

**KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

Thursday, August 27, 2020

8:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.

Zoom online meeting

Board Members Present: Caitlin Blair; Eric Friggle; Firas Hamza; Jackie Beard; Jennifer Carman; Jenny Lampton; Jonathan Westbrook; Marty Pollio; Mary Ellen Wiederwohl; Mike Hesketh; Neil McElroy; Roger Cude; Sadiqa Reynolds; Sarah Davasher-Wisdom; Sean O’Leary; Tami Hatfield; Tom Quick; Tony Georges; Willie Byrd

Welcome and Greeting – *Tony Georges*

Thanks to everyone for joining the meeting this morning.

Mr. Georges welcomed new Member Neil McElroy, who briefly introduced himself as a long-term manufacturing professional (currently at Material Handling Company in Mt. Washington) who is passionate about workforce issues.

Board Conversation with Mayor Greg Fischer – *Tony Georges and Mayor Greg Fischer*

Mayor Fischer thanked the Board for the work they have been doing to help maximize human potential, especially the focus on a deeper commitment to racial equity. The existing systems have not worked for many people in our community, especially Black people, for many decades. This time is our chance to leave our mark on history, to make a difference. There have been some 90 days of protests for racial justice in Louisville, and these issues alongside the pandemic have created a delicate balance of protesting and safety. It is a difficult time to navigate our city.

In terms of workforce in particular, we have to look at not just what we are doing, but what we can do more of. We have seen some successes: the JCPS Academies and alignment, Evolve502, SummerWorks and the Tech Academy, KYCC (the Kentucky Youth Career Center), and Tech Louisville programs, for example. All this work aligns with the programs we have been pushing out and investing in, with the Future of Work initiative and our goals of helping people attain living wages. Our HBCU Simmons College continues to make good progress, as well.

Another issue is funding. We could use three times the amount of federal funding we receive right now, so continued advocacy with federal officials is super important. The DOL grant for Code Louisville was transformative a few years ago. It is also important to continue work we are doing with foundations, such as JPMorgan Chase, Gheens, James Graham Brown, and others. The state has helped us with KentuckianaBuilds. Still, we need to do more and move faster.

The Mayor thanked the Board, calling their work urgent and important. Mr. Georges referenced the spirited conversation last meeting about what we can do more of rather than what has been done in the past. Mr. Quick mentioned his appreciation to the Mayor and asked if there was anything from a programming perspective KentuckianaWorks could do that he would like to see. Mayor Fischer replied, “How do we get more intentional about rectifying the skills gap? What are Black voices telling us?” The Mayor said it was not really a “breakthrough comment,” but emphasized a need for intentionality and removing barriers to help people increase their skills.

Ms. Beard was on a call last week where the focus was on internet access being a game-changer. A few years ago, there was discussion in the community about the internet becoming a public utility, and she asked for an update on that. Mayor Fischer said the city has been making good progress on that, citing the announcement of 30 new hotspots in Russell in coordination with the Russell Place of Promise and a mile of fiber going down along Broadway. It is one of the city's focus areas right now, a critical issue for topics such as job applications and online learning.

Mr. Gritton mentioned he had sent out some pre-reading about the programming and strategic plan subcommittees. Part of what has come out of those has been what the Mayor has been describing: we have been figuring out how to strengthen and deepen partnerships with the Louisville Urban League, our long-time contractor and friend, and being more intentional about doing all we can to help. Before we try to raise outside money, we wanted to see how we can leverage what we already control and how we can improve coordination and information sharing. Over the next month, we will try to figure out how to make our partnership stronger and deeper.

Mr. Georges told Mayor Fischer he wished the Mayor could have been on the call at the last Board meeting. The Board is committed to not just do more of the same; rather, they will find a way to make an impact on racial equity in the workforce. There will be a move to action quickly. Mayor Fischer again thanked the Board for what they are doing, and for their time, attention, and continued dedication. He closed by saying we have got to do this racial equity work, to have non-stop focus and energy on it. We have an opportunity; let's get it done together.

Further Dialogue on Efforts to Deepen Impact on Black Residents – *Tony Georges and All*

The aforementioned pre-reading had five things to consider about how we move forward and do things differently. Mr. Gritton cited the multiple meetings going on around this kind of work, saying Ms. Davasher-Wisdom and Ms. Reynolds specifically have been on multiple calls with him. KentuckianaWorks recognizes it is making a difference for African-Americans; what we are trying to figure out is how to reach the next level with our efforts, to scale it up. A committee made up of staff members, board members, and invited guests met to figure out how to best work with Black-led organizations, emphasis being "with" rather than "to." The second meeting was held yesterday. Mr. Gritton said it is obvious to him and other staff members the two trusted Black-led organizations KentuckianaWorks can focus on are the Louisville Urban League and Russell Place of Promise. Employers ask to connect to this work, but we do not have a systematic way of how to martial that request to West Louisville organizations; that is an easy opportunity to do something about. Look at the employers represented on the Board – Humana, GE Appliances, UPS, and so on are always looking for people. We are doing job fairs and doing work, but trying to make it more systematic and share the data better. The Urban League counts their job placements, we count ours at NIA, but we are not aggregating to show our combined impact. Mr. Gritton said there will be a more concrete plan ready by the September meeting.

