

Nebraska Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2021, 9a – 12p
Nebraska Department of Labor Building
550 South 16th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Agenda item 1. Call to Order

Chair Mark Moravec called to order the meeting of the Nebraska Workforce Development Board (the Board) on September 10, 2021 at approximately 9a at the Nebraska Department of Labor Building, 3rd Floor, Conference Room 309, Lincoln, NE.

Chair Moravec announced Carol Swigart's resignation from the Board.

Chair Moravec announced Senator Ben Hansen had been appointed to the Board by the Speaker of the Nebraska Legislature to serve as the Board's Legislative representative, replacing Senator Joni Albrecht, who resigned due to competing priorities.

Chair Moravec introduced Jim Hansen who was recently appointed by the Governor to serve as a business representative for the Board. Jim currently serves as Outreach Coordinator for Sandhills Global.

Agenda item 2. Roll Call

Nicole Schaefer called roll and advised Chair Moravec that quorum was established.

Members in Attendance

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Greg Adams | 7. Michael Geary | 13. Bradley Schroeder |
| 2. John Albin | 8. Allan Hale | 14. Jennifer Sedlacek |
| 3. Kyle Arganbright | 9. Jim Hansen | 15. Becky Stitt |
| 4. Gary Dixon, Jr. | 10. 10 Mark Moravec | 16. Lisa Wilson |
| 5. Jason Feldhaus | 11. Don Nordell | |
| 6. Lindy Foley | 12. Terri Ridder | |

Members Absent

- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Governor Pete Ricketts | 5. Anthony Goins | 9. Kyle Nixon |
| 2. Senator Ben Hansen | 6. James Hanson, Jr. | 10. Dannette Smith |
| 3. Elizabeth Babcock | 7. Tate Lauer | 11. Jim Smith |
| 4. Brian Deakin | 8. Susan Martin | 12. Paul Turman |

Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) Board Support

1. Brad Pierce, Director, Division of Reemployment Services
2. Katie Thurber, General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel

3. Deb Andersen, Administrator, Division of Reemployment Services
4. Erick Carrillo, NEworks Account Security and Support Technician, Division of Reemployment Services
5. Nicole Schaefer, Administrative Programs Officer, Division of Reemployment Services

Agenda item 3. Notice of Publication

Nicole Schaefer announced that the Notice of Public Meeting was duly published, in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, in the Beatrice Daily Sun, Grand Island Independent, Lincoln Journal Star, North Platte Telegraph, Omaha World Herald, and Scottsbluff Star-Herald. Nicole announced that notice of the meeting was posted on the State of Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar.

Agenda item 4. Approval of Minutes

Chair Moravec called the next order of business, which was the approval of the meeting minutes from the March 5 and June 11, 2021. The draft minutes from the March meeting were emailed to the Members of the Board on June 10, 2021 and again on September 8, 2021, along with the minutes of the June 11, 2021 meeting. Both sets of the meeting minutes were included in Board Member meeting packets as Handouts 1 and 2.

Chair Moravec opened the floor for public comment on the draft minutes. No public comments were made. Bradley Schroeder motioned to approve the minutes, and Becky Stitt seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motions by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

Agenda item 5. Old Business

a. NDOL Update – Federal Review of the State and Greater Lincoln

Chair Moravec introduced Bradley Pierce, Director of Reemployment Services with the Nebraska Department of Labor, who presented to the Board on the Federal review of the State and the Greater Lincoln Workforce Development Area, which was conducted during the week of June 21st, 2021. The review resulted in two findings.

Bradley advised the Board on the first finding related to non-compliant monitoring by the State. Since September 2020, when NDOL received a similar finding following mentoring by USDOL, NDOL has added a second FTE to the State Monitoring Unit. Development of a new comprehensive monitoring guide, which will replace the current monitoring manual once finalized, will mirror the Federal comprehension monitoring guide. This ensures that the State reviews local area Title I programs are using the same objectives and indicators as used by Federal reviewers.

The second finding was related to inaccurate performance reporting by the State and Greater Lincoln on the measurable skills gain performance indicator, which is used to measure interim progress of participants who are enrolled in education or training services for a specified reporting period. USDOL asserted that the State had not detected Greater Lincoln's underperformance on the measurable skills gains to address this deficiency, and that the Greater Lincoln Workforce Development Board had not provided technical assistance to Greater Lincoln Title I service provider staff on how to measure measurable skills gains to address this deficiency.

Bradley stated that over the past 26 months, the State provided technical assistance four times to all local workforce development area staff on criteria for measurable skills gain and the process for documenting measurable skills gains in NEworks was addressed, and provided technical

assistance to all local area administrative entity staff on the measurable skills gain performance indicator when the State's performance accountability was first issued in September 2019.

