

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

**Thursday, May 28, 2020**

**8:30 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.**

**Cisco Webex online meeting**

**Board Members Present:** Caitlin Blair, David Bizianes, Eric Friggle, Harold Reynolds, Jackie Beard, Jenny Lampton, Jessie Schook (proxy for Sarah Davasher-Wisdom), John Archer, Dr. Marty Pollio, Mary Ellen Wiederwohl, Mike Hesketh, Sadiqa Reynolds, Sean O’Leary, Tami Hatfield, Tom Quick, Tony Georges, Dr. Ty Handy, Willie Byrd

**Welcome and Webex Basics** - *Tony Georges and Tobin Williamson*

Chairman Georges welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mr. Williamson reminded all attendees to stay muted unless they are speaking, and encouraged them to ask questions in the chat. Mr. Georges also mentioned the possibility of waving one’s hand if they had something to say. Mr. Georges specifically welcomed Mayor Greg Fischer, saying the Board appreciated his time.

**Remarks from the Mayor of Louisville Metro Government** – *Mayor Greg Fischer*

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Georges and appreciated the Board welcoming him.

KentuckianaWorks has been incredible allies and partners throughout the growth of the city over the past several years. Learning how to manage life in the COVID-19 era requires four things: 1) A gradual loosening of the economy; 2) More testing capability; 3) More implementation of contract tracing; 4) Finally, it is up to us as citizens – social distancing, wearing masks, etc.

We are trying to protect public health while at the same time also rebuilding the economy. How do we go back to what we were doing before economically while noting the inequities that must change? The Mayor said this has never been more important to him. The pandemic has put a glaring spotlight on the inequalities that exist in our society. What KentuckianaWorks has done over the years is a wonderful blueprint for others; SummerWorks, Code Louisville, and the Academies of Louisville are the types of equity programs that helps us move people out of poverty into living wages and beyond, programs that create family-supporting careers.

Local governments have to balance their budgets. Metro Government’s revenue has been severely impacted down 20% or so due to declining payroll taxes and other income, meaning layoffs of potentially 600-800 people. 2/3 of Louisville’s budget is public safety and public health; this level of job cuts could be a dramatic impact upon our city. Mayor Fischer has spoken quite a bit with the influential Mitch McConnell, and the Mayor encouraged the Board to make their voices heard with him, as well. We do not need jobs cut, but we also have to be able to provide basic levels of public safety, public health, and emergency response.

A number of challenges remain. One is the high unemployment rate (15.4% in April) and the damage it does on our payroll tax revenues. Retail/hospitality sectors are going to be the last to recover. One advantage for Louisville is that we are within driving distance of 2/3 of US population, and drivable tourism will likely come back first. Another challenge is the threat to some of the city’s signature events, like Derby and Tri-Festa. Finally, there is equity, which

echoes back into our workforce strategy. A disproportionate amount of people of color have been impacted by the medical and economic impacts of the pandemic. Deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd have also created tension and emotion. The business community and white America needs to understand and show empathy. We must continue to develop workforce programs that move people into high-wage jobs. KentuckianaWorks has focused on equity since its start; the Mayor is proud of that. Now is time to double down. So many of the problems we deal with in this country and this city are related to just one thing: poverty. Simply put, people need more money. We need to create job programs, to continue upskilling, and to question the whole “survival of the fittest” capitalist system when it was out of balance even before the pandemic. The problems associated with inequality have only been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. If our country’s workforce boards lead the charge, we will get there. Until we figure it out, we will have more strife on our streets. In Louisville, our tagline is “Build Back Better, Together.” We are determined to come out of this with more equity. There have been some promising developments of leap-frogging into the future; for example, Future of Work initiative. When we put out the challenge, we attracted 4,400 people in a few weeks (2,700 in the first 24 hours). Over 1% of our city’s workforce said “I’m interested in future of work skills and I want to be reskilled.” That is extraordinary.

