

**Program Oversight Committee Meeting**  
**August 20, 2021**  
**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Members Present:** Christine Tarquinio, Lisa Thompson (proxy for Sadiqa Reynolds), Mike Hesketh, Patricia Williams, Valorie Hughes

**Staff:** Aleece Smith, Angella Wilson, Bailey Preston, Brian Luerman, Chris Locke, Cindy Read, Lada Gasparac, Mary Rosenthal, Patrick Garvey, Sarah Ehresman, Tobin Williamson

**Contractors/Guests:** Andrew Pierre, Charlotte Kerns, Chris White, Dennis Ritchie, Eric Hicks, Kimberly Boyd-Lane, Linda Witt, Monica Collins, Regan Wann, Renee Walters, Sara Dodeci, X'Zashea Lawson-Mayes, Zakiyyah Raymore

**Welcome and Introductions** – *Mike Hesketh & Cindy Read*

Chairman Hesketh welcomed everyone. Ms. Read then went through several staffing updates.

- Lada Gasparac recently started as Senior Program Director for Young Adult Programs. She was previously in corrections and has been certified in evidence-based practices.
- As a reminder of a big change, Goodwill won the youth services contract for Jefferson County effective July 1 2021. They have been a long-time partner and have brought some enthusiastic and creative new players. Renee Walters would be familiar to many, as she has been running the regional WIOA youth programs. Dennis Ritchie oversees reentry programs for Goodwill. There are two new program directors: X'Zashea Lawson-Mayes (WIOA youth and HUD) and Andrew Pierre (Reimage and Compass Rose). Finally, Chris White (who used to work for KentuckianaWorks) is filling Ms. Walters' previous role in the regional WIOA youth program.
- The Equus contract is still without a project director, following Angela Wells-Vereb's resignation in June. Ms. Read acknowledged the three experienced operations managers who are managing the project until the project director position is filled: Zakiyyah Raymore (NIA Center), Monica Collins (KMCC), and Charlotte Kerns (Business Services), all working under the direction of Sara Dodeci.
- Not able to be at this meeting (but joining in September) will be Mr. Savvy Shabazz, a familiar name to many as a former Reimage case manager. He was recently hired as the Louisville Site Director for the Center of Employment Opportunities.
- A final staffing announcement: this would be the last meeting with Mr. Williamson, who recently moved to Maine and would be leaving KentuckianaWorks around Labor Day. Mr. Williamson was deeply appreciative of everyone involved with the POC and was thankful for working with them the past couple of years.

Chairman Hesketh emphasized the Committee's support for the program staff and contractors, acknowledging the difficult previous year and the uncertain year ahead.

**Review & Approve Minutes from June 21, 2021 Meeting – Mike Hesketh**

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Williams. The motion passed without opposition. Ms. Hughes abstained since she was not at the meeting.

**Labor Market Update – Sarah Ehresman**

Ms. Ehresman provided a presentation on “A Snapshot of the Louisville Economy During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” a repeated title but with updated information current as of mid-June. The region has regained ~70% of jobs lost during the pandemic, but that means it was still down about 30,000 pre-COVID jobs. It took about five years to recover from the ‘08 Great Recession, but the hope was this recovery would take a shorter amount of time (assuming the pandemic could be brought under control). Recovery had been stronger in some industries compared to others (for example, Transportation/Warehousing/Utilities, Professional/Scientific/Tech Services, and Financial Activities were up, whereas Leisure/Hospitality was down 15%). On average, the size of the local labor force was 2.5% smaller in 2021 than it was in 2019. So, who has dropped out of the workforce? Data was not available at the local level, but assumptions based on the national data could be made that younger and older workers have seen the steepest declines in labor force participation. 40% of Kentucky’s prime working age adults cite care responsibilities (children, elderly, COVID-positive) as their main reason for not working; mothers in particular have been driven out of the labor force. Many younger workers were employed in the leisure/hospitality sector, which has been especially hard hit. Others may be prioritizing education and training. Some older workers opted for early retirement or have remaining health concerns. One key finding was that states who ended expanded UI benefits did NOT see big gains in employment, but they DID see more people reporting financial hardship. Q2 2021 average hourly wages were 8% higher than Q2 2019, and the tight labor market gives workers more choices. Generally, this meant good news for employees, bad news for employers. Workers value higher wages, but they also value stable scheduling, benefits, visible career pathways, and having worker voice. Young workers are part of the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in the US; workplace culture matters to them. Also, Pre-COVID barriers were still a problem, with some even made worse by the pandemic (e.g., transportation, justice system involvement, substance abuse recovery, childcare affordability & availability). Ultimately, the pandemic itself was the root cause of current labor market tension; we will not be able to fully rebound until the pandemic is fully under control.

