



**KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Thursday, January 25, 2024 – 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Greater Louisville Inc., 101 S. 5th Street, Suite 2300, Louisville, KY**

Members Present: Tony Georges, Jonathan Westbrook, Eric Friggle, Sarah Davasher-Wisdom, Harold Reynolds, Jeff O’Brien, Kim Blanding, Jennifer Lampton, Monica Collins, Rocki Rockingham, Ty Handy, Mike Hesketh, Patricia Williams, Cortney Burden

Staff: Michael Gritton, Alicia Pardo, Patrick Garvey, Sarah Ehresman, Evelyn Woock, Angella Wilson, Aleece Smith, Chris Locke, Regina Phillips

Contractors/Guests: Rodney Cross, Sara Dodeci, Deb Giordano, Rena Sharpe, Martha Stephenson, Tracee Whitaker, Nicole McGill

Welcome and Greetings – Board Chair Tony Georges

Chairman Tony Georges welcomed everyone to the Board Meeting and thanked them for attending the first Board meeting of 2024.

Vote Needed: Review and Approve Minutes from November 2023 Meeting – Tony Georges

There was a quorum present, and a motion to accept the November meeting minutes was made by Ty Handy and seconded by Rocki Rockingham. The motion passed without opposition.

Vote Needed: Review and Approve the Consent Agenda from January 2024 Program Oversight Committee – Michael Gritton and Mike Hesketh

A summary of the consent agenda from the January 2023 Program Oversight Committee was provided to the Board as well as the key voting item. Michael stated that the Program Oversight Committee reviewed the contract to partner with RCF Group for furniture and moving expenses for the Kentucky Career Center and the Power of Work to relocate to the new Goodwill West Louisville Opportunity Center.

With a quorum present, Mike Hesketh asked if there were any questions or comments, and when there were none, a motion was made to approve the consent agenda by Harold Reynolds and seconded by Jonathan Westbrook. The motion was passed unanimously.

Vote Needed: Review and Approve POC and Staff Recommendations to Exit “Welfare to Work” Contracts with the State – Michael Gritton

Michael stated that KentuckianaWorks was invited by the Kentucky Department for Community-Based Services (DCBS) to take over the programmatic leadership of the “welfare to work” part of TANF services in 2007 across our 7-county region. At that time, we conducted an RFP, selected Goodwill of Kentucky as the contractor, and began delivering the services known as the Power of Work. In 2010, DCBS required us to bid to continue providing TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) services rather than just extending the contract, and KentuckianaWorks entered a partnership with Goodwill to bid on the work together at that time. For reasons never explained to us, DCBS awarded our partnership with Goodwill the contract to perform the work in Jefferson County but did not award it to us in the six regional counties. In 2019, DCBS offered KentuckianaWorks and Goodwill the chance to take on the



workforce-related work of the SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or “Food Stamps”) program, which has a total budget of \$183,500. DCBS has now reached out to offer KentuckianaWorks and Goodwill a chance to renew the contracts for another 2-year cycle for both the TANF and SNAP work.

Michael highlighted that the partnership between KentuckianaWorks and Goodwill has been very fruitful over the past 18 years. The Power of Work program has helped 250-400 people a year get off welfare and into a real job. Since 2007, this partnership has helped upwards of 5,000 people get off TANF and into a real job. But the funding available for this work has not increased one dollar since we were first awarded it many years ago, and the KentuckianaWorks staff are not able to influence much of the work of the program, as all of the programmatic directives regarding goals and outcomes are really set by DCBS.

Because we’re only making a limited impact on the design or delivery of this work, and because we know Goodwill runs a strong program today and will continue doing so in future years, the staff recommended that KentuckianaWorks exit the “Welfare to Work” efforts funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) allowing Goodwill of Kentucky to run them directly.

A motion to approve the withdrawal of its partnership with Goodwill to provide TANF and SNAP employment services, and allow Goodwill to take over these contracts alone was made by Sarah Davasher-Wisdom and seconded by Ty Handy. The motion was approved.

Vote Needed: Reviewing our Work on Job Quality and Proposed Creation of a Badge for Employers Following those Key Principles – Aleece Smith, Tracee Whitaker

Aleece Smith is the Director of Inclusion and Sector Strategies at KentuckianaWorks. She discussed the memo that was given to the Board prior to the meeting. She began by explaining that KentuckianaWorks has training programs that make sure job seekers have the skill sets relevant to industry needs, and that KentuckianaWorks’ vision also requires those roles to be satisfying and household-sustaining. Last year, the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration released a guidance letter ([TEGL 07-22](#)) that described the characteristics of a good job, explained why job quality is important, and outlined how the current workforce system should integrate good job strategies into its employer partnerships and workforce training. To inform major funding opportunities released last year that place high importance on good jobs, the Departments of Commerce and Labor also published the [Good Jobs Principles](#). Both of these documents emphasize a more active role for employers in workforce development, suggesting they should move beyond being mere consumers of trained talent to being investors in talent.

Aleece Smith highlighted that the Redesigned Jobs, Resilient Workers (RJRW) grant received through the National Fund for Workforce Solutions provided insight into the amount of organizational effort it takes for an employer to implement permanent job redesign. She then introduced Tracee Whitaker, the Chief Human Resources Officer for Masonic Homes of Kentucky, to talk about their collaborative efforts.

In 2021, Masonic Homes did a survey on worker voice in healthcare and other professions. Burnout and two-way reliable communication were the resulting issues from barriers such as high electric bills, car payments and repairs, housing, and phone bills.