The Mayor’s main request for the Board is to keep leaning into the areas where help is needed. KentuckianaWorks has done a great job over the years with Opportunity Youth. Usually their environments have thrown multiple obstacles at them. KentuckianaWorks, through programs like ReImage and others, has shown it can be done. There are more challenges than ever, but the Mayor “knows we are up for it.” His new proposed budget has \$1,000,000 extra for KentuckianaWorks to expand on to that work for young people, often African-American males, who are off-track for a productive life. If we do not invest, the outcome is predictable. Another specific request the Mayor had for the Board: advocacy with Metro Council is needed. Previous attempts to put more money into our Opportunity Youth has not been successful with the Council in the past. We need prevention and intervention programs, not just more police. Finally, the Mayor mentioned a Facebook Town Hall later that day to expand on Building Back Better Together. “We are going to be in this for a while,” he said. “I want us to look back on our careers at this point and say we made a difference. We need to be a model.”

Mr. Georges thanked Mayor Fischer and said the Board appreciated his comments. He noted a part at the end of today’s agenda to discuss what changes the Board can make in the community, and Mayor Fischer teed up that discussion perfectly. Mr. Quick cited a need to transform and evolve moving forward, and thanked Mayor Fischer for putting money behind these efforts.

Mayor Fischer said he could not overemphasize the need for Metro Council to hear from the Board; “we need your voices now more than ever.” Mayor Fischer saw Dr. Pollio on the call and thanked JCPS for their transition to NTI and the Chromebooks initiative; the Mayor called it “a real demonstration of adaptive leadership.” The Mayor thanked everyone and said “let us look back and say we rose to the occasion and came up with some models that helped a lot of people.”

### **Review and Approve Minutes of the April 23, 2020 Meeting** – *Tony Georges*

The minutes were approved following a motion made by Ms. Reynolds and a second was made by Mr. Archer. The vote passed with no opposition.

### **Review and Approve Consent Agenda** – *Cindy Read*

KentuckianaWorks' contractors are still serving 1,600-2,000 customers every week, 100% virtually. Once the COVID-19 crisis began, everyone had to move quickly. Ms. Read encouraged the Board to read the weekly challenges/successes report when they had a chance.

There were two items on the Consent Agenda after the Program Oversight Committee meeting:

1. Recommended authorization for new RFPs for technology (supporting programs, case management, research, and evaluation) not to exceed \$100,000. The state was planning to change from the KEE Suite program, but the COVID-19 crisis halted that. We are looking to ensure we keep getting the good data we have always enjoyed. This RFP would supplement whatever the state decides for data management. Additionally, KentuckianaWorks has had an agreement for a number of years with a company called AtWork solutions as our contractor. That contract has expired, so what we are working on is getting a six-month extension for them.
2. Approval to renew contract with JCPS Adult & Continuing Education to provide on-site adult education services for the TANF/Power of Work program, not to exceed \$10,000. Mr. Gritton suggested breaking the items into two votes so that Dr. Pollio could abstain.

Ms. Reynolds added “as you’re choosing a system, think about the sub-grantees you have and the systems they use.” The Urban League, for example, has to enter data into six different systems and most of them don’t cooperate; please keep long-term partners in mind.

A motion to approve item #1 (the RFP for technology and a contract extension for AtWork Solutions) was made by Mr. Quick, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, and passed with none opposed.

A motion to approve item #2 (JCPS adult-ed contract) was made by Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Mr. Quick, and passed with none opposed. Dr. Pollio abstained from the vote.

### **Program Highlights: ResCare** – *Angela Wells-Vereb, Charlotte Kerns, and Shatreece Johnson*

- Keys to success – ResCare provided a great toolkit and resources to help kick off the new virtual services environment. Operations from across the country were able to share best practices with each other, and staff were empowered to take those ideas and be problem-solvers themselves.
- Virtual service delivery – Unemployment insurance assistance, job seeker services (i.e., workshops, voucher issuance, case management appointments), and business services (i.e., rapid responses, job fairs) are all now being done remotely. ResCare staff members were trained up to answer unemployment insurance calls, which had never been done.
- Workforce Readiness Oldham County (WROC) program – innovative service delivery for Roadmaps to Success job readiness training, currently being offered via Zoom. There have been 13 training participants thus far, with 8 completions and 5 job placements. The primary attendees are African-American females who have been in long-term poverty. The top referral source has been the Oldham County Library. Mr. Friggle asked if the schools have been involved; Ms. Kerns said the KYCC works primarily with youth. Mr. Gritton said it is a challenge since WIOA divides up the work between adults and youth, and does not make it easy to do work in high schools; the focus is on out of school youth.

