

KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Thursday, February 25, 2021
8:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.
Zoom virtual meeting

Members Present: Caitlin Blair, Cornelius Cotton, Eric Friggle, Harold Reynolds, Jackie Beard, Jennifer Carman, Jenny Lampton, John Archer, Kristin Wingfeld (proxy for Dr. Marty Pollio), Michael Hesketh, Rebecca Fleischaker, Sadiqa Reynolds, Sarah Davasher-Wisdom, Sean O’Leary, Tom Quick, Tony Georges, Dr. Ty Handy, Vincent James

Welcome and Greeting – Chairman Tony Georges

Mr. Georges hoped everyone was doing well and not too bothered by the winter weather. He also congratulated Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Thompson of the Urban League for their great new facility.

Vote Needed: Review and Approve January 2021 Minutes – Tony Georges

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Archer and seconded by Mr. Quick. None were opposed.

Saying Thanks to Three Vital Members of KW’s Family – Tony Georges & Michael Gritton

- Ms. Jackie Beard – For always sharing important, courageous, and necessary opinions
- Mr. Roger Cude – For helping to get Humana more involved with KentuckianaWorks
- Mr. Rider Rodriguez – For all of his incredible work on the team for more than a decade

Vote Needed: Consent Agenda from the POC – Cindy Read & Mike Hesketh

Ms. Read explained the law required KentuckianaWorks to issue a Request for Proposals for the construction trade pipeline program (i.e., KentuckianaBuilds) and reprocure contracts every five years. Last week, the POC approved a request not to exceed \$380,000, which is more or less what it is now. Half the funding comes from WIOA funds, half from Governor’s Discretionary Funds. The second item was more informational, and explained how three RFPs would go out in March. Each one will require a committee of Board Members to select contracts. Existing contractors will be eligible to re-apply. Ms. Read clarified that POC Members could also take part, in addition to Board Members. Mr. Hesketh said the total commitment requires multiple days to fit in all the meetings, but the actual time involved is about 4-6 hours total. He encouraged Board Members to join a review committee if they could find the time to do so.

A motion to approve the construction RFP was made by Mr. Quick and seconded by Ms. Beard and Ms. Fleischaker. The vote passed with none opposed, with Ms. Reynolds abstaining.

Vote Needed: Recommendation from Staff and the POC Regarding The “Comprehensive” Career Center in our Region – Cindy Read

Ms. Read shared that KentuckianaWorks has benefitted from getting some wonderful low-cost/no-cost space out in the regional counties. After the Shelby and Bullitt centers closed many years ago, mobile teams were created to serve there. Meanwhile in Louisville, career centers can be found at NIA, at Cedar, and at the KMCC. Mr. Williamson shared a map of current locations. The law is non-negotiable and very specific that as a workforce board, KentuckianaWorks must

provide a comprehensive one-stop center with partners (or at least access to partners) including Wagner-Peyser (the state-funded career service), the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, veterans' services, YouthBuild, Job Corps, etc. In Louisville, the comprehensive one-stop center has been at 600 W Cedar for at least 10-12 years. Staff have questioned many times if that was the best place to be. We love our partners, and it is a big space; but on the negative side, it is known as the "unemployment" office (rather than "employment" office) and it is across from the jail, which is not ideal. Basically, it does not really allow us to create the impression of a career center.

During the Bevin administration, Kentucky went with the approach a lot of states have done: no unemployment services in-person (either online or over the phone). This has since become a major issue, and Gov. Beshear brought unemployment services back to Cedar. There are wonderful people there who do an amazing job; but with the pandemic, it has even more so become known as the "unemployment" office. Additionally, other workforce boards around the state have talked about doing a lasting shift to more virtual services (our virtual workshops, for example, have been so successful they will continue to be done remotely). Another piece that has become influential was the KentuckianaWorks budget. Staff have received notice of an expected 10% decrease in WIOA allocation (around \$500,000, so a significant funding cut). The Cedar Center costs ~\$60,000 yearly in rent, and is just a couple of miles from the NIA Center. Given all these factors, staff felt it would be best to leave Cedar and transfer to NIA.

