

KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – STRATEGIC PLAN SESSION
Friday, October 30, 2020 – 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Board Members: Caitlin Blair, Neal Cotton, Eric Friggle, Harold Reynolds, Jackie Beard, Jennifer Carman, John Archer, Dr. Marty Pollio, Michael Hesketh, Neil McElroy, Roger Cude, Sadiqa Reynolds, Sean O’Leary, Stacey Wade*, Tami Hatfield, Dr. Ty Handy, Tony Georges, Vincent James, Willie Byrd

CLEOs Present: Judge John Brent (Henry Co.), Judge John Riley (Spencer Co.), Judge Dan Ison (Shelby Co.), Judge Todd Pollock (Trimble Co.)

Ground Rules and Expectations – *Michael Gritton and Jacob McAllister*

Mr. Gritton appreciated everyone taking time to join, acknowledging that everyone is busy and there was a lot going on in the world at the moment.

The main goals for the day were to create 3-5 strategic priorities for the next two years, work on racial equity using *A Path Forward* as a framework, continue efforts to align the board (“what”) with staff (“how”), and finally to encourage ongoing Board Member involvement.

Discuss Pre-work Materials: SWOT and Labor Market Intelligence – *All*

The conversation began with a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Mr. Wade asked about the “work-first” mindset, which was listed as a weakness; Mr. Gritton said we help people get a job and list employment as per required by WIOA, but is it a success if they are only making \$10-11 / hour? KentuckianaWorks plans to do more research on long-term outcomes for the people it serves. One encouraging sign Mr. Gritton pointed out was that entry-level wages seem to be going up at large employers across the region. Mr. McElroy said he noticed these low-wage jobs were often in the service sector; in the manufacturing sector, where he is, they are begging for workers (welders, truck drivers, etc.) that cannot be found.

Mr. Georges lamented a lack of connection/alignment with potential state-level partners in Frankfort, but he wasn’t sure if that could be classified as a weakness, opportunity, or threat. Mr. Gritton touched on the various local, state, and federal funding streams KentuckianaWorks gets for its various programs, and how it can be a complicated issue at times in terms of service delivery. Ms. Reynolds praised the cutting-edge labor market intelligence as a strength, but cautioned that it had to be used correctly.

Several participants referenced in the chat how the number of workforce initiatives in Louisville can potentially be a strength, but this could also be a threat if the different organizations and employers do not collaborate well together. Ms. Schook and Mr. Cude expressed concerns about this gap in the video chat, but were not sure whether to classify it as a weakness or opportunity.

Mr. Archer said “supportive services” used to mean work boots, but now it might need to mean home office materials after the switch to more remote work opportunities. Around forty percent of his workforce has switched to remote, and many of them will be staying there. Mr. Friggle said his company was seeing similar numbers, and employers need to be prepared for this future

workforce issue. Mr. Cude pointed out this presents an opportunity for a Louisville-based workforce to do remote work for anywhere. Mr. Georges also mentioned being proactive in recruiting remote work opportunities, perhaps using EKCEP as an example; “the best defense is a good offense,” and it would be wise to position the workforce of Louisville to work anywhere.

Mr. Georges emphasized the debate about work-first mindsets v. upskill/training mindsets, and how a lot of private dollars and resources are available to be used on the latter. Mr. Archer said a lot of his employees start as contingent workers but end up as permanent employees; 150 new employees in recent months. They are moved to wherever the best fit is for them once they get started. Ms. Reynolds said the pandemic presents an opportunity for the Board to open doors for people that haven’t had doors opened to them before, with a need for the Board to be more proactive. Historically there is not much evidence for companies following through on that, she said; training programs have not been as receptive as they said they would be. Mr. Gritton said these “career ladders” opportunities – tuition reimbursement opportunities, training, etc. – need to be explored more, as a lot of private companies just do not talk much about what kind of advancement opportunities they offer. It is hard to tell it to others if we do not know it ourselves, so this definitely presents a potential opportunity for the Board to explore more.

Mr. Archer said his biggest concern as an employer at the moment is talent acquisition, as he is starved for employees right now. His business is changing constantly, especially becoming more dynamic in the COVID-era. Mr. McElroy echoed these remarks, saying he has sixty open manufacturing jobs that he cannot fill even after utilizing four different recruiting services. Both Board Members expressed concerns about connections and communications between employers and jobseekers, which was also emphasized by Mr. Friggle.

Ms. Reynolds compared workforce to foster care; the long-term goal is a stable environment / good-paying job, but if someone is in danger, they have an urgent need for safety / some work immediately. She also lamented how different sources of funding have different data entry systems, which takes up an extraordinary amount of her staff’s time that could be spent making connections between employers and jobseekers and/or providing wraparound services. There is a continuous need for more employer investment in their employees. Mr. Friggle compared it to a chicken and the egg scenario; employers keep investing, employees keep seeking, but they do not want to get on an endless loop. Ms. Reynolds said she and Mr. Gritton developed a business plan on this issue five years ago, she will dust it off and send out to the employers.