Ms. Thompson and Ms. Tarquinio thanked Ms. Ehresman, saying this data backed up anecdotal information they had been hearing in the field. Ms. Thompson cited how the number of pre-K childcare providers was down by half, while acknowledging multiple generations often required care. Ms. Hesketh described how given the data found in states that prematurely ended UI, he concluded we should not expect to see much change in employment level numbers. Ms. Ehresman said financial hardships would start impacting people more significantly. Mr. Hesketh wondered about the impact on the career centers from people interested in transitioning from sectors like leisure/hospitality to other careers; Ms. Kerns said younger people they had seen were concerned primarily about childcare and secondarily about wages. Ms. Read said childcare was covered by supportive services, but only up to \$1,000. Mr. Hesketh had heard from manufacturers focusing more on automation, and Ms. Read mentioned the mixed results from a survey she sent out to the manufacturing employer alliance earlier this week. Ms. Tarquinio said 32 people have reached out to GLI with interest in the Career Acceleration Network. Mr. Ritchie

referenced childcare, describing how schools and daycares being reopened had not changed the situation much, with uncertainty about kids getting sick, quarantining, etc. Once taxes come out, low-wage workers often lose money trying to get childcare by having to take off constantly.

**Staff Recommendation: Issue RFPs for SummerWorks Service Provider – Chris Locke**

Under federal law, KentuckianaWorks must competitively procure contracts every five years, and the current SummerWorks contract (held by YouthBuild) is in its fifth and final year. Mr. Locke's recommendation was to issue a new RFP for a future contract not to exceed \$500,000 (higher than the expiring contract amount). The specifics would be determined in negotiations with the successful proposer. Mr. Locke then provided some background: as with everyone else, the past 18 months had been anything but normal for SummerWorks. Still, staff kept at it, and the contractor produced respectable results in spite of the pandemic-based uncertainty, to the credit of a lot of people. Planning had been fraught with what-if scenarios, contingency plans, etc. Staff and the contractor have had to be flexible and adaptable. More updates about SummerWorks 2021 would be ready next month, but the good news was there had been no interruption of services with participants or employers. Additionally, the Mayor had leaned into the program and recommended to Metro Council a doubling of SummerWorks funding (from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000) in 2022; as a result, the year would start with the largest budget the SummerWorks program has had since its inception. One key thing to note: the current contract with YouthBuild would be extended by three months, with this extra time used to close out the program year; thus, the new contract would activate in January 2022 as opposed to October 2021. The additional money from Metro would allow YouthBuild to be paid for those additional months. The attached memo contained a schedule of the RFP process, which would be managed by Metro Purchasing (though KentuckianaWorks would write, score, and select the proposal). The RFP release was scheduled for September 2021, with proposal due dates around October 27, the award date by the November 2021 Board Meeting, and the contract starting in January. Any Committee Members interested in serving on the review board should contact Mr. Locke.

Mr. Hesketh asked about the Mayor's budget recommendation to Metro Council and how to best utilize the additional \$500,000. Mr. Locke said staff does everything to keep those costs as low as possible, but there were a lot of additional costs covered by things such as support services (e.g., participant wages). The Chairman then asked about the Mayor's and Metro Council's reasoning for the budget; did they recognize more funding was needed, or were they anticipating more would be needed? Mr. Locke said he and Mr. Gritton were having a conversation with the Mayor next week about what SummerWorks looks like now that it was ten years from its start. Mr. Locke felt the Mayor was looking for a big year for SummerWorks in 2022.

A motion to approve the staff recommendation as stated by Mr. Locke was made by Ms. Hughes and seconded by Ms. Thompson. The motion passed without opposition.

**Staff Recommendation: Approve Contract for Pluralsight – Cindy Read & Brian Luerman**

Ms. Read explained how this was a new requirement the Committee/Board may see more of in the future, resulting from a recent meeting with Metro Purchasing. Small contract amounts did not need to get a bid, previously; for contracts \$30K and above, though, bids were needed. Sometimes there were products/services that cannot be provided by many people; in those cases, "non-competitive procurement" occurs. That used to be done internally, or sent to Metro Council

if it was for something big. Now, Metro Purchasing wants Board approval. However, a lot of software companies (including Treehouse and Pluralsight) do not put forth bids for procurement.