Ms. Regan Wann, the One Stop Operator for our region, will be asked to lead this effort to have NIA certified by the state as our region's new comprehensive career center. NIA was certified as an affiliate center a year ago. After an application is approved by the POC and the Board, it would be submitted to the KWIB, though it was not 100% clear if they have the ability not to approve it (this may just be a formality). The entire process will take a couple of months to be completed; staff would like to start this process, but not without a green light from the Board first. The POC approved the plan last week. A final application would be brought to the May Board meeting. Mr. Gritton has had conversations with state leadership so they would not be surprised at this update. The proposed last day for WIOA services at Cedar is May 31. NIA already has some partners there (Voc-Rehab, American Indian Employment Project, some youth and adult services). The state currently has no Wagner-Peyser staff in our region, which is an issue; but they have two positions posted, and it would be great for one to join us. In an earlier discussion with Ms. Read and others, Mr. Georges mentioned how this move would respond to the emerging realities of how services are provided. NIA may not be the final stop, and there will be a thorough process evaluating other options that will happen later; but for now, we cannot really afford the rent at Cedar while it is being figured out. Mr. Gritton added that when Governor Bevin took office five years ago, there were 200 people across the state working in the Office of Employment & Training; by the time he left office four years later, that number was down to under 50. Part of the reason staff were added to 6th/Cedar was because there was a lot of state staff there to partner with; as those numbers have shrunk, there are not as many staff anymore!

Mr. Georges said this provided an opportunity for the center to rebrand and offer something positive about the future. He felt the timing was right (in a post-pandemic world) and that putting it in the West End would do a lot of positives, something that had been talked about for a while.

Ms. Fleischaker asked how this would be different from what the Urban League provides (and Goodwill will be providing). Ms. Read said there was no question some similar services would be provided, and KentuckianaWorks partners with both of them. Funding streams allow us to do things like training. There has not been as much federal funding in recent years, so this would help free up funds. The Urban League has a very good workforce center, and they operate a program with us (i.e., Kentuckiana Builds). Part of the move was ensuring KentuckianaWorks would raise that up and not needlessly duplicate, but there will be a lot of work to go around. Mr. Gritton mentioned discussions KentuckianaWorks has had with Goodwill's Ms. Rena Sharpe and Ms. Marsha Berry. Goodwill has been changing their model to focus more on removing barriers. When folks are ready for employment, Goodwill can refer them to KentuckianaWorks for connections to jobs and/or job training opportunities when funds allow them. He and Ms. Read had a meeting with Goodwill scheduled for tomorrow, and a meeting with the Urban League later today. It is incumbent on staff to make sure collaborations go well. Ms. Berry added Goodwill has found employment is at the top of their model, rather than the bottom. People have to deal with overcoming barriers first. Ms. Reynolds appreciated Ms. Fleischaker's question, and thought the Urban League had been able to partner very well with KentuckianaWorks (with more work needed on better relations with Goodwill, though).

Ms. Beard thought what Mr. Georges said about rebranding and a smooth transition made sense. She recalled difficulties in finding good spaces when she helped with KHCC (the now-closed Kentucky Health Career Center) real estate. She agreed to keep a longer-term solution in mind, but felt this worked in the interim. Ms. Read added one thing that made the situation challenging was that KentuckianaWorks cannot pay for capital improvements, and to find a great space at a good rate was indeed a challenge. One thing she, Mr. Gritton, and other staff have talked about is a possible need to raise funds to refurbish a center at the right place, with a year-long plan to get there. She also noted a need for potential locations in southeast and southwest Jefferson County. The model of getting free or low-cost space in the counties has helped tremendously, though Northern Kentucky recently built a beautiful brand-new career center in Covington they raised money for with no federal funds.