- Virtual Hiring Event – Northwest Ordinance Distilling (a Sazerac company) is seeking 40 new employees in New Albany for jobs ranging \$17-31/hour. Registration and pre-screening is being done completely online via Google Forms. Applicants who do not qualify are referred to the Kentucky Career Center or Indiana’s WorkOne Region Ten. There were 151 responses in six days (126 in Kentucky, 25 in Indiana).
- Outcomes and Success Stories – 4,617 customers were assisted in April. Ms. Wells-Veréb shared some specific examples (data about UI claims, WIOA enrollments, etc.).

Mr. Georges thanked the staff for their presentation and for showing the human impact of the work that KentuckianaWorks does.

**Labor Market Intelligence Update** - Sarah Ehresman

Mindful of the time, Ms. Ehresman said she would fly through the presentation and send out the slides to the Board later. She wanted to mention the state’s base unemployment rate. At 15.4%, it was the highest it has ever been recorded in Kentucky. It was slightly higher than U.S. rate of 14.7%, though slightly lower than Ohio and Indiana. Overall, Kentucky was the 11<sup>th</sup>-highest rate in the country. Kentucky lost 290,000 jobs in March, and the distribution of those job losses was not evenly distributed; the impact was most felt in the leisure/hospitality sector. Consumer fear/uncertainty about travel and tourism were not expected to rebound very quickly. The Congressional Budget Office projects peak unemployment in the third quarter of this year, but still with a projected unemployment rate of 8.6% at the end of *next* year (on par with 2011).

Job losses are really impacting low-wage workers and communities of color, like Mayor Fischer said. 36% of wage-earners in the lowest quintile lost their job in March, compared to just 10% in the highest quintile. Workers in the lowest quintile are less likely to have savings, more likely to be unbanked, and more impacted by the digital divide. In short, many low-wage workers are really suffering right now, and many jobs lost in hospitality and retail might not be returning.

Digital demands in the current and post-COVID economy include digital devices, broadband internet, and digital skills. However, there is a broad digital divide in the Louisville metro area. 26% of households do not have a desktop or laptop at home. This is not evenly distributed, with a very high percentage in south and west Louisville. JCPS moved quickly to get Chromebooks to students, but there are still parts of the county with a desperate need for technology. 29% of Louisville households have limited internet access (16% have no internet, 13% have cell phone data plan only). Again, this is not evenly distributed; over half of households in some parts of south and west Louisville do not have internet access. The percentage is also higher in outlying rural areas. 31% of U.S. workers have no or limited digital skills. Again, the pattern is not evenly distributed; workers in sectors like hospitality and retail have higher rates of low digital skills.

Mr. Georges thanked Ms. Ehresman, saying “that is a ton of data.” He encouraged the Board to take time to read and digest it all, that it dovetails nicely into Mayor Fischer’s earlier comments.

**What Does the New Reality Mean For Us as the Workforce Board?** – Tony Georges

Mr. Georges started by exclaiming “we say ‘don’t let a crisis go to waste.’” We get to choose how we re-emerge, we get a blank of piece of paper. Last year, he would not have thought providing laptops and computers would be our priorities as a workforce board; he thought

transportation was the biggest obstacle to work. Now, a lot of work is being done remotely. He was interested how the Board would challenge the paradigm of how we prepare people for work, and how we can address this equity divide moving forward. We have a very rare opportunity to re-evaluate what services we need to provide. He would have been thrown out of his building three months ago if he had suggested more jobs done remotely. KentuckianaWorks' partners at EKCEP in Eastern Kentucky have gone ahead of us in this model, equipping folks with technology to meet global needs, not just regional. If we can equip and prepare folks for digital work, it expands our scope. He asked for any thoughts/reactions to Ms. Ehresman's information, about what we can do differently, new services that could be provided, or changes in scope. Mr. Georges predicts 2020 will be a different year and customers will be served like never before.

Ms. Wiederwohl loved the comparison of the challenge we had before vs. the challenge we have now. Transportation is out the window for now, though there will still be transportation challenges in the future, especially with TARC budget cuts. It was spot-on to focus on the digital divide. JCPS provided an example of how we can mobilize around that. It feels much more doable now, and Metro is ready to be a partner moving forward.

Ms. Reynolds said the data and slides were great. She looked forward to the Board moving forward with an equity lens in mind. It is hard to deny the challenges in certain communities both in our city and across the country. She appreciated the information shared today and hoped we can move forward in showing ways that we actually get it and work to be ahead of the curve.