Trasee highlighted that a good number of their employees live in the west end of Louisville where transportation has been a huge barrier. Because they have a relationship with TARC transportation, Masonic now provides employees with a free monthly TARC pass, which has really helped improve attendance at work and morale. Trasee mentioned that Masonic struggled to have good communications with their employees, because they were often switching phone carriers and phone numbers, making it hard to stay in touch with them. Masonic has now leveraged a relationship with Verizon so that employees and their family members can get a new phone and a phone line for \$36 a month, which is automatically deducted from their paychecks. This has provided employees with more stable, reliable phone service, and greatly improved Masonic's ability to stay in touch with their employees now that they have stable phone numbers and phone service.

Aleece handed out a presentation to the members on the job quality outcome maps, which was sent out at the end of the meeting.

Aleece first explained that Canopy is a local organization that certifies businesses for achieving measurable social and environmental good, operating with the highest ethical standards, and taking care of all stakeholders along the way. In collaboration with KentuckianaWorks, Canopy has developed the Workforce Investor Badge that would highlight workforce practice changes. This badge will recognize the employer's efforts to move toward being a provider of high-quality jobs.

Aleece clarified that the purpose of this badge is to highlight employer practice changes like those at Masonic Homes that Trasee just mentioned, that make the employees' lives better with balance and support for social determinants of work, and not just a paycheck. KentuckianaWorks would reserve the right to deny or revoke the badge based on discovery at any time of behavior or policy that is in direct conflict with quality job indicators.

In conclusion, Aleece requested the Board's affirmation of the creation of the Workforce Investor designation and other job quality work to prioritize advancing racial equity and position the organization to effectively execute its mission. She opened the floor for comments and questions.

Sarah Davasher-Wisdom asked how would you handle rising allegations when deciding who is in or out when there are infractions. Aleece stated that they have drafted a brief clause in the proposal describing that KentuckianaWorks has the right to revoke the Workforce badge if the employers do not meet the percentages that will be linked to reliable data. Jonathan Westbrook pointed out that from an employer's perspective, this is launching a new brand that will have challenges with competing with other badges like the Best Places to Work. Aleece affirmed that other badges come at a cost with their surveys, and this badge will not have that barrier.



Tony Georges asked about the treatment of employers with and without the badge and how the questionnaire would be implemented. Aleece noted the tiered-services model used by the Equus Business Services team and how it already provides a more comprehensive level of service to highly engaged employers. Aleece explained that the questionnaire would be embedded on the KentuckianaWorks website. Once completed, it will be scored based on the rubric developed in collaboration with Canopy. If the employers meet a certain score, they will be able to use the Workforce Investors Badge throughout emails, websites, and other marketing materials. Those who do not meet the criteria will be offered support through the job quality toolkit from the Department of Labor and various resources from the National Fund. Eric Friggle asked how much support the employer needs to meet the score, and Aleece affirmed that there is further conversation to be had on that. However, supports such as staffing a consultant to work for an employer would not be a part of the process at this time.

In closing, Tony Georges and Ty Handy commented that this questionnaire would give employers the opportunity to see their weaknesses and strengthen those areas that may cause barriers to their employees.

A motion to approve the creation of the Workforce Investor Badge and performing other job quality activities that position the organization to more effectively pursue the priority placed on racial equity and execute the mission of KentuckianaWorks was made by Ty Handy and seconded by Cortney Burden.

Discussion: Update on The Next Generation of our Work to Support the Academies of Louisville – Tony Georges, Michael Gritton

Tony Georges reminded the board that in 2017 they had started the focus to align KentuckianaWorks with the Academies of Louisville. The Board was able to get 13 employers engaged in the partnership which resulted in successful results in the underperforming schools. Under Michael’s leadership, KentuckianaWorks can hire 7 new staff members to focus on the Academies of Louisville. KentuckianaWorks has proposed a budget of \$ 3.6 million over the next three years, and the first \$225,000 is being funded by the Gheens Foundation. The James Graham Brown will be taking our request for support to their Board in May 2024 in the amount of \$300,000 over each of the next 3 years (\$900,000 total).

Tony highlighted that the philanthropist, MacKenzie Scott, donated a grant in the amount of \$20 million to Jefferson County Public Schools, and it was unrestricted. KentuckianaWorks put together a proposal for the \$2.475 million needed to reach our goal of \$3.6 million and presented it to the Jefferson County Public Education Foundation Board meeting to advance the progress with the Academies of Louisville. Tony and Michael announced that the proposal for the remaining grant of \$2.475 million was approved by the Education Foundation, and now will go to the JCPS Board of Education for final approval.

Executive Director’s Report – Michael Gritton

Michael began his report by announcing the work that Aleece Smith is involved in with the Refugee Employer Engagement Program (REEP). Michael referred the board members to a more detailed memo that was provided in the pre-work for the meeting. Jewish Family & Career Services (JFCS) staff will provide KentuckianaWorks staff with training and technical assistance on eligibility determination and career laddering with refugees and provide ongoing consultation and support.



Michael spoke about the job placement data for Code Louisville and Code Kentucky. Brian Luerman gave a detailed update at the program oversight committee meeting. The job placement rate has been at a historical low for the last year with the previous year not being much better. KentuckianaWorks is currently working to get more graduates placed.

Michael mentioned that the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) was up for reauthorization and a new version has been passed through a House Committee in Congress that would require 50% of the funding that goes to adults to be spent on job training. He told the members he would update them with more details at the next meeting.

In conclusion, Michael announced the departure and farewell of Board member, Patricia Williams, and Michael acknowledged and thanked her for her amazing work and wished her well on her next adventure. With no further discussion, Chairman Tony Georges then adjourned the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.