Ms. Reynolds said the Board has to understand the position the Urban League finds itself in. Ms. Reynolds said "I'm working with a staff of basically 30-36 people, and maybe 6-7 of them in workforce... We're the human version of Indeed.com. We get resumes from the community, we get employers asking for jobs," and they have to be connected. There used to be 2,500 people come out to job fairs at the Convention Center, but the League did not know how many got placed and wraparound services were not available. Now, LUL staff individually screen resumes,

sit down with folks because retention is just as important as placement. What she and Mr. Gritton have talked about is how to increase human potential. The challenge is the League is doing everything staffing agencies do to match the right people to the right jobs, but without the funding or staffing behind it. Yet the same people running through resumes and working with employers are also the people getting calls in the middle of the night about client obstacles. There is not a shortage of jobs or of people wanting to work; the challenge is matching them correctly. Mr. Gritton said KentuckianaWorks is trying to figure out how to add horsepower to LUL's work; "We are proud of the work we do, we want to do more." Ms. Beard asked if there are duplicates in the placements in data of KentuckianaWorks and the League. Mr. Gritton replied it's something that needs to be worked on, as there is not a shared data system. At the same time, we do not want to create more work for the already understaffed six people! Ms. Reynolds said since LUL has social security numbers, she is confident they are not the same. LUL is the oldest HUD certified agency in Louisville, has been through 14 audits, people have bought \$12m in mortgages after leaving their office. It is the largest free tax prep center, the largest expungement center. Partnering with the League is not just about its name, it is about the work that gets done; there were 23,000 visits in 12 months. Mr. Quick said no one knows KentuckianaWorks better than Ms. Reynolds, even though she gets pulled in 1,000 different directions. Mr. Quick thought it was critically important for fellow Board members to continue to leverage our relationship in a way that benefits KW, LUL, and, most importantly, the individuals served. It would be a mistake to not double down on this partnership. Ms. Davasher-Wisdom declared everything Ms. Reynolds described is valuable, but a lot of employers just do not know about it; consolidating this information into one workforce portal would be beneficial.

Mr. Georges referenced focusing on employees and not just employers, as was discussed at the last meeting. Metrics are important, but keeping score about who gets credit is not as important as employees getting good jobs. Mr. O'Leary added the employee/employer issue becomes a bigger deal when we have 3% unemployment; at 15%, it is a different ballgame. There is a small movement now to use technology to alleviate Ms. Reynolds' pains with her team so they can better use their time – for example, Indeed.com will help prioritize resume lists. As he has thought about this over the past 3-4 years, Mr. O'Leary has realized we need to make sure we bridge the skills gaps. We have the data and the data science, but we need to bring it together and do something with it, to focus on a community-based system that does a match of jobs, skills, and individuals. Mr. O'Leary said he would be reaching out to some of the folks on the Board about this, as there is an opportunity for Louisville to move the needle here. We have smart people and good intentions, but a lack of efficiency. Mr. Hamza recommended utilizing LinkedIn more.

Mr. Georges asked if there were any objections to Mr. Gritton and his team digging deeper and coming back with a more concrete plan, and there were none raised. Mr. Gritton referenced the "Good Jobs" part and how trying to define wage levels can be controversial; that will be addressed more in September. He and Ms. Reynolds worry the pressure to get people a job does not always mean a good job. Mr. Hesketh added two points: 1) in the manufacturing world, staffing companies are being used to help find employees. He would help in any way he could; Ms. Reynolds said she would be calling him today. 2) GLI was working on a job start then transition program, and his business is all-in. The entry wage is not where people want to be, but they provide a great place to start.

Vote Needed: Minutes of June 25, 2020 Meeting – *Tony Georges*

Mr. Quick made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Byrd. It passed with none opposed.

Vote Needed: Consent Agenda for August – *Cindy Read*

There were three quick items on the Consent Agenda for the Board to review:

- The Targeted Occupations List (using last year’s list for now, will review in January);
- Contract renewal YouthBuild up to \$600,000 (that contract is highly impacted by how much money is raised for SummerWorks);
- Issuing an RFP for a new platform to help manage opportunities for work-based learning (internships, job shadows, etc.); the final price will be negotiated at a later date.

Ms. Reynolds made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Cude; it passed with no objections.

Annual Report, Videos, and Celebration of Past Year’s Successes – *Michael Gritton*

Mr. Gritton gave kudos to KentuckianaWorks communication team members Patrick Garvey and Bailey Preston for the annual report (<http://www.kentuckianaworks.org/year-in-review>).

