



GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL
January 28th, 2021, 2:30-5:00pm
Virtual Meeting on Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Council Members Present:

Mark Argosh, Cindi Bigelow, Dr. Monette Ferguson, Jeff Flaks, Sen. Tony Hwang, George Anderson (for Margaret Keane) Ravi Kumar, Marty Guay (For Jim Loree), Judy Marks, Dave O'Neill, Judy Olian, Rochelle Palache, Peter Salovey, Erika Smith, Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Dr. Kelli Vallieres, Rep. Toni Walker, Jay Williams

Voting Ex-Officios Present:

Commissioner Amy Porter, Commissioner Kurt Westby

Absentee Board Members:

Marna Borgstrom, Kevin Graney, Dr. Ruth Levy, Sal Luciano

Absentee Ex-Officios:

Commissioner Miguel Cardona

2:36pm, Chair Argosh calls the meeting to order to deliver Welcome remarks.

We welcomed everyone on the call and encouraged their participation. After the council unanimously approved the state's workforce strategy, legislation has been drafted in partnership with the Office of the Governor & the Office of Policy & Management to implement the strategies. An overview will be provided later.

The council work has been reorganized to four committees. The Committee meetings will be the heart of today's session. Much progress has been made by the committees since our last meeting.

Chair Argosh reviews the agenda.

2:23pm, Chair Argosh reviews the 2 Votes to start the meeting: 10/8/2020 Minutes & by-law changes. Chair Argosh calls for a motion to vote on the approval of the October 8, 2020 meeting minutes & a by-law change that defines the number of members of the Executive Committee to be 7.

Kelli Vallieres motions to vote, Jay Williams seconds, no discussion, Chair Argosh moves to vote.

Vote passes with 20 yay, 0 nay, 1 abstain, 5 absent at time of vote (Judy Marks votes to abstain from the minutes portion, stating that she was not present at the prior meeting.)

2:47pm, Vice-Chair Vallieres welcomes the group and continues to provide GWC updates since October.

CT was tasked with providing training that would meet the needs of the employers in the state. \$14M was received in CARES funding for training & support. This resulted in 800 trained individuals in high demand fields such as Manufacturing, Healthcare, and IT for entry and mid-level skills/positions). The biggest amount of training was for healthcare. Approximately 350 people were trained for positions such as CNA, pharmacy technicians, sterilization processing technicians, & medical assisting.

A significant portion of the funding also went to supportive services including securing childcare slots for trainees and for health care workers. The money also enabled small childcare providers to get their licenses or expand the number of children they could serve.

Vice-Chair Vallieres shared the award of the H1B Federal DOL grant to support IT training and manufacturing training in Connecticut. As a result of the collaborative efforts between the Workforce Development Boards, employers, state agencies, education & training providers CT secured the maximum award available for \$10M. Employer engagement was a critical element and 76 companies or stakeholder partners provided letters of support. Over the next two years, 2,000 individuals are projected to receive training with a focus on entry level & incumbent workers.

Vice-Chair Vallieres outlined the need for a Community Engagement Committee. This committee will span across the four GWC committees to ensure equity & access for all & will focus on identifying system inequities. It will also highlight the needs of specific populations by race, income, and gender as well as the needs of immigrants, veterans, returning citizens, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented populations. The next steps for the GWC will be to engage stakeholders and determine actionable goals within each of the working teams.

Vice-Chair Vallieres discussed the key partnerships around the state to ensure connectivity across related initiatives:

- The GWC, the Council on Women and Girls, and the Office of Early Childcare are working together to develop a business partnership to expand access to affordable and high-quality childcare during school, training, and work.
- The GWC will partner with the 2 Gen Benefits Cliff working group to lead a pilot program on the effective uses of the Federal Bank of Atlanta's Benefit Cliff Calculator
- The GWC has partnered with ReadyCT on the CS4All/CS4CT initiative to expand the computer science curriculum in secondary schools.

3:00pm Ms. Lindsey Woolsey describes the status of Regional Sector Partnerships in each region of CT. Each region is in process of launching one to two Regional Sector Partnerships:

- The North Central region will focus on Technology, with its second industry to be determined
- The Eastern region will focus on Manufacturing first, healthcare second
- The South Central region will focus on Manufacturing, with its second industry to be determined
- The Southwestern region will focus on Manufacturing, with its second industry to be determined
- The Northwest region will focus on Manufacturing, with its second industry in healthcare launching later in 2021

3:15pm, Deputy Policy Director Mohit Agrawal provided a high-level overview of the Governor's Workforce Bill.

As part of the Governor's budget, the Office of the Governor, in partnership with the Office of Policy & Management, is preparing legislation on workforce development.

This legislation will codify the Office of Workforce Strategy into state statute and give this office specific responsibilities for workforce strategy. The OWS will collaborate with other state agencies, to deliver workforce programs such as WIOA.

The legislation will also launch CareerConneCT. These short-term sector based training programs will help unemployed or underemployed individuals transition into long term careers.

A third focus will be on enhancing data systems related to workforce development. We must understand if training providers are meeting the needs of the employers. Included will be the development of a credential registry system and enhanced wage records to understand the longer-term impact of education and job training programs.

This legislation will also help increase access to affordable transportation options across the state.

3:29pm Mr. Niall Dammando provided an update on the Committee planning to date and next steps. The sub-committees will oversee the major initiatives in the plan. The planning work will ensure that the Council is focused on the key plan elements and avoid duplication across committees.