Mr. Gritton asked Ms. Rogers and Dr. Pollio to share what they learned about wifi and Chromebooks for students that can teach the rest of us. Dr. Pollio pointed out an important point relevant to one of the slides that was just shown, regarding synchronous v. asynchronous instruction (synchronous = all students logging on at the same time; asynchronous = they can do it whenever). Synchronous is better for learning, since the students have interaction with teachers like in a live classroom; but when three students in one household are sharing just one computer, maybe even with a parent for work, how can that happen? Even more impactful is 1/3 of JCPS students who do not have reliable internet access. It is very important for everyone to understand as long as we have that, we can take care of the devices, but the heat map shows the internet access challenges. There is already a digital gap, and the COVID crisis will only magnify the gap many times over. It is going to have to be a community-wide effort. We have to have 95,000 kids with a device, but also 95,000 kids with high-speed internet, or else it is still an equity issue.

Ms. Rogers mentioned one item JCPS was working on this summer before COVID happening was cooperating with Alisia McClain to target 150 African-American girls to spend a week during spring break learning IT skills and select IT as their Academies pathway. It was a deliberate focus, and JCPS was really excited about it. JCPS is going to try to find a way to rework it and continue connecting with those young women. There are also other tech efforts planned, such as in medical and manufacturing pathways. She closed by saying "we do not need incremental progress, rather, we have to have breakthrough progress," echoing Mayor Fischer.

Mr. Georges thanked Ms. Rogers and Dr. Pollio, adding "I have total confidence in you guys." He said he would continue to push and challenge the Board to not re-emerge the way it was before the pandemic. "Email me, call me, write it down, keep pushing new ideas," he concluded.

### **Executive Director's Report - Michael Gritton**

Mr. Gritton thanked everyone for their discussion. We continue having deeper conversations, and we welcome those conversations. He also thanked the ResCare team and Ms. Ehresman.

Regarding what the Mayor discussed, Mr. Gritton has had ten meetings with Mr. James and various Metro Council members. Mayor Fischer only made two recommendations for new funding in the new budget, and one is taking savings from the closure of youth detention center to help Opportunity Youth through KYCC. Mr. Gritton echoed the Mayor's encouraging everyone to speak up to Metro Council members. He suggested the Board let Council Members know they serve on the KentuckianaWorks Board and support the Mayor's recommendation. But, unless it is clear the federal government is going to help the city, it is not likely to pass.

Mr. Gritton also heard Mayor Fischer asking the Board to reach out to Senators McConnell & Paul and Representatives Yarmuth & Guthrie. Mr. Gritton also mentioned drafting a support letter to the Metro Council about the proposed million dollars for Opportunity Youth, though what would really help is reaching out to them directly. Pre-COVID, 18% of African-American youth ages 16-24 were disconnected (not in school and also not working). In the last recession, that number almost doubled. If that happens again, it will be almost 40%; not a formula for success for our economy, for employers, or for the community. Mayor Fischer is trying to get upstream of that and invest in ways of connecting them, and Mr. Gritton also asks for support.

Mr. Georges thanked Mr. Gritton and said he was all-in on the letter of support. Mr. Georges reminded everyone to read the material Ms. Ehresman would be sending out later. He closed the meeting by telling everyone to stay safe and we will talk again soon.

The meeting adjourned at 9:59 A.M.

#### **KentuckianaWorks Staff:**

Aleece Smith  
Angella Wilson  
Barbara Ferrell  
Bailey Preston  
Brian Luerman  
Chris Locke  
Cindy Read  
Elizabeth Davis-Terhune  
Jaime Disney  
Joi McAtee  
Lori Hiser  
Mary Rosenthal  
Michael Gritton  
Patrick Garvey  
Regina Phillips  
Rider Rodriguez  
Sarah Ehresman  
Stacy Roderick

#### **Contractors and Guests:**

Angela Wells-Vereb  
Ashley Janicki  
Charlotte Kerns  
Christy Rogers  
Demitra Suazo  
Jennifer Welch  
Joshua McKee  
Kristin Wingfeld  
Monica Collins  
Regan Wann  
Rena Sharpe  
Sara Dodeci  
Shatrece Johnson  
Violet Skinner  
Zakiyyah Raymore

#### **Special Guest:**

Mayor Greg Fischer