Greater Lincoln has already implemented steps to improve its performance on the measurable skills gains performance indicator before the USDOL monitoring report was issued through enhanced monitoring and oversight of its Title I service provider.

Agenda item 6. New Business

a. Homelessness and the Pandemic

Chair Moravec introduced Board Member Jason Feldhaus, who presented to the Board on homelessness and the pandemic. Jason's presentation was provided in Board Member Meeting packets as Handout 3. Jason discussed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nebraskans, and how lockdowns affected their ability to work in order to pay their housing-related bills.

Between March 2020 and December 31, 2020, Nebraska received approximately \$2 Trillion in Federal funds through the CARES Act. The funds went to Nebraskans to assist with rent and utility payments, insurance and property taxes, and landlords who lost revenue due to COVID-19 (up to \$10,000 each). HVAC, plumbing, roofing and window rehabilitation was also a fixture of the CARES Act Landlord Pilot Program. Future goals include expanded eviction supports through Legal Aid and the development of a debt management and asset development program to work with Credit Advisors and the UBT Financial Case Manager.

Jason opened up the floor for questions or comments. He was asked where he is currently seeing high demand for the housing and utilities. Jason answered that most of the demand is in larger metro areas. Jason was then asked about how the increase in cost of rental properties will be handled in the future. He answered that increased wages, landlords looking to get out of their investment, inflation and increased housing assistance from the government are all leading to increasing rental prices. In response to this, they are looking at rehabilitation programs for rental properties, cash assistance programs, and using federal and state dollars to support landlords in helping to house individuals that have struggled with homelessness.

b. Labor Market Information/Labor Market and the Pandemic

Chair Moravec introduced Jodie Meyer, Research Analyst with the Nebraska Department of Labor Office of Labor Market Information, to discuss the effects of the pandemic on the collection of labor market information. Information on this subject was provided in the Board packet as Handout 4.

Jodie reported to the Board on the following four points regarding data collection in the labor market and how they were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Lower response rates to some surveys
- Telework- workers unable to check mail or answer phones
- Understaffed and high turnover rates
- More emphasis on online and phone reporting to avoid in-person follow-ups

LMI, which is made up of two sections- including Business Labor Statistics (BLS) and Workforce Information Grant (ETA)- collect information on employment and wages, current employment statistics, industry projections and local area unemployment statistics.

Jodie also reported that in late 2020, BLS released a new version of the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) model in reaction to the large and sudden changes in unemployment. BLS also made changes to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) models, including the birth-death

model, which was revised to more accurately differentiate business which had closed temporarily and those that had closed permanently. Changes to how seasonality is calculated was adjusted as well.

Quarterly Consensus of Employment and Wages (QCEW) provides 98% of data in the U.S. on industry employment. While the data can be used to examine the impact of the pandemic down to the county level, there is a time lag, so most current data is not available. Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) is data collected twice a year. Three years' worth of data are used to produce estimates; this model only reflects one of the six panels. Future data releases will include more data collected during the pandemic.

Statistics about wages in Nebraska by county were discussed, as well as which industries were returning to pre-pandemic levels of employment, including mining and logging, construction, manufacturing, and education and health services, as well as industries that had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, including leisure and hospitality, financial activities, government, and professional and business services. Employment recovery projections, due to be released next year for years 2020-2030, are expected to include projected recovery from the pandemic since 2020 employment rates were lower than normal, which will lead to higher projected growth.

Jodie opened up the floor for questions or comments. She was asked why people seemed to be dropping out of the workforce. She stated that it could be due to multiple factors, including continuing fear of COVID exposure, childcare facilities remaining closed and some Nebraskans simply choosing to retire early. People quitting their part-time job to go back to school was another possibility. It was also asked whether the recovery statistics provided included farming and agricultural industries; Jodie said they do not.

c. Subcommittee Reports

i. Policy and Oversight Subcommittee – Workgroup Updates

Chair Moravec introduced Deb Andersen, Administrator of Policy, Performance and Technology with the Nebraska Department of Labor, who presented on behalf of James Hanson, Jr., the Subcommittee Chair. Deb explained that James was at the National FBI Citizens academy Alumni Association in Las Vegas, therefore he was unable to attend the board meeting.

Deb informed the Board that the subcommittee has not met since June 11, 2021, but the career pathways workgroup and alignment workgroup have been busy.

