



**KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Thursday, May 25, 2023 – 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
at Greater Louisville, Inc**

- Members Present:** Jonathan Westbrook, Jennifer Lampton, Eric Friggle, John Archer, Monica Collins, Patricia Williams, David Bizianes, Mike Hesketh, Rocki Rockingham, Christine Tarquinio (a proxy for Sarah Davasher-Wisdom), Harold Reynolds, Jeff O'Brien, Ty Richardson, Cornelius Cotton
- Staff:** Michael Gritton, Alicia Pardo, Christopher Locke, Angella Wilson, Patrick Garvey, Aleece Smith, Sarah Ehresman
- Contractors/Guests:** Sara Dodeci, Lynn Rippy, Rena Sharpe, Ashley Janicki, Rosell Hamilton, Rodney Cross, Yvonne Jones, Renee Walters, Martha Stephenson, Kimberly Boyd-Lane

Welcome and Greetings – Acting Chair Jonathan Westbrook

Chairman Jonathan Westbrook welcomed everyone to the Board Meeting and thanked them for attending.

Update and Discussion: The Spot – Young Adult Opportunity Campus, In the Aftermath of the Shooting on April 10th – Michael Gritton and Rena Sharpe

Michael reviewed the facts around the shooting at The Spot on April 10th, which happened the week of the Strategic Planning Retreat. Michael introduced Rena Sharpe to talk about the management at The Spot and the safety measures taken for the students and staff.

Rena talked about the steps that are taken by the staff when it comes to traumatic events like this. She started by stating that the staff at the Spot are resilient and understand the dangers when working with an at-risk young adult population who want to turn their life around. She emphasized to the committee how hard it is for these particular young people to escape the violence they have lived in. She stated that she and Michael are appealing to the Metro Council for funds to help expand The Spot to help more young adults that are hurting and in need of the programs. She also stated that they have prioritized full-time armed security at The Spot, and they met with Officer Haygood and Officer Collins from the LMPD to gain guidance on how to help the students and staff feel safe going forward. In conclusion, she stated that they are not going to quit helping these young people, and they are continuing to look for a safer larger location for The Spot.

Michael reaffirmed the alignment that KentuckianaWorks has with this work, and they will continue to get funding to support the work. He stated that Mayor Craig Greenberg added a \$2 million addition to KentuckianaWorks' Budget to support this work with young adults, which the Metro Council is now considering. This will not only maintain the current operations at The Spot Downtown, but it will help us open up another location for The Spot to expand. Eric Friggle asked if there is a known percentage of the young adults that have criminal backgrounds that are serviced at The Spot. Rena stated that there are about 40-50% of young adults have this barrier.



Vote Needed: Review and Approve Minutes from February Meetings – Jonathan Westbrook

There was a quorum, and a motion to accept the February Meeting minutes was made by Mike Hesketh and seconded by John Archer with David Bizianes abstaining. The motion passed.

Vote Needed: Review and Approve the Consent Agenda Item from the Program Oversight Committee– Michael Gritton, Mike Hesketh

Michael stated that several contracts that the Program Oversight Committee approved now need to be approved by the full Board. A summary of the items was sent out in advance, and he provided a very quick summary of the key highlights. Chairman Westbrook asked if there were any questions or comments, and when there were none, a motion to approve the consent agenda was made by John Archer and seconded by Rocki Rockingham. The motion passed unanimously.

Follow-up Discussion – Strategic Planning Retreat and Direction Going Forward – Michael Gritton and Jonathan Westbrook

Jonathan Westbrook started with a brief overview of the Strategic Planning Session that was held back on April 12, 2023. He stated that our job today is to set the strategic direction for the staff and to tell them what additional information we need or want from them to be able to do that. What they've presented to us is what they thought they heard at the Strategic Planning Session back in April. So, we'll start first with the Priorities that they've outlined, to get your feedback on whether they've gotten those right or not. Then we'll spend some time considering the four "doors" they laid out for us last time, to see if we can provide them more clarity on which of those doors we're recommending as our path forward. Is there more clarity we can recommend on these? Lastly, we'll try to get into the proposed Mission, Purpose, and Values, which were sent out ahead of time for us to consider. Jonathan started with the three priorities outlined in the staff memo:

