

HIGH COUNTRY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

October 11, 2007

MINUTES

The October 11th meeting of the High Country Workforce Development Board was called to order by Chairman Doug Pratt. Mr. Pratt thanked everyone for their attendance.

The following Workforce Development Board members and Youth Council members were present:

Vanya Baker	Jim Halsey	Doug Pratt
Anne Bowlin	Jennie Harpold (YC)	Sam L. Ray
Carol Coulter	Gwen Harris	Earl Tipton
Maria Cunningham	Jayne Phipps-Boger	Tommy Williams (YC)
Marie Gwyn		

The following Workforce Development staff members were present: Misty Bishop-Price, Rebecca Bloomquist, Carole Coates, Ruby Greene, Andrea Morgan, and Don Sherrill.

Guests: Teri Carter, Vassie Cooke, Steve Forrest, Rick Herndon, Patrick McKernie, Ginger Shaffer, and Pam Wilson.

Mr. Pratt asked for consideration of the August 9, 2007 minutes. Members voted unanimously with no abstentions to approve the minutes as written.

Mr. Pratt reported that Wendell Wilson and Carol Peters have resigned as members of the Workforce Development Board (WDB), and those positions will be refilled. Mr. Pratt reported that congratulations were due to Scott Moncrief for being designated as the Outstanding Workforce Development Board Member.

Mr. Pratt gave the Executive Committee report. He stated that the August 9, 2007 meeting notes were in the Board Book. Mr. Pratt reported that the Articles of Incorporation (p. 47) have been received as the first step in the WDB getting non-profit status. Once the Board is incorporated and designated as a 501(c)(3) organization it will be able to apply for additional grants it is not otherwise able to apply for. Mr. Pratt reported that the WDB has been involved in three multi-regional grant applications through the Commission on Workforce Development which have all been approved. The Regional Collaboration Planning grant includes AdvantageWest, Western Piedmont Workforce Board, and Region C Workforce Board along with High Country WDB as the administrative entity. The grant purpose is to formalize inter-Board collaboration processes to make effective use of shared resources. The Disability Navigator grant includes High Country, Western Piedmont, Region C, Mountain Area, and Southwestern Area Workforce Boards. Mountain Area Workforce Board is the administrative entity. The grant will fund positions to work with JobLink Career Center staff to help them provide more effective services to people with disabilities and to help Centers improve accessibility. This program is to train the trainers who work with those with disabilities. The Allied Healthcare Health Careers Regional Skills Partnership Planning grant includes all the above Boards, AdvantageWest, and a number of other partner organizations including the community colleges and area health education centers. AdvantageWest serves as the applicant for this grant and Mountain Area Workforce Board is the administrative entity. This is a planning grant to identify training and skill needs to establish mechanisms to improve career training and retention. Mr. Pratt reported on funding and staff issues. He said p. 41 of the Board Book depicts funding allocations with a pattern of decrease in funds over the last four years. This requires clear focus on core services, resources, and actively seeking outside funding sources to carry out the Board's key goals and objectives. Mr. Pratt reported that since July, Board staff have made two requests for emergency funds in response to plant closures and the continuing need to serve Dislocated Workers. Don Sherrill stated that Board staff have applied for emergency Dislocated Worker funding. The WDB received \$200,000 in early September and then applied for a second round. That round has also been approved though the paperwork has not yet been received. Mr. Pratt reported that Julia Rowland resigned her position in August as JobLink System Liaison for four counties to work with Appalachian State University's Center for Entrepreneurship. It is not anticipated that this position will be refilled at this time. Staff is reorganizing to make the best use of existing staff and talents. Mr. Pratt reported that Ken Cone resigned his position as the WDB's Business Consultant effective September 30, 2007 to enter retirement. This position will be advertised, possibly in collaboration with the other two workforce areas the High Country WDB is working with. Mr. Pratt stated that Mr. Cone has set a high standard, so the Board's biggest objective is to fill that position with the right person rather than fill the position quickly. Mr. Pratt reported that the new Board website is up and running and that Rebecca Bloomquist will provide a brief overview later in the meeting.