Mr. Quick added how after discussing this earlier with Ms. Read, Mr. Gritton, and Mr. Georges, they felt now was the right time to make the move. There have been some challenges at 6th/Cedar for a while. He did not want to discount how the NIA Center is a good transitional spot; however, where KentuckianaWorks goes from there is critical, as that becomes the permanent home for the foreseeable future. Leaving Cedar now would be an easy decision; where we would go next from there for a flagship home somewhere in Jefferson County would be hard.

A motion to authorize certification of the NIA Center as the comprehensive career center was made by Ms. Fleischaker and seconded by Mr. O'Leary. The vote passed with none opposed.

Vote Needed: Strategic Priorities for KentuckianaWorks 2021-22 – Michael Gritton

Mr. Gritton explained the first page and a half of the document served as a kind of shortcut, whereas the metrics, deliverables, etc. can be found in the full version. A sixth priority about productive state partnerships was added after many Members mentioned it in October. With Mr. Georges and Ms. Reynolds on the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, staff felt it was appropriate to lift this up as a separate priority; for example, building a relationship with Lt.

Governor Coleman and the Education and Workforce Cabinet, as their funding for Kentuckiana Builds and Code Louisville was important. Mr. Gritton then pointed out pushing for racial equity was obvious. There was lots of work on alignment (i.e., SummerWorks and a new tech platform). In October, there was a repeated theme of connecting jobseekers with the available jobs that employers could not fill. He also acknowledged hearing about data and research, and how a huge amount of pain at the staff level has come from trying to get years of data from different systems into a researchable database. This was also painful because non-WIOA programs were using the Client Track system for years; now, they were moving to Launchpad. KentuckianaWorks staff have been meeting 3x/week with the contractor. Some other things were also added under Convening & Partnering; KentuckianaWorks is attempting to be recognized as a bi-state region with our peers at Southern Indiana Works. Finally, he referenced a meeting he had with Mayor Fischer and Ms. Fleischaker about a week ago where they discussed convening a group of action-oriented influencers on African-Americans to explore whether we should create some kind of “community impact” effort focused on Black employment and median income rates.

Mr. Georges said there was a lot in the document, and that it would be the playbook the Board holds Mr. Gritton and his team accountable to doing. Mr. Hesketh said it was an outstanding document, noting it continued to evolve and improve. He noted how in the metrics piece, some goals were listed as “and ongoing,” but others did not. He felt it was critically important to not have a metric unless there was a specific goal. Mr. Gritton said Ms. Read had also pointed this out, and an earlier draft had another page or two. This would be adjusted in the next version. He agreed with Mr. Hesketh to set specific goals and shoot for them. Mr. Georges then referenced the racial equity dashboard to measure services offered to African-Americans. Initially, he would like to see that percentage go up; but later, when equity starts to happen, it should go down. Ms. Reynolds mentioned the goal was not just how many people were served, but how many got a job. She appreciated Mr. Hesketh’s comments about having an end goal in mind. Mr. Gritton replied that would be the next iteration of what is done, and that it was part of a conversation he had with Mayor Fischer, Ms. Fleischaker, and Mr. Kendall Boyd about convening a community table. Discussing African-American employment, KentuckianaWorks can affect it to some degree, but there were a lot of other players, too; for example, Mr. Gritton said he was on a committee co-chaired by leadership from LG&E, MSD, and Louisville Water Company making efforts to lean-in and hire more African-American staff and contractors. Those companies have identified around \$5b worth of capital projects happening in the next 4-5 years, and part of the possibility of this collective impact table was getting folks like that to join and collectively report together. He asked the Board to think back to 55,000 Degrees program to get a comparable idea of collective impact. He felt there had been a real change in Louisville in the past year, as there is not a meeting he is in where people are not talking about racial equity. Overall, he felt there was an opportunity here to use convening power to make a measurable difference. Mr. Georges was not sure if the table would be led by KentuckianaWorks, but the collaboration would certainly involve partners like the Urban League, GLI, Goodwill, and Metro United Way. In the chat, Ms. Reynolds asked how this work would be connected to the work being done by GLI. Mr. Gritton praised Ms. Tarquinio and Ms. Davasher-Wisdom for doing an amazing job at GLI, and that KentuckianaWorks would be eager to work with them. Ms. Reynolds said because of who is at the table at GLI (e.g., CEOs), the Urban League would share information with them to push on the accountability side. She encouraged involved stakeholders to not be redundant in their work.

