

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL

October 8th, 2:30pm-5:00pm

Virtual Meeting

Approved January 28, 2021

Council Members Present:

Cindi Bigelow, Marna Borgstrom, Monette Ferguson, Courtney Murphy (on behalf of Kevin Graney), George Anderson (on behalf of Margaret Keane), Ravi Kumar, Marty Guay (on behalf of Jim Loree), Sal Luciano, Garrett Moran, Judy Olian, Dave O'Neill, Rich Jacobs (on behalf of Peter Salovey), Erika Smith, Chris Swift, Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Kelli Vallieres, Toni Walker, Tony Hwang, Jay Williams

Absentee Board Members: Cliff Asness, Peter Bevacqua, Oni Chuckwu, Ruth Levy

Ex-Officios Present:

Amy Porter, Beth Bye, Colin Cooper, Jen Widness, Jordan Sheff, Kurt Westby, Miguel Cardona, Peter Denious, Scott Gaul, Tim Larson

Chair Moran called the virtual meeting to order at 2:35pm

Chair Moran reviewed the existing committees. Over the years, the committees have found themselves in collaborative conversations with similar and related topics. With there being so much overlap, it makes sense to combine the activities. This will also allow everyone to support the same agenda and more people from each area of expertise can be represented (for example: 3 CEOs to each committee rather than being more spread out).

- Work-based learning will roll directly into the Education Committee
- Healthcare & Bioscience, IT & Business Services, Manufacturing, and Sector-partnerships will roll up into the Business committee, with the opportunity for sub-committees
- Data and Performance to be enhanced to Data and Accountability
- Supportive Services to remain the same
- An Executive committee will be formed to provide a sounding board for the Chair and Executive director

Chair Moran reviews the voting items, 2:37pm

Chair Moran states that the vote will be on the previous Board Meeting Minutes (May 14, 2020 & July 22, 2020) as well as by-law changes to simplify board actions.

1. Changing from 2/3 vote majority to simply majority
2. Creating the Executive Committee
3. Provides voting rights to commissioners who are primary overseers of funding and to be more consistent with regulation. This will impact three ex-officios:
 - a. Commissioner Kurt Westby, the Department of Labor
 - b. Commissioner Miguel Cardona, the Department of Education
 - c. Commissioner Amy Porter, Department of Aging and Disabilities

Chair Moran invites the group for feedback. No feedback or questions are offered.

Chair Moran opens the voting for both Minutes and By-laws through virtual role-call. *Both votes pass unanimously; no nay, no abstain.*

Chair Moran turns meeting to Vice Chair Kelli Vallieres at 2:42pm

Vice Chair Vallieres welcomes the group to begin discussion on the COVID-response initiatives and on economic recovery since the pandemic.

The initial response to the virus was to provide upskill and reskill opportunities to those who were unemployed in either the same occupation or at a higher level than they left at. The first program launched was SkillUp, a program already utilized in Eastern, CT, now broadened to more of Connecticut.

- SkillUp provides approx. 500 courses online primarily in Business Services, IT, Business Analysts, Customer Service, Project Management, Digital Literacy, etc. The second program launched was 180Skills
- SkillUp Since May:
 - 9,000 licenses have been granted
 - 20,000 courses completed
 - 5000 courses completed in enhancing professional skills (ex: Time Management, Writing Effective E-mails and Instant Messages, Being an Effective Team Member, etc.)
- 180Skills Since June:
 - 180Skills courses have a focus on manufacturing, a top industry in Connecticut with high demand
 - 1800 licenses granted
 - 132 courses completed
 - Although the traction hasn't been as high as SkillUp, an email release is due to go to the unemployed population shortly through the Department of Labor and each time an email blast goes out, we see a spike in registration and course completion.
 - The top courses completed are manufacturing as well professional skills (ex: Managing Money, Excel Basics, etc).

Vice Chair Vallieres states that not only is it important to skill up and reskill the unemployed population but that we must also focus our energy on incumbent worker training to support the large number of jobs held by an older population, who will be looking to retire in the next three to five years. We are preparing for a wave of retirement and must skill up to do more than recover but prepare.

Vice Chair Vallieres discusses the second initiative and response to the Coronavirus: \$15 million of CARES Act funding to CT at 2:48pm.