Mr. Archer stated that a major threat is a need for better data tracking and reporting systems, which is also an opportunity to improve. Mr. Gritton used the state’s unemployment insurance technology woes using antiquated coding systems as one example of how data collection is a significant issue for the state. Mr. Archer is concerned that with incomplete data, KentuckianaWorks might not receive an appropriate level of state and federal funding. Ms. Reynolds expressed concern with the different data reporting and requirements that are used for various funding streams, which control a lot of staff time that could be spent in other ways.

Finally, Mr. Georges mentioned the importance of keeping the needs of individual jobseekers in mind, not just looking through an employer lens; he has been involved with KentuckianaWorks for a long time and has started to realize the business community is just one part of the equation.

Review Survey Results – All

71% of the survey's respondents said the organization's work aligns with its values, with feedback such as participants being "work ready," utilizing and leveraging data, solutions being equity-focused, and experimentation. 79% of the survey's respondents said the organization's work aligns with the vision that has been established, with comments on regional preparation for workforce, being customer-focused and not just employer-focused, and, again, being "work ready." 79% of the survey's respondents agreed the organization's work aligns with its mission, with specific thoughts such as properly defining dignity, employer engagement being needed to create quality jobs and improved communities, and wondering if the organization is inspired to create lasting change. Ms. Blair felt the dignity of work was especially important to talk about; there is not much dignity to work, she said, when someone has to work three jobs just to get by, or if they are classified as "temporary workers" by the same company for three or four years. Mr. Reynolds echoed Ms. Blair's comments, saying there needs to be a widespread shift from "jobs" to "career pathways."

The survey also featured open-ended questions about various priorities: Alignment, Youth Employment, Adult Employment, and Career Pathways. There is also the question of whether to incorporate Racial Equity into all of the work we do, or to make it its own separate priority.

Ms. Reynolds said it was imperative to have better alignment and collaboration with organizations that do workforce development at some level (being careful to clarify she was not claiming this was or was not happening already; she just thought it needed to be mentioned).

Mr. Georges would like to see long-term tracking of participant data. Mr. Gritton said KentuckianaWorks has a lot of data it has not been able to mine yet, which is a goal for 2021. Ms. Wingfeld added to this topic, saying JCPS has interest in long-term tracking of its students. Ms. Ehresman said doing more with long-term participant tracking is one of her top priorities for the Labor Market Intelligence unit. She mentioned being excited about the possibilities. Mr. McElroy explained how Bullitt County employers have been working with local students in a co-op model; if they show up and do good work, they receive a job offer. Ms. Schook praised the Career Calculator, but wondered how to get it in front of more students and parents as a resource.

Dr. Pollio emphasized the Explore program's work JCPS is starting in some of its middle schools that focuses on giving students opportunities to be engaged and get new experiences/credentials – giving them a "diploma plus" – rather than lining students up into career pathways, noting there has been some community pushback about making ninth graders choose career tracks at such a young age. Mr. Georges said alignment and pathways work are long-term issues; if there is anything 2020 has taught us, it is that things can change in an instant. This led Mr. Friggle to think about short-term workforce readiness for community college students.

Ms. Reynolds suggested it would be smart to focus on low-hanging fruit opportunities (i.e., goals that are easily attainable), especially in the current economic situation. There were employers on the call saying "we offer jobs and training," and there are also jobseekers saying "we are ready to work and need money now." She noted the need to get people into jobs that offer training, though again, people need rent money now. Everyone has to do a better job connecting. She also

emphasized the need to focus on jobs for adults; JCPS has homeless students, she said, because the parents are homeless. We do a great job training kids, but what about their parents? She concluded her thoughts by encouraging the Board to work on racial equity issues, encouraging the Board to acknowledge its discomfort. Mr. Gritton promised Ms. Reynolds that KentuckianaWorks will do a better job making the match between employers and jobseekers.

Mr. Hesketh wondered how there could possibly be so many who need work when there are so many employers he knows who are looking for workers, companies who would hire applicants on the spot. Ms. Reynolds replied there is often a disconnect between CEOs and HR offices, that jobseekers simply do not believe employers sometimes. Ms. Reynolds cited transportation and childcare as two barriers that she sees over and over again in potential workers. Mr. Gritton said this issue has been found in SummerWorks at times, as well, and how federal funding often comes with strings that limit the type of wraparound services that can be provided. Mr. Gritton gave the example of how GE Appliances' second shifts ends at 12:30 A.M., but TARC stops running that bus route at midnight. Ms. Schook also referenced how barriers often impact jobseekers, and how HR officials have a need to better understand these situations; for example, large companies might offer some sort of employee rideshare program, but smaller companies often do not have those types of resources. Ms. Reynolds said employers must do better about getting jobseekers into jobs, organizations like the Urban League can ably handle setting up virtual meetings.