Mr. Dammando provided instructions for the Committee Breakout sessions. These sessions had three key objectives:

1. Review the scope & priorities of committee & sub-committees
2. Identify any additional key stakeholders for the committee & sub-committees
3. Consider your own participation level (ex: a working member or advisor/thought partner)

3:38pm Chair Argosh called for open questions/discussion before going into the breakout rooms

Jason Howee (chat): Do any committees need more members more than others?

Vice-Chair Vallieres: the committees that we have are well-represented and you are welcome to participate in the committee of your choice. If you'd like to be a part of the conversation, please join.

Leticia Colon (chat): Can you pick more than one?

Chair Argosh: Yes, you can, but please pick the one that interests you the most for today. Please let us know the additional committees you are interested in.

Sen. Tony Hwang: Thank you. Regarding the legislative proposal, I am eager to see that. Please share some of the proposal language for us to help shepherd that.

For those on the call, please provide written/zoom testimony from the committee working groups to offer their viewpoints in support of the legislation.

Mr. Agrawal: This is a very helpful part of the process. Submitting testimony to the legislature and participating in a zoom public hearing is very important and these are great ways to help push this forward. In terms of timing, the bill will not be released until the Governor's budget is released.

Sen. Tony Hwang: Thank you. I have been very impressed with the pieces that have been shared to date and I look forward to helping other legislators take pieces of this to various committees and to help communicate this information.

3:50pm-4:39pm Breakout sessions commence

1. Business Leadership
2. Career & Education
3. Equity & Access
4. Data & Accountability

4:39pm Chair Argosh asks the chairs and vice chairs from each breakout committee to provide a brief recap of their discussions.

Business Leadership, Mr. Marty Guay: We are very excited about the work in the area of business leadership. We must continue to make sure that the scope is well defined. It is crucial that we not create silos but leverage the different regions to participate.

Career & Education Building, Ravi Kumar & Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez expressed concerns about the staffing available to the educational systems to carry out this work. How do we get the counselors to prepare for the jobs of the future and interact with the businesses? Very excited about the work.

Equity & Access, Cindi Bigelow & Dr. Monette Ferguson: This conversation was “the beginning of the work” and the participants were ready to dig over the last hour. We were reminded of all the hidden costs and the realities of equity & access problems.

Data & Accountability, Dave O’Neill: This committee is designed to take all the information we have (and the data we don’t have yet and need to get) and create two interfaces: one for the user (ex: the job-seeker) and the second is for evaluating the success of these programs. These must be flexible because we are serving so many categories of people (K-12, colleges, job-seekers, students, decision makers, etc.)

4:49pm Vice-Chair Vallieres reviewed the GWC as the State Workforce Board & the relationship with WIOA

By Federal statute, the GWC has oversight responsibilities. The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) leverages the regional workforce development boards and the American Job Centers to provide underserved populations with employment, training, and education services that lead to meaningful career opportunities.

The GWC has state & federal responsibilities to WIOA as a state workforce board. The Governor’s Workforce Council must:

- ~~Approve the 4-year State Workforce Plan (modified every 2 years)~~
- ~~Approve the 4-year Local Workforce Plans (modified every 2 years)~~ **Redacted from the minutes: see note below**
- Approve the WIOA Title I Governor’s Reserve budget & Allocation formulas for Title I funding distribution to the Workforce Development Boards (every year)

The Workforce Plans (state & local) have already been voted and approved, however the WIOA Title I Governor’s Reserve budget, Rapid Response & allocation to the Local Workforce Development boards must be voted on. Vice-Chair Vallieres stated that the allocations are very prescribed and provided by the federal government.

This funding must be approved every year as a requirement of WIOA and it ensures that the allocation formulas are in compliance with the prescribed allocations as provided by the federal government. Chair Argosh stated that the funds are being distributed as required by Federal WIOA stipulates.

4:56pm Chair Argosh opens up for public comments or questions

Mr. Marty Guay: how materially different is this breakdown this year than in other years?

Chair Argosh: The federal weightings are similar to what has been used in previous years. The only things that will differ from year to year are discretionary items.

Deputy Commissioner Dante Bartolomeo (DOL): We have been going by the same formulas as in the past. These are done within the Department of Research and you can see how they are weighted. These breakdowns are prescriptive and are being distributed as required.

Chair Argosh calls for motion to vote to approve the WIOA funding formulas & distribution.

Commissioner Amy Porter motion to vote, Cindi Bigelow seconds, no open discussion, Chair Argosh moves to vote.

Vote passes unanimously, 16 yays, 0 nays, 0 abstain, 9 absent at time of vote

Edit for the Record: Information indicating that it is a responsibility of the Governor's Workforce Council to approve the WIOA State & Local plans will be redacted from the minutes & related documentation. It is only a requirement of the State Workforce Board (the GWC) to vote & approve the Title I Funding Allocations. During this meeting, the GWC unanimously voted to approve the funding allocations.

4:57pm Chair Argosh provides closing remarks

A survey will be sent out to all participants and additional stakeholders to help identify which sub-committee(s) they would like to be a part of.

Additionally, we will continue gather and consider feedback to the strategic plan. We welcome additional comments the group may have.

A newsletter will be forthcoming to provide more frequent committee updates.

The next meetings will be held on Thursday, April 15th, Thursday, July 15th, and Thursday, October 7th all from 2:30pm-5:00pm.

4:59pm Chair Argosh Adjourns the meeting