CARES Funding was granted to CT to create innovative workplace and training programs. The Workforce Development Boards had the in-roads necessary to provide the regions in which they serve with the necessary programming. This was a great opportunity to provide programming on a statewide level to in-demand jobs and career paths.

One standout area of funding was to provide program assistance to the healthcare system, which has been relative disparate throughout Connecticut – working instead on individual and small programs. Pulling together as a state allowed us to determine, and meet, their collective needs all in partnership with the CSCU system (CT State College and University System). Additionally, by looking at the programs on a statewide level, we were able to provide supportive services to program participants – a much needed service response to the Coronavirus and job losses. Transportation and slots for high quality childcare services were provided through the Office of Early Childhood. Opportunities for stipends, compensation, IT (laptops or mobile hotspots), etc. were provided to ensure that individuals could fully engage in these programs. Programs were needed to be stood up and run by December 30 and we were able to do so, with the tight timelines.

Vice Chair Vallieres discusses the relationship of this recession and its impacts on the community, 2:51pm.

Unlike the 2008 recession, the impact has not hit the middle class of professionals with college degrees but rather younger individuals, under the age of 30. This population is the most unskilled and most vulnerable of our population. In terms of upskilling and reskilling, it is important for us to look at how we serve this population with a training program and allow them to engage in a career that will provide upward mobility. Programs and initiatives moving forward will focus on stackable credentials to career pathways and advancements to move up the ladder, with higher-level earnings and opportunities to family sustaining wages.

Workers have been disproportionately impacted by the virus. Minorities are a vulnerable population to focus on.

- 42% of those that lost their jobs were Native American
- 30% Black
- 27% Hispanic
- 26% Asian/Pacific
- 20% White

Workers with a High School diploma or less were twice as likely (48% of the claims) to file for UI benefits. Levels of education play a huge role in stability in jobs and careers.

- 26% of the claims were from individuals with less than a High School Education
- 22% High School graduates
- 16% some college
- 10% Bachelor's
- 8% more than a Bachelor's

Overall, CT has recovered an estimated 55% of pandemic-induced job losses. Some industries were impacted more than others and have yet to recover fully. The Leisure and Hospitality industry was most impacted with a loss of 55% of jobs at the very beginning of the crisis and only recovering 33% back since. These jobs are typically filled by those with less of a skill set and shows who we need to continue to focus on. This contrasts to the Financial Activities industry who has seen a loss of 3% and is holding stable at that number; but have yet to recover from just that 3%. The Manufacturing Industry has also been impacted and has not yet rebounded holding at a loss of 7%. Prior to the pandemic, Manufacturing was one of the fastest growing industries and having a difficult time finding individuals to fill entry-level positions. Now they will need to be reabsorbed and we must leverage incumbent worker training as well.

Who is Hiring? Although we see huge impacts to the Leisure and Hospitality Industry, the Healthcare Industry is hiring at a rapid pace. It is the Top Industry hiring specifically for jobs as Registered Nurses, Nursing Assistants, and LPNs. This demand reinforced the need to upskill in the healthcare industry and that the CARES Funding is being diverted to the right sources. Healthcare demand is followed closely by Business Services, Technology, Manufacturing, and Finance.

We have to continue to match the skill set of the jobs to the demand of the industry. This data will help drive the indicatives moving into 2021.

Chair Moran discusses the GWC Strategic Initiatives for 2021 at 3:01pm.

In partnership with the Office of the Governor and the Department of Labor, the Chair & Vice Chair have worked to allocate federal WIOA funding to the local Workforce Development Boards for the upcoming year. Additionally, the local boards are responsible for a four-year plan, as required by federal WIOA legislation and they must be submitted to the US Department of Labor.

All agencies have been working hard to pull together the budgets that will support the legislation and how they will fit and interact with the strategic plan. We have submitted plans to the Office of Policy and Management and are awaiting

feedback to see what the budget impacts would be. Sometime within the month or so, we'll start to socialize that actively with legislators and others around the government, so we are ready for the next legislative cycle. Costs associated with the strategy are creative and embedded into the budgets of larger agencies, for example the educational agency.