1. Racial equity
2. Jobs with pathways to careers (and "middle-class" wages)
3. Alignment – not just from high school to employers, but across the workforce development ecosystem

He pointed out something the staff noticed at the Retreat, which was while the Board continued to place Racial Equity at the top of the priority list, there wasn't much discussion of it after that. He brought it back to the Board for further discussion, is there more detail we want to provide on this. He noted the loss of the strong voice of Sadiqa Reynolds at the Board table and asked others for their thoughts on this issue.

Ty Richardson asked Michael how he envisions the staff using the priorities in 12-18 months. Michael said let's take the example of the Board's new framing around Alignment. For the last 6-7 years, we've spent a ton of staff time working on alignment issues, specifically the alignment between what high school kids at JCPS and the other regional school districts are learning, and what employers want them to know when they graduate if they are going to start work, rather than college when they graduate. What we heard at the Retreat was the Board's interest in knowing more about how other parts of the workforce development ecosystem are aligned (or aren't), not just how high schools are aligned with employer needs. If that's really what the Board means when it says "across the workforce ecosystem," then we need to think about what resources we have, and what roles we can play, in that broader space.



What we thought we heard at the Retreat was, “Before we can go deeper in a particular issue area or focus on a particular population with workforce challenges, we want to know more about the current state -- who is doing what already, what are the perceived gaps, how could we as a Board contribute to a better future state in that area? Essentially, we’d understand that the Board wants to go deeper – in background information, current funding picture, who is already in the space – before determining whether it wants to make a bigger commitment to a particular area or population. We would then, of course, organize future Board meetings and background materials to present that new level of research and background.

Michael circled back to the new framing of the Board’s priorities. Previously, one of our top 3 was “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs,” which we as a staff took to mean any job is a good job for a person who doesn’t have one. The new framing, “Jobs with pathways to careers (and “middle-class” wages),” is more than slightly different, because we hear in that a new focus on career paths and jobs that offer benefits that help people thrive. If that’s what the Board means, that will also help guide day-to-day staff work, as well as content at future Board meetings.

Ty Richardson asked, it sounds like the staff is thinking about these three priorities as key outcomes that will be a filter for decision-making, as we prioritize work. Jonathan Westbrook added that he thinks that’s exactly the role of the Board, to set that direction for the staff so that they’re day-to-day work and activities can be aligned around the priorities we’ve set for them.

John Archer commented that because of the program execution, racial equity is a part of KentuckianaWorks’ core and should be retained as such. He also noted that he doesn’t see any divergence between the Alignment work with high schools, and the young adult work we do for those who haven’t successfully transitioned to work or school because we’re just getting to them earlier if we help them in high school. But either way, we’re doing racial equity work that is important. Why not do both if we can?

Eric Friggle stated that he thinks Jobs with Pathways to Careers ought to be our top priority, and when we do that well, we’re already doing Racial Equity work too, because so many of our customers are African-Americans. But he worries about whether we can sell to young people the opportunity to start with a job that might lead to a career down the road – is that too far off in the future, especially for the young people we serve?

When Eric asked whether we can sell young people on jobs that pay \$15-\$20 an hour and whether that gets them to a “middle-class wage” in Louisville, Sarah Ehresman explained that the current living wage for a single adult with no dependents is just over \$16.00 per hour. Most participants at The Spot have dependents which means the living wage is between \$20-\$25 per hour. Michael stated that the pathway from \$15 as a starter pay to \$20 is easier to obtain today than it was back in 2010 when starting pay was often at \$9.50 or \$10 an hour.

