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Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2025

Actions Taken:

- Approval of March, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee meeting minutes
- Approval and recommendation of Full Council approval of the 2025 Regional Business Services Plan

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was brought to order at 12:00pm by Robin Plume.

II. Minutes

Review and Approval of March 5, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes. **Mark Vorobik moved to approve, and Kyle Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Approved NWC committee and board minutes are available on the Council's website www.nwboard.org.

III. Board Business

A. Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce – update

Robin provided an overview of the Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce (BEST) initiative and invited Scott to recap the prior meeting, during which, he shared a PowerPoint presentation. Scott highlighted the group's objective: transitioning external language and marketing materials utilizing traditional programmatic language to a talent-focused approach, positioning staff as recruiters who connect qualified participants with employer needs.

A key challenge identified by the taskforce is the need to eliminate "WIOA-speak" and adopt clearer, more accessible language that resonates with both businesses and customers. Strategies discussed included framing offerings as "scholarships" to communicate value, addressing soft skill development, alleviating employer pain points, and aligning services with the pace of business operations without compromising quality.

Robin inquired about Lightcast, which Scott described as a labor market data tool. Marissa noted its ability to deliver localized insights that enhance responsiveness to both job seekers and business clients. Marissa also shared the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) has been working with Lightcast to acquire a statewide contract so that all local workforce development boards have access to the same types of data.

i. NWC 2025 Regional Business Services Plan

Scott presented a draft update of the Council's Regional Business Services Plan (available in their meeting materials), developed and recommended by the Business



Engagement Strategies Task Force. He noted that the current plan, adopted in 2014 with the launch of WIOA, contains outdated references and no longer aligns with the Council's 2024–2028 Regional Strategic Workforce Plan.

The proposed 2025 update modernizes language, eliminates redundancy, and aligns more closely with current strategies and the evolving priorities of key business partners. The revised plan is organized into five sections: Purpose, Strategic Goals for Meeting Employer Needs, Vision for Business Services, Guiding Principles, and Levels of Responsive Services.

The updated plan positions businesses as primary stakeholders and promotes a streamlined, market-responsive approach to service delivery. The Task Force reviewed the draft and recommended it be advanced to the Workforce Solutions Committee for formal consideration.

Following discussion, Mark motioned to approve the 2025 Regional Business Services Plan, and recommend Full Council approval. Kyle Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Assessment of Service Gaps

Robin reminded the committee that assessing service gaps is a key priority for the current program year. Marissa outlined initial steps and plans underway to address this need, with more details to follow. Robin also expressed enthusiasm for a new, more inclusive and engaging business survey approach aimed at improving employer participation and feedback. This item will remain on the agenda as a placeholder for the Business Engagement Strategies Task Force (BEST) to take up as their next project. Further information will be provided as the initiative progresses.

C. Service Updates

Malinda reported that the Business Engagement Specialist position, funded through the Community Reinvestment Project (CRP), has significantly enhanced business services capacity—particularly with small businesses, which often require more intensive support. She emphasized the importance of sustaining this role beyond the CRP funding period, given the measurable impact over the past year. With a dedicated staff member in place, the team has exceeded WIOA Title IB business service targets, including:

- Surpassing goals for On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Allocating \$134,833 in Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) across 16 contracts
- Advancing Work Experience (WEX) efforts, with early placements beginning to transition into permanent hires

Malinda underscored the strategic value of continuing this capacity to maintain momentum and deepen employer engagement.

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D. Proven & Promising Practices

- **2025 NAWB Annual Conference**

Scott shared reflections from some of the most memorable sessions he attended during the 2025 NAWB conference in Washington DC. He informed members of keynote speaker Mark Perna, which focused on inspiring young people by recognizing that today's career decisions are often driven by lifestyle aspirations. Perna emphasized the importance of engaging the "Why Generation" by clearly articulating the value of opportunities and helping youth envision and build their own futures.

Scott also cited a Texas initiative where Workforce Development Areas partnered with Walmart and others to deliver flexible training and job placement for individuals facing employment barriers. These efforts included youth work experiences, CDL training, and apprenticeship support - with Walmart contributing resources such as iPads and flexible funding streams.

Finally, Scott highlighted the workforce system's continued shift toward skills-based hiring, noting that employers are increasingly recognizing candidates for their demonstrable abilities and soft skills, rather than formal credentials - an approach that has shown promise in improving job performance and retention.

E. PY 2024 Q2 Community Success Stories

Robin directed members to the one-page success story report included in their packets, noting that it offers a concise overview of key highlights from the past quarter. She also reminded members that the full stories are accessible on the Council's website for further details www.nwboard.org.

Old Business – None

New Business: Malinda reported that both the EcSA and Community Reinvestment Program (CRP) have been renewed with funding. She provided a brief overview of CRP and how it differs from WIOA, highlighting its distinct goals. Marissa added that although EcSA funding is lower at the state level this year, our region will still receive funding, and we are currently waiting on ESD to release final figures.

Public Comment – None

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Robin Plume at 1:01pm.

Attendance

Board Members: Robin Plume, Mark Vorobik, Dave Paul, Michael Reese, Kyle Jones

Guest: Kevin Logan (ESD)

Staff: Marissa Cahill, Malinda Bjaaland, Scott Iddings, Liz Vaughn