Mr. Gritton introduced a new video for the ShelterWorks program, featuring participant Sidney. Mr. Gritton praised Mary Rosenthal and Alan Watts for their persistence and amazing work. With reports full of numbers, sometimes individual stories are lost; he hoped this video encouraged the Board to be proud of the work KentuckianaWorks does. Ms. Read echoed Mr. Gritton, saluting Ms. Rosenthal, Mr. Watts, and Ms. Wells-Vereb for their work. Mr. Georges was struck by the video participant saying “Every time I needed something... everybody knows somebody.” Mr. Georges looked at the agencies and companies represented on the Board and said “I am so impressed by the power of our network.” Mr. Burnette, Ms. Giordano, Ms. Davasher-Wisdom, and Ms. Lampton all praised the video in the Zoom chat.

Presentation and Discussion on “the Benefits Cliff” and Possible Impacts on Prospective Workers at Various Wage Levels – *Sarah Ehresman*

Ms. Ehresman gave a ten-minute presentation that succinctly but expertly explained how the “benefits cliff” works, referencing cost of living specific to Louisville, the federal poverty line, public assistance thresholds, and a hypothetical scenario of a single mom of one young child moving up in her career. Mr. Williamson would email the slides to everyone after the meeting.

Mr. Georges had heard about the benefits cliff, but never seen it presented in that way. He wondered, “what is our role as a workforce board, what can we do?” adding “I don’t know the answer.” Ms. Ehresman proposed phasing out benefits gradually rather than having them just fall off a cliff. She pointed out that from an employer’s perspective, it is important to understand why someone might not take a job promotion, especially if it is for a role in the \$10-18/hour range. Mr. Gritton said this issue was brought up because KentuckianaWorks is always wondering how to get employers to pay a little more so people can do a little better. We have not martialed Board resources to help legislators realize how people may be worse off if they are making a little bit more due to losing childcare, healthcare, etc. Ms. Davasher-Wisdom would like to follow-up with KentuckianaWorks staff to share this information with Kentucky House leadership. Mr. Burnette was struck by seeing how long it takes workers to get back to where they were pre-cliff.

Ms. Beard asked about resources for wrap-around services, if workers could see “this is where they are, this is where you go to get them?” Mr. Gritton said it was probably not written down anywhere. Ms. Beard said as employers, “we have to take some ownership of that.” It is not just about paying workers, but it should also involve emotional support; how do we help workers support themselves? Ms. Sharpe from Goodwill said they have several hundred employees, and Goodwill has taken a step back to evaluate what services are provided for them. If employers want to step up, phase one is figuring out where workers are with social services. There is not enough money simply to rely on social service providers like LUL; employers must play a role.

Executive Director’s Report – *Michael Gritton*

Mr. Gritton had two things to discuss. First was recognition of something that had not yet succeeded – Opportunity Youth efforts. The Metro Council did not take Mayor Fischer’s recommendation to give the Kentucky Youth Career Centers \$1 million; instead of giving it to KentuckianaWorks, the Council will be giving it to the Metro Office of Resilience and Community Services, who will then issue an RFP. KentuckianaWorks would prepare to write a proposal, but has learned we are going to have to spend more time interacting with Metro Council members in the future. Mr. Gritton did not know why the Council would not choose to put funding at the place that is already serving the targeted population at scale. He encouraged the Board to tell Council members about their work on the Board, and how proud they are of what we are doing.

The second thing was that Mr. Gritton has been in his current role for 18 years; during that time, KentuckianaWorks has had two fantastic partners at the state in Susan Craft and Josh Benton. Mr. Benton recently left, and the state has been making strange choices without consulting anyone who does workforce work. Things have been moving around (including Wagner-Peyser functions, unemployment insurance, and trade adjustment and assistance programs), and now most of what used to be the Workforce Cabinet has moved or is moving to the Labor Cabinet. Mr. Gritton is trying to find out where the money is, who is making decisions, and so on. Mr. Gritton plans to meet with the new commissioner Marty Hammons at 11:00 A.M. later today, and he hopes to figure more things out then. No one at KentuckianaWorks knows who is in charge of deciding whether the KEESuite data system will be replaced or not, for one example. The Board can expect more to be reported at the September Board Meeting; for now, just know there is a lot of uncertainty, which is rarely good.

Finally, Mr. Gritton gave kudos to Ms. Ehresman for her report, saying she took a really complicated subject and made it simple and plain in ten minutes, which is really tough to do.

Mr. Georges thanked everyone for attending. The meeting adjourned at 9:58 A.M.

KentuckanaWorks Staff:

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

Special Guest:

Mayor Greg Fischer

Contractors and Guests:

Angela Wells-Vereb
Ashley Janicki
Charlotte Kerns
Deb Giordano
Eric Burnette
Grace Simrall
Jennifer Welch
Jessie Schook
Joshua McKee
Kathryn Griseto
Lisa Thompson
Marsha Berry
Monica Collins
Patricia Williams
Rena Sharpe
Renee Walters
Sara Dodeci
Shatrece Johnson
Tanelle Smith
Violet Skinner