Ms. Read referenced the two proposed charts about KentuckianaWorks' priorities, with one showing racial equity as something that infuses everything done by KentuckianaWorks and one showing it as a separate item altogether. She asked for Board input on how to address it. Ms. Blair has been hearing about intentionality, so she likes having equity as a separate issue on par with the others. Mr. Georges suggested a third image, with everything else needing to be inside the larger circle of racial equity work, to show how it encompasses everything. Ms. Thompson said that was stated well and racial equity cannot be ignored. Mr. Archer agreed on the importance of racial equity and diversity, saying intentionality in this topic was a strength.

Small Group Discussions, followed by Large Group Report-outs – All

1. Eric Friggle, Harold Reynolds, Stacey Wade, Willie Byrd, Roger Cude
 - a. Two-way communications are key for KentuckianaWorks, Board Members, employers, jobseekers, racial equity work, inclusivity... everything. Mr. Reynolds emphasized a need to focus on improving all aspects of communication in the next year, including employer marketing techniques to jobseekers. At a Board level, a 'help me help you' mindset is needed to help achieve everyone's goals. In other words, one obvious win from the conversation was realizing the need to connect people with positions.
 - b. It is important to identify the needs of today and tomorrow, with a long-term plan that is also flexible enough to make short-term changes.
 - c. Expanding small- and mid-sized business career opportunities is also important; Ford, GE, Humana, UPS, etc. are important, but there are also untapped resources at smaller employers.
 - d. Some members cited a need for Board Members to better understand the data and opportunities that are available to them.

- e. Mr. Wade said racial equity is the cornerstone for all of the work that KentuckianaWorks does; Ms. Thompson likened racial equity to being the bottom level of a pyramid, the foundation upon which all other things stand.
2. John Archer, Kristin Wingfeld, Neal Cotton, Neil McElroy, Mike Hesketh, Dr. Ty Handy
 - a. Youth employment / development is important, but the team echoed what Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Wade had said earlier in the discussion: adults need jobs now. There has been a lot of talk on the Board about alignment work in the schools, but has the Board neglected adult career services and training in the meantime?
 - b. However, adults often have real barriers and challenges to work; this is especially important in light of COVID-19 and protests about racial inequities.
 - c. There is always a question of funding; who pays for what? What can Board Members and industry leaders do to help mitigate the barriers jobseekers face?
 - d. The team agreed that advocacy and strong working relationships are key, and cited a need to broaden and deepen the Board's relationship with Metro Council.
 - e. Racial equity work must be kept front and center to the work done by the Board and KentuckianaWorks staff. Mr. Reynolds explained a need to set up systems that make employment possible with a racial equity lens in mind, saying that employers need skin in the game, employers need to adequately compensate the organizations that help them find new employees.
3. Caitlin Blair, Jessie Schook, Lisa Thompson, Tami Hatfield, Tony Georges, Jackie Beard
 - a. Ms. Thompson reminded the group of Louisville's history of redlining and Jim Crow laws, which has created a multi-generational wealth gap for communities of color; the Board must keep in mind the impact that has had on jobseekers. She echoed the earlier comment of the need for employers to have skin in the game.
 - b. The team pondered what private-sector HR officials could do to better mitigate the barriers and benefits cliff jobseekers face, and how various best practices could be implemented on ways to removing those barriers. Ms. Beard reiterated a need to keep the benefits cliffs in mind, and how that influences worker decisions; being on the Board and receiving that LMI has helped her realize that slightly higher salaries are not always good for low-wage workers. Ms. Blair suggested that wrap-around services could be one way to address this, and recognized that addressing workplace barriers aligns with the racial equity work encouraged by the authors of *A Path Forward for Louisville*. She suggested KentuckianaWorks needs to be a community leader in this issue.
 - c. There was a call to identify strategies related to building employee capacity and resilience (e.g., hiring success coaches, the "teach them to fish" parable, etc.).
 - d. The work needs to be done in an immediate context of connecting people with positions for employers, but also in a context of creating services and support structures that lead to long-term success for employees.
 - e. Ms. Thompson referenced the need to ensure places that offer great jobs are ready to both find and keep the jobseekers who need those jobs, especially with the immediacy related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

KentuckianaWorks Staff:

Aleece Smith
Angella Wilson
Brian Luerman
Chris Locke
Cindy Read
Elizabeth Davis-Terhune
Jaime Disney
Joi McAtee
Katie Elliott
Latricia Swope
Laura Paulen
Lori Hiser
Mary Rosenthal
Michael Gritton
Patrick Garvey
Regina Phillips
Rider Rodriguez
Sarah Ehresman
Stacy Roderick
Tobin Williamson

Board Proxies & Other Guests:

Betty Fox, Louisville Urban League
Jacob McAllister, the Oliver Group (Facilitator)
Jessie Schook, Greater Louisville Inc.
Joshua McKee, Louisville Forward
Kristin Wingfeld, Jefferson County Public Schools
Lisa Thompson, Louisville Urban League
Tony Waterson, Southern Indiana Works