Mr. Pratt called on Marie Gwyn to give the Youth Council report. Ms. Gwyn reported that minutes from the August 9th and September 13th meetings were in the Board Book. Ms. Gwyn reported that new members on the Youth Council

include Sherry Wood, Sandy Reece, LaKita Moore, and Len Hagaman. Ms. Gwyn introduced Teri Carter whom the High Country Council of Governments has hired as the new Youth Career Coach serving Alleghany and Wilkes Counties. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Board Book contains program reports with numbers being served and activities offered by the Get REAL providers. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Youth Council will be hearing reports from providers at their next meeting on November 8th. Ms. Gwyn reported that Misty Bishop-Price is continuing to research the issue and statutes regarding availability of school dropout names and addresses. They have learned that the dropout list of names and addresses is public information. Ms. Gwyn said the Youth Council is discussing how to coordinate getting this information out or meeting with counties to work through these issues along with the issue of the waiting period required before entering the GED program after Youth drop out of school. Ms. Gwyn reported that the annual Workforce Development Partnership Conference will be October 17-19 in Greensboro. Mayland participant, Aren Doolin, will be recognized at the conference as an Governor's Outstanding Youth Participant award winner.

Mr. Pratt called on Don Sherrill to give the Quality Assurance (QA) Committee report in Scott Moncrief's absence. Mr. Sherrill reported that the QA Committee met in August and September with the notes included on pp. 21-24 of the Board Book. The committee looked at JobLink issues at its last meeting. Since it is expected that some centers will submit rechartering applications during the year, Rebecca Bloomquist presented information about the chartering application and review process. She provided copies of business plans of rechartered JobLink Centers to the committee. Mr. Sherrill reported that last spring the state issued swipe card machines for use in the JobLink Centers. The Centers are getting their feet on the ground using that system. There is an additional JobLink Management Information System to record Center services and there have been some issues regarding the use of that system. Mr. Moncrief sent a letter to JobLink Management Team Chairs and WIA service providers congratulating them on their use of the swipe card system and to also reiterate the importance of using the JobLink MIS. Mr. Sherrill reported that Board staff met with WIA service providers last Friday and included a follow-up conversation around this issue. Providers shared best practices regarding the use of the systems. Mr. Sherrill stated that follow-up will continue with the JobLink Centers to ensure that the swipe cards and JobLink MIS are being used to the fullest possible extent. Mr. Sherrill reported that Ruby Greene had informed the committee during the August meeting on several Incumbent Worker grant guideline changes proposed by the state. Mr. Sherrill said that the state has not implemented those changes for this year, with the exception that equipment can no longer be purchased with Incumbent Worker grant funds. Mr. Sherrill reported that WDB staff meet quarterly with WIA service providers around some cutting-edge workforce development topic. Staff held a "Swap Meet" in August with a presentation by Mike Pierce, Wilkes Community College Advanced Materials Technology Director, regarding that project in Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes Counties. Mr. Sherrill said his presentation was well received. Board staff plan to invite Mr. Pierce to make a presentation to the WDB in the future. Mr. Sherrill reported that the committee also reviewed end-of-year reports for WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, Business Services, Incumbent Worker services, and final closeout and monitoring. Mr. Sherrill reported that the committee also reviewed the allocation chart on p. 41 of the Board Book.

Mr. Pratt called on Earl Tipton to give the Strategic Planning Workgroup report. Mr. Tipton reported that pp. 26-27 of the Board Book contain the workgroup's revised draft Strategic Plan Update for 2008-2011. Mr. Tipton said the *Our Mission* and *Our Core Values* sections have already been validated by the WDB. Mr. Tipton said the workgroup is recommending to the Board today that under *Our Priorities*, the *Developing and directