to all and to continue to assess and promote the needs of HUBs and small businesses. The Andrea Harris Equity Task Force (AHTF) sunsets at the end of the month, and the proclamation highlights Ms. Harris' work as a trailblazer in this space and charges all of us to collaborate with various statewide organizations to continue her mission.

In conclusion, Dr. Izod offered congratulation to Pat Sturdivant, executive director, Capital Area Workforce Development Board, who was recently awarded the *Triangle Business Journal 2024 Corporate Leadership Award*.

Chair Rabon asked the members if there were any additional new business or discussion on the reports needed to be heard from the floor. N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Jordan Whichard praised the Innovation Grant Awardees and the director of Strategic Evaluations for their work and earlier presentations. He reminded the members that the governor included in his current pending budget a request for state funding to expand the Local Innovation Fund Grants program. Deputy Director Whichard also acknowledged the absence of Division of Workforce Solution leaders, Dr. Andrea DeSantis, Dr. Jenni Harris, and others, who were meeting with Jobs for the Future leaders, congressional delegates and staff, and workforce development boards, such as Mountain Area and High Country, at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to learn about how our workforce system impacts the western areas of our state, from job training to tourism.

Next, commission member Dr. Hope Williams remarked on the importance of page programs, internships and apprenticeships, stating her first exposure to government was as an intern and encouraged the members to host these programs. She then introduced her guests, interns Alexis Thompson, a recent Campbell University graduate, and Davion Dunn, a recent St. Augustine University graduate. Both were in attendance to learn more about state government and the NCWorks Commission.

To conclude, Chair Rabon thanked members and wished everyone safe travels on their return trips.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Annie Izod

Approved on November 13, 2024