There are nonprofit organizations assisting with our agenda that have been retained for a modest amount (or for free); notably Social Finance who will work hand in glove with our Supportive Services team. They have delivered a tremendous value and insight and provide incredible support to the GWC. They have agreed to continue to work with us into the next year. Next Gen Sector partnerships have also been retained through the end of next year.

The strategic initiatives for 2021 are as follows:

1.0 Business Leadership: GWC Lead, low cost, a very important fulcrum area

- 1.1 Regional Sector Partnerships: Currently, they are in the socialization process with regional meetings happening in the 5 areas. The goal is to have 1 to 2 partnerships per region. No legislation and no real cost to stand up.
- 1.2 Credential Registry: Looking to require that all certifications are housed in the same database for searchability by employers and job seekers. Credential Engine is a company that has created an infrastructure to do so and may be a candidate for housing CT's credential database. NEBHE & EMSI will be participants on this task.
- 1.3 Skills Based Hiring: Internally, the Department of Administrative Services has agreed to pilot skills-based hiring for its upcoming needs in IT. Private sector pilots will be identified for 2021
- 1.4 Retain CT Graduates: Campus Philly is helping to coach cities & communities on retention through their chambers, educators, etc. The most powerful tool in retaining graduates is internships.
- 1.5 Workforce Development Board Alignment: Launch a study to see what other states are doing and to define collaboration moving forward. Too often we put the boards in competition for funding rather than in partnership for funding.

2.0 Career Building: a very ambitious agenda, a lot of institutional changes, business sponsorships could be very important with multiple lead agencies. The emphasis is currently on High School and Community College focused – as many of our most vulnerable citizens sit and we must focus to those areas. But we must also aggressively engage the four-year institutions moving forward and will do so for 2021. The plan also focuses on programs rather than individual groups.

- 2.1 Career Pathways: turn the individual pathways into statewide. The state college system and the State Department of Education will be included in this pathway project.
- 2.2 Sector-based Training: Looking to optimize and create ROIs for sector-based training. We are looking to do a better, more focused job at creating sector-based training. Looking to seek bond funding if needed to help promote future growth.
- 2.3 Work-based Learning: The plan is to do more with aligning the pathway programs and establish an intermediary.
- 2.4 Accelerating Post-Secondary Access: Hoping to require students to complete the FASFA forms and the poorest communities have the lowest completion rate. We are looking to find ways to support these communities and access funding for colleges.
- 2.5 Academic & Career Advising: Looking to broaden the student success programs and that students have a financial literacy foundation for preparing students for college.
- 2.6 Improving Preparedness: Convene on the Computer Science alignment for modernization and reconvene the educator professional development.
- 2.7 Adult Education: 320,000 adults without high school degrees with half being English-language learners and they pay mightily for that in terms of access to career paths and job opportunities. We are proposing that the Workforce Boards and the Adult Educators get together to design a new plan for reaching these individuals.

3.0 Equity & Access: like the Education initiatives, most of these will get done in partnership with other agencies. GWC will help influence and participate actively.

- 3.1 Expanding Capacity of the Childcare System: Improving the childcare system is important to the health of businesses across the state.
- 3.2 Reduce Transportation Barriers: As more and more students are enrolling in non-credit bearing certificate programs it is important to expand the UPass system to support those students.
- 3.3 Expand Behavior Health Services: This is a fundamental service provided to get people to work and requires expansion. The participation of this program broadens the pool and is a rewarding benefit.
- 3.4 Reduce the Adverse Effect of Benefit Cliffs: The goal is to adopt a benefit cliffs personal financial calculator to help individuals understand their benefits and how it will be impacted when they receive a raise. Other states have a similar function that CT would look to adopt.

4.0 Data & Accountability: there are two fundamental parts here, a front-end service and a back-end database.

- 4.1 Online Services: We need to enhance an online service for job seekers and the DOL and DAS will be actively involved.
- 4.2 Data & Performance Management Tools: This is an infrastructure piece. Statewide dashboards and ROI analytics must be leveraged and include enhanced wage records & expand the program data.
- 4.3 Integrated Data System: The GWC will look to broaden the P20 WIN's analytic reach and flexibility.