Rena Sharpe added that the average placement wage at The Spot is a little over \$16.00 per hour. But the key is we’re helping them get credentials or other skills that can help them move up over time from that entry-level wage. Jonathan Westbrook point out that this is what the Board spoke about at the Strategic Planning Session because it speaks to the career pathway part of our focus. If we’re getting these customers a part-time job at a fast food restaurant, we’re not doing much to help address that career pathway focus. But if we’re helping them get credentials that get them a job in a field with a lot of upward mobility, that can make a big difference over time.



Patricia Williams wanted more context around racial equity and what the intended outcome was from the Board's previous strategic planning work back in 2020 because she wasn't on the Board at that time. She noted that a lot of our program efforts serve a lot of black and brown people, and there's probably a way to call out that work explicitly when we're talking about our Career Pathways work too.

Jonathan Westbrook noted that we had outcomes we could look at, we had anecdotal evidence we could look at, and we had data from Sarah that there were systemic obstacles for sure. So as a Board, we were interested in helping to overcome those systemic obstacles, whether that was housing, or transportation, or child care. We were trying to take a holistic approach to removing those barriers wherever we could.

Michael added that ever since the Board has prioritized racial equity, KentuckianaWorks has tried to target individuals with barriers, not just finding starter jobs, but a good job that will lead to a possible career. Rocki Rockingham stated that leading with racial equity is important because it has to shape how we think about equity. While she applauds that so many of our programs are serving high percentages of black and brown customers, we still haven't achieved equity, so we need to keep our focus on that goal. Unless it's a priority, we will not get there. Patricia stated that having such a large percentage of our customers be black and brown people is actual evidence of the continuing problem we're trying to address.

Rocki Rockingham emphasized that it is the systemic part of the problem that we have to pay attention to and tackle for the narrative to be different in the end. Ty Richardson noted that he passionately agrees with what Rocki just said, but noted that the question he's grappling with is knowing there is an ecosystem of organizations that exist to try to address those systemic issues, what role does this organization play in trying to do that? The priorities we're identifying ought to be filters that help us choose how to spend our time and our money. If one drives more of these outcomes than the other, we should choose the one that does so. I cannot emphasize enough my commitment to racial equity, but I'm struggling with how much that issue is this organization's primary goal. To give people an idea to react to, I'm wondering if it wouldn't be better to put racial equity in our mission statement so that our priorities were Jobs with Pathways to Careers, and Alignment to get Partners to catalyze action across the Ecosystem so that we're helping ensure more of those organizations get after this goal of racial equity.

Jonathan Westbrook stated that he thought racial equity should be a priority and not be buried in a mission statement. He talked about The Spot searching for a new location, specifically in downtown Louisville because they're trying to prioritize serving the population most in need. That's an example of a decision that's put through the filter of our priorities, and it certainly includes the Career Pathways and Alignment elements, but it's also explicitly about our racial equity goal. Rocki Rockingham agreed with Jonathan Westbrook, keeping racial equity as a priority keeps us honest, and keeps it as a filter that we have to run everything through. Jeff O'Brien reaffirmed and stated that this also gives KentuckianaWorks' staff the filters to design programs. The Spot serves the 12,000 dislocated youth in Jefferson County and a big percentage of those youth are African American. When we think about systemic problems of the city, and to Ty's point, there are agencies doing work across the community, but what can KentuckianaWorks do to affect the problem of youth violence, where a recent report indicated we're among the worst when comparing us to our peer cities? This is the work that can directly affect it – designing programs to get young people out of the cycle of violence and trauma that they are in, and that program design and program outcomes are a top priority. The racial equity goal has to be a priority lens for the work we do and the work we want to do in the future.

John Archer asked that by keeping it first, it will drive change with the partners and city government. So that everyone will know what we as a Board are about. Mayor Greenberg should know that everything



being done at KentuckianaWorks is being filtered through a racial equity lens first. Christine Tarquinio asked Michael if there was any of this conversation with Mayor Greenberg and what his thoughts were on the workforce strategic priorities. Michael stated that he is meeting with the new Economic Development Director, Pat Mulloy, and will then proceed to discuss with the Mayor about these topics within the next month or two.