At its beginning, Code Louisville used a program called Treehouse that worked great. Over time, though, staff noticed ways it could be improved. With that background, staff recommended a transition to Pluralsight. Mr. Luerman explained Treehouse was changing its business focus, which was what caused him to start looking around about a year ago. Pluralsight has been around a long time and they were well-recognized in upskilling people for modern tech needs. It started with Microsoft, but had since expanded to other IT needs (cybersecurity, data analytics, etc.). In talking with employers, Mr. Luerman found most were quite receptive to the idea of moving to Pluralsight (which has a lot of courses that Treehouse does not). It also has a non-profit subsidiary specifically for 501(c)(3)s that offers a much more reasonable cost. In sum, Pluralsight offered better services, better costs, focused on non-profits, and was recognized by employers. The recommendation, then, was to enter into a contract with Pluralsight to provide licenses and content for Code Louisville and Code Kentucky at a cost not to exceed \$125,000.

Mr. Hesketh acknowledged companies like this did not go and compete for bids, they must be sought out. He asked Mr. Luerman if he noticed others, or if Pluralsight was the obvious choice; Mr. Luerman said the answer to each question was yes. He said a lot of companies offered portions of these services, but only Pluralsight checked all the boxes. Mr. Luerman also emphasized that many employers he worked with were already big supporters of Pluralsight.

A motion to approve the staff recommendation as stated by Ms. Read was made by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Tarquinio. The motion passed without opposition.

#### **Deputy Director's Report – *Cindy Read***

Ms. Read deputized in the place of Michael Gritton, who was on vacation this week. She wanted to focus on program reports.

- To start with good news: Code Louisville now had Code Kentucky, with their staff in place. They were fully up and running and got some good PR up in northern Kentucky.
- On the adult services side, Ms. Read reminded the Committee the NIA Center opened as the Comprehensive Center on July 1. It is an ever-evolving process, and there is a desire to have many services and partners there. Goodwill's youth team was there already, and there were some events planned in the coming weeks
- On the other hand, KMCC was struggling to find people to come in for training for manufacturing careers. Still, there were positive updates, such as JCPS's ESL in manufacturing training which will launch in October.
- Kentuckiana Builds was having their latest program graduation following this meeting, and the Urban League continued to do good work with that program.
- TANF/SNAP programs are now being managed by Mary Rosenthal. Goodwill has been doing a great job under difficult circumstances, such as the state extending "Good Cause."
- Young adult programs transitioned to Goodwill on July 1; the reports showed not a lot of outcomes due to a problem with the KEE Suite system preventing participants from enrolling. Ms. Read and Ms. Disney wrote about the problem, which was affecting both the WIOA adult and youth programs. Mr. Gritton called Commissioner Hammons about

the issue, who said he would be having a meeting with Deloitte about it this morning. The commissioner appreciated the call and subsequent write-up.

- The YHDP youth homelessness program is in transition. The target numbers for the year had been reached.
- For Compass Rose, all the target numbers for the grant had been exceeded and we are now in follow up for a year.

Ms. Read asked Ms. Walters, Mr. Pierre, and Ms. Lawson-Mayes to describe how they were doing at Goodwill. Ms. Walters said July was pretty crazy, with building a new staff in a new place with new programs and cleaning up the space after moving in. They were now working with participants, though. Participants start with a soft skills training (3 days, 8 hours/day); after that, they go into Good Start (15 hours of assessments, career counseling, interview prep, etc.); then, they go into the Rise Program (25 hours). Ms. Walters said the buy-in from participants had been amazing, and the staff were fantastic. With all the programs together, Goodwill had been able to combine resources in terms of education, jobs, homelessness, hunger, etc. Ms. Lawson-Mayes then talked about the WIOA youth program, which would soon have a new staff member. She claimed homelessness was proving to be a significant barrier for a lot of participants. Outside of KEE Suite difficulties, they were at 10-15 enrollments and had two interns (one was a junior facilitator and the other would be an IT specialist). 8-10 interns were expected in the next cohort. Ms. Read then asked Mr. Pierre to discuss the Reimage program. He thanked the career coaches for their communication and participation. There have been eight participants who have completed soft skills prep, Rise Program, and Good Start. One participant has been able to start college. Staff were also establishing connections with the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Public Defender's Office.

For some unfortunate news, Ms. Read explained the state of Kentucky had failed to obligate a required percentage of dislocated worker funds for two years in a row. Consequently, the federal government was taking \$2.6m away from the state's funding; this change would hit the KentuckianaWorks budget to the tune of \$476,000. Fortunately, Ms. Wilson had prepared a very conservative budget on the income side, and Ms. Read believed the organization would be okay. There would be more information on that topic in the coming months.

**Committee Discussion: "Virtual" or "In-Person" Meetings? – Mike Hesketh**

Given how the meeting was running up against time, Mr. Hesketh suggested staying virtual for at least another month given the uncertain nature of the virus. He applauded everyone on the call for making the virtual format work efficiently.

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.