To summarize: there is a limited legislative agenda. Most of the items include more planning, convening, buy-in from internal and external agencies, etc.

Chair Moran calls for Feedback on the 2021 Strategic Plan:

Cindi Bigelow: Exactly how many legislations we are looking to support?

Chair Moran: roughly 6 along with legacy information. Some have been around for a while and not yet passed so the pieces will not be new news.

Marty Guay: what would you consider the 3 things that we have to do, foundationally out of all these recommendations?

Chair Moran: The regional sector partnerships, 2 building the career pathway system that will inform the educational system as well – the common language and common way to review initiatives and engage educators/businesses, 3 – work-based learning. The most transformative thing would be the understanding and there is *nothing* like being there. All three of these items engage the community and there are no policy or cost attached to these items

Commissioner Sheff: What is the plan to incorporate beneficiaries to the plan?

Chair Moran: In general, we encourage incorporating all members that could be impacted; folks that will execute or be a participating agent/agency. We need to be disciplined and thoughtful about reaching out to all groups.

Jen Widness: Include higher ed in more places where CSCU is taking the impact. We want to ensure that all Educational agencies can be engaged, open it up to be broader and include more groups. Presidents across the board are ready to be engaged in all aspects and participatory.

Chair Moran: agrees to review the document and ensure that Higher Ed is included

Sal Luciano: Agrees with the direction and refers to light-out manufacturing and that they will need less people. Can those people begin to branch out in the building trades, energy trades (CT has increased by 8%)? Suggestion to utilize apprenticeships, especially for black or brown individuals, to participate and be a leader

Chair Moran: agrees that apprenticeship and green jobs is an emerging career, the regional sector partnerships will pick this up. They are the ones driving the demand and why the regional sector partnerships are so important. They are the ones understanding where the future is going. Let the Regional Sector partnerships drive the trade and future of apprenticeships

Toni Walker: Pleased to hear us discuss the returned citizens and discuss a “lost population.” Many CC have begun programs in the prison system, and perhaps we could be channeling the captive audience and connect them better to the CCs and the career pathways.

Chair Moran: agrees that returning citizens and Correctional Institutions and how to include IT equipment (ex: computers) into the correctional institutions as it is a problem. In general, College counselors are way understaffed and are college oriented rather than career pathways oriented. Drive the systems for career, not just college advising.

Toni Walker: please review the blend into the technical high schools? Given the new aggressive level we are moving forward in?

Chair Moran: agrees to ensure that they are active participants

Amy Porter: A follow up, would like to broaden the perspective on Disability services and how to include them (beyond mental health). Perhaps not a separate section but rather infused into the entire plan.

Chair Moran: about half of the funding that flows through X is already being given to disability services, so we have not put as much of a focus on it. More time and focus will be included to this task moving forward.

Commissioner Scheff: would like to 2nd Amy Porter’s words and would like to include veterans in that category (ex: amputees, blindness, etc) and they are often left out of workforce growth opportunities as a result. We need to make it clear that this is for them as well. Ensure we include other marginalized populations.

Chair Moran: there is often funding if we can find the time and money to dedicate. Bandwidth is limited and we would like to find the ways to organize and do better (outside resources). If we could exploit the money better, we could move the needle much faster and more effectively.

Commissioner Westby: Would like to call out that WBL is a very broad structure being utilized. A significant amount of federal money is directed at apprenticeship and can continue to be utilized. Keep it in mind that it is available and reference it that way.

Commissioner Larson: We have a large population of independent schools that are supporting certificate training programs (Poter&Chester, Lincoln, Stone, etc) and they are starting to see and uptick in that area specifically and that a focus would do well to shift that way. Ensure we are looking at all available avenues.

Judy Olian: In regard to the 4-year institutions in the state, let’s look at the alignment of job needs against work force needs. The most economic vulnerable are the most in need of help. The 4-year higher education impact are still needed to increase the higher-level skill career paths.

Peter Salovey agrees.

Chair Moran: The regional sector partnerships will drive the programming.

Judy Olian: can you elaborate on where more funds will kick in to support?

Chair Moran: reiterates that the legislations won't call for that much funding, we are voting on the plan that we would like to propose to legislation. The overwhelming amount of money doesn't cost much to get it done.