Eric Friggle asked how KentuckianaWorks would measure success for these priorities, especially the one around racial equity. Michael highlighted the racial equity dashboard on our website <https://www.kentuckianaworks.org/dashboard>. This shows overall and individual program outcomes based on racial equity. Sarah Ehresman stated that one area they have tracked is the job placement for black and white customers. Right now, their wages are about on par, but for us to really address this issue, we'd want to see wages for black workers higher than for their white counterparts. Another area we're working on is job quality under Aleece Smith's leadership, which can also have a big impact on racial equity.

Jonathan Westbrook stated that at the Strategic Planning Retreat, the staff laid out 4 options for what are the potential strategic directions to pursue. He listed the following:

1. *Stay the course*, stick to our knitting, and focus on continuous improvement over what we already control/influence;
2. *Take a more focused approach* by identifying one or two specific challenges we want to go deeper into and determine the best way for us to make a difference in addressing that challenge;
3. With so many players trying to address some aspect of workforce development, and many of them trying to do so with a focus on racial equity, *focus on convening partners* to leverage efforts and avoid duplication; or
4. *Pick an alternative approach* not articulated above.

He asked to go around the table and have each member of the Board speak individually and voice their opinion on these options, and if there's a question you'd like to pose to the staff about the information they can bring it back at a future meeting, what would that information be

John Archer stated that based on the level of success, he would stay the course with minor revisions. The big question is where is the biggest opportunity where if we could find new money we could use it most wisely to make the biggest impact? Rocki Rockingham reaffirmed staying the course, but also asked where are the biggest opportunities where we can make the biggest difference. She liked the idea of trying to engage with the state legislature about potential new investments in populations like our young adults.

Ty Richardson stated that it is necessary to create an aligned roadmap first so that we can understand where the partnerships and the greatest impact could be, and that may inform some significant shifts. He stated that until this is complete, it's hard to endorse staying the course as an option at this time.

Eric Friggle believes that taking a more focused approach on community partners to ensure that we're not duplicating efforts is important and will help us focus on what needs to get done. Mike Hesketh affirmed he wants to stay the course, but also to establish the roadmap so that we know what others are doing. He cited how much good work is going on now between school districts and their community partners, work that wasn't happening 5 or 10 years ago to the same degree. He also commended the fundraising prowess over the last few years, but as we're raising more money focused on youth and young adults, that very well may shift the focus of the Board over time, since we'll need to deliver results for that



new investment. Patricia Williams stated to stay the course because the demand for jobs is there. She thinks we need to have the information about who is doing what under the “roadmap” idea so that our interest in being the “first call” for those with a workforce question or concern can be fulfilled.

David Bizianes agreed with the sentiments around staying the course as the best option. He’d also welcome more feedback from staff and the core folks on the ground so that if they have recommendations where they think we could focus resources to deliver better results, I think that’s what we should do.

Jenny Lampton agreed to stay the course especially the work being done at The Spot. That has been a tremendous improvement! She wanted to also consider partnering with as many people as they can. Monica Collins also agreed to stay the course. She stated that working with the schools is huge. If we can get them into a career, hopefully, we’ll see fewer of them coming into the Career Center trying to find a pathway to a career. Cornelius Cotton reaffirmed staying the course and also emphasized keeping racial equity number one on our list. He said the violence plaguing our city is caused in part because people don’t have careers, and when we help them get that, it helps with the violence too. Christine Tarquinio agreed with Mike Hesketh, it’s a “yes and.” I can tell you there are a lot of players in the workforce space, so knowing more about who’s doing what can certainly help us identify gaps where the Board can make a bigger difference.

Executive Director’s Report – Michael Gritton

Michael stated that WIOA will be the lowest percentage of the KentuckianaWorks’ Budget in his 20-year tenure in FY24. The funds will be leaning more towards The Spot and finding a better and safer location for our core location in downtown Louisville.

With no further discussion, Acting Chairman Jonathan Westbrook then adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 29, 2023.