- The 2022 state plan modification workgroup has not met yet but will meet in the near future.
- The career pathways workgroup has met three times since the last board meeting: July 2, July 21 and August 25, 2021).
- Deb directed the Board's attention to Handout 5 in the Board packet for details on the career pathways workgroup's activities to date and planned next steps. The top five in-demand industry sectors represent those identified as priorities for all three of Nebraska's local workforce development areas: healthcare/medical fields, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, construction, and transportation, distribution and logistics. The workgroup also identified the following seven barriers that are perceived to be the most critical for job seekers and worker participation in the selected priority industry sectors: childcare, criminal history, low income, disability, cultural/language barriers, literacy/credentials, and youths who have aged out of the foster care system. The workgroup will continue work on these barriers effecting job seekers and worker participation and will begin work to identify barriers to employer participation in career pathways.

Deb Andersen introduced Stan Odenthal of Heartland Workforce Services, who is the lead for alignment workgroup, to provide the Board with a report on the workgroup's activities.

- Stan Odenthal stated that the alignment workgroup held their first meeting on July 14, 2021 to discuss goals that the group would like to meet regarding coordinating workforce development activities, statewide identifying solutions for technology integration, broadening the use of the state's common intake system, developing policies that support program and technology alignment, developing and disseminating online resources and information supporting fully integrated customer service, and developing and implementing state-level technical assistance and cross training with workforce partners. They also decided to hold meetings on a monthly basis.
- Stan explained that the workgroup took a keen focus on common intake process, which can be as simple as a referral piece or as advanced as technology that captures eligibility information or details of an individual to push out to various workforce development programs. They studied the common intake process implemented by the State of Tennessee, which utilizes a paper form in their workforce areas. A meeting with Tennessee was held on August 6, 2021 and again on August 18 to discuss this method. Based on their discussions in these meetings, the workgroup decided to explore a more technology-based approach for Nebraska's common intake process. The workgroup also discussed the eligibility explorer that is built into NEworks that the Nebraska Department of Labor is implementing. They plan to look further into the eligibility explorer in their next meeting.

ii. Strategy and Innovation Subcommittee

Chair Moravec introduced Michael Geary to provide a report on the Strategy and Innovation Subcommittee. Recapping what James Smith reported during the June meeting, the Strategy and Innovation Subcommittee had two projects in process in March 2020, prior to COVID-19 restrictions and limitations. These included:

- Establishment of an MOU between the Board and Nebraska's three Homeless Continuums of Care
- Alignment of statewide workforce initiatives

The impact of the pandemic stalled the Subcommittee's progress on those projects. However, they resumed their work on these projects on June 23, 2021.

The MOU with the Homeless Continuums of care has not yet been finalized. Inclusion of a provision relating to the E-Verify clause that NDOL Legal proposed has not been settled. Jason Feldhaus said during the June 23 meeting that he would follow up with representatives of the Continuum. Michael asked Jason if he had learned anything about the new MOU. Jason said he is unsure where the holdup was in the process, but that he would follow up with NDOL Legal the following week.

Regarding the alignment of statewide workforce initiatives, Michael stated that during the June 23 meeting, subcommittee members discussed the format of data collection form. Recommendations were to make the form a fillable form and to ensure there is adequate space for responses. The form is under revision and will be presented to the Board during the December meeting for review and comment. The Subcommittee also discussed methods for distribution of the finalized form. Recommendations were to partner with:

- The Nebraska Department of Economic Development
- Regional and local economic development associations
- The Nebraska Department of Labor
- The state and local chambers of commerce

The Subcommittee discussed opportunities for use of this data. Aside from the compilation of the responses received following distribution of the form, one recommendation was to coordinate with local workforce development areas to identify opportunities. The Policy and Oversight Subcommittee's Career Pathways Workgroup will be interested in the compiled data.

Agenda item 7. Member Updates

Chair Moravec asked Members of the Board for updates on their respective industries or organizations and local workforce development area activities for the Members who also serve on local workforce development boards. Members of the Board provided updates as requested.

Agenda item 8. Public Comment

Chair Moravec opened the floor for public comment. No comments were made.

Agenda item 9. Next Meeting – Date and Time

Chair Moravec reminded the Members of the Board that the next meeting of the Board is scheduled for December 3, 2021 from 9a to 12p, location pending. If the date or time of the meeting changes, Members of the Board would be notified by email.

Meetings for 2022 are scheduled for March 11, June 10 and September 16. Chair Moravec opened the floor for comment on future meeting dates to the Board and the public. No comments were made. Chair Moravec asked for a motion to approve the meeting dates for 2021/2022. John Albin motioned to approve, and Bradley Schroeder seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted by voice vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

Members of the public may confirm the dates and times of the meetings of the Board by checking the Upcoming Meeting section of the Board's webpage. The Board's webpage is accessible at <https://dol.nebraska.gov/ReemploymentServices/Training/WIOA/NWDB>.

Agenda item 10. Adjournment

Chair Moravec asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Board. John Albin motioned that the meeting be adjourned, and Michael Geary seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted, which carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:15a.