Vice Chair Valleries: Reiterates that we have a clear understanding of where we want to go but we need a clearer plan on how we are going to get there. 2021 is going to be the year to move the needle and drive the items forward.

Chair Moran vote proposal, 3:50 pm: Yay to immediately move forward with the plan and NAY to postpone temporarily. Would people like to postpone? Open the floor.

Judy Olian: can you elaborate on where some funds will kick in to make this happen?

Chair Moran: most of the items on the list are not cost impactful. Many of the items can get done with the existing teams. The "what's next" for most of the items on the plan are to get the right people in the room to develop the plan even more – the next phase of the plan is not going to be costly. There is an overwhelming amount of work that doesn't cost anything

Vice Chair Valleries: The plan that has been put together has spent a lot of time looking at the current state and where we need to go. We have a clear understanding of where we want to be, but there is much work to understand how we get there, in what order, etc. That will take the next year [2021] to move the agenda forward. Certain parts of the work will need some funding to support (philanthropy, grant money, etc) but the determination of which organizations will support financially is not yet determined.

Chair Moran votes. *All Yay, no nay, no abstain.* Vote to move forward on the strategic plan passes.

4:03-4:08 BREAK

Mark Argosh to review Breakout Session Agenda, 4:10pm

Participants will be in one of three breakout groups and there are 4 questions to be discussed.

Group returns from breakout session and feedback is provided, 4:30pm

Question 1: What is the highest return project that is the easiest to accomplish?

- a. Engaging the population of our workforce that holds less than a high school degree
- b. Creating sector partnerships
- c. Dual track options – apprenticeships for earning credits in community colleges and high schools
- d. Short-term vs. long-term impact: Keeping graduates and workers in CT
- e. Sector based strategies and work-based learning; manufacturing and business ready to continue with apprenticeships/WBL
- f. Education coordination: ready to partner and collaborate
- g. ROI in K-12 is embedding these concepts into curriculum and career advisement
 - i. However, may not be easiest to do, but is necessary
- h. Career pathways: importance is that trainers are trained in industry needs and specific manufacturing needs.
- i. Second chance programs are key
 - i. tablet system that can broadcast into prisons for training.
- j. Easiest is technology, remote learning is not working as well as it should – leverage technology platforms that are already and conduct retraining efforts (including a culture shift)

Question 2: What changes is your profession (business, government agency, educators) most ready to make?

- a. Ready to implement in big business and manufacturing regarding apprenticeships

- b. Internship expansion is key; dual credit models needed. Business side versus education.
- c. Healthcare system form informal partnerships to support developing career paths for growth opportunities.
- d. Upscale and rescale current workers, data security, etc.
- e. Skills-based hiring is key
- f. WB Learning Comm, struck by different cultures in educators.
- g. Ready to use stackable credentials, badges & certificates – they are available across CT and need to continue to leverage
 - a. Need to match these to employers
- h. There needs to be more flexibility in outcomes that are evaluated to determine how philanthropy can be leveraged for these initiatives.
 - a. Provide funding for JFES recipients to receive supportive services, but once they exit the program, this supportive services money stops. Philanthropy can be leveraged to continue to provide these services
 - b. Federal programs don't allow for this, so it's difficult

Question 3: What changes will your profession (business, government agency, educators) have the most difficulty making?

- a. Need to be effective communicators, especially to educators
- b. Modifying curriculum in the short-term to meet industry needs is going to be difficult
- c. Regional Partnerships and collaboration are the anchor for all the ideas and the outcomes could vary region to region
 - a. Pathways to the conversation between the varying sectors: K-12, Community Colleges, Business, Government, etc.

Consensus during the readout: everything is doable, even if difficult or costly. There is a willingness and readiness to jump in and adapt and work together to do so.

Question 4: What initiatives will we collectively have the most difficulty achieving?

- a. Childcare & supportive services will be the hardest to solve
- b. Transportation & expanded access to transportation
- c. Effectiveness of the program
- d. School alignment and increased ratio of advisors
- e. Local leadership & Local will – the potential for high impact is huge
- f. Clarity of supply & demand
- g. Making sure that the business leadership group is aligned with the sector-based training

Chair Moran adjourns the meeting at 4:57pm.