Ms. Beard referenced how in the past it has been mentioned KentuckianaWorks legally cannot advertise, and asked how the Board could position KentuckianaWorks to promote the future of work. Mr. Gritton emphasizing that WIOA prohibits the organization from advertising its services while simultaneously encouraging outreach. The same law also encourages boards to lead career pathways efforts (such as the Academies of Louisville), which is why KentuckianaWorks tries to get more experiential learning at the high school level. The bigger challenge are adults who do not know what comes next for them.

Mr. Quick asked what kind of feedback KentuckianaWorks staff had about the strategic plan and priorities after their internal discussions about it. Mr. Gritton said there was a tremendous amount of excitement among the staff about the role they could play in advancing racial equity. Mr. Gritton said people who do this kind of work are drawn to making a difference in some way. The staff have enthusiasm about making sure that work gets done, that it would not just be lip-service; that is why there is so much discussion about data and measurement, and why convening with other players to leverage all available resources is at the top of the strategic priorities list.

A motion to accept the strategic plan – with the condition it would be improved upon and added to along the way – was made by Mr. Hesketh. A second came from Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Quick at the same time. The motion passed. Mr. Quick said it was a big deal, and Mr. Georges agreed.

Executive Director's Report – Michael Gritton

Mayor Fischer has been president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors after being elected to that role last summer. He is starting to step out in trying to make federal investments in workforce development be one of USCM's top advocacy priorities (it makes it easier they have a willing audience in the Biden administration). USCM had a leadership session last week, and one of the sessions he hosted was specifically about a need for additional federal investment. The Relaunching America's Workforce Act ("RAWA") has been re-filed, and it would essentially triple or quadruple the amount of funding for workforce boards to do the kind of job training efforts they would like to and can do. It would also create a new round of challenge grants for community colleges, which would be in lockstep with collaboration with Dr. Handy and his team at JCTC. The Mayor is in a unique role and has a chance to be really influential. Mr. Gritton also reminded Board Members they can be influential in their conversations with federal officials (e.g., McConnell, Paul, Guthrie, Massie, Yarmuth). Mr. Gritton mentioned the possibility of taking Code Louisville statewide. A proposed \$2m plan was submitted last week to LG Coleman to partner with Northern Kentucky, Lexington, and EKCEP (Teleworks). Mr. Gritton gave kudos to Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Luerman for their work. Finally, Mr. Gritton mentioned a new ~\$300,000 proposal with JCTC about lineman training. This is an in-demand job that pays well and cannot be outsourced, so KentuckianaWorks is being pretty aggressive about asking for funding and linking it to the priorities the Board just approved.

Ms. Berry and Mr. Georges echoed congratulations and thanks to Mr. Rodriguez for his work on the Wired65 initiative among other contributions to the organization. Mr. Georges also again thanked Ms. Beard and Mr. Cude again for their lengthy and distinguished service to the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47 AM.

KentuckianaWorks Staff:

Aleece Smith
Angella Wilson
Bailey Preston
Barbara Ferrell
Brian Luerman
Christopher Locke
Cindy Read
Dr. Darrius Brooks
Elizabeth Davis-Terhune
Jaime Disney
Joi McAtee
Katie Elliott
Lori Hiser
Mary Rosenthal
Michael Gritton
Patrick Garvey
Regina Phillips
Rider Rodriguez
Sarah Ehresman
Stacy Roderick
Tobin Williamson
Zakiyyah Raymore

Contractors and Guests:

Angela Wells-Vereb
Ashley Janicki
Charlotte Kerns
Christine Tarquinio
Deb Giordano
Demitra Suazo
Josh McKee
Lisa Thompson
Marsha Berry
Monica Collins
Regan Wann
Renee Walters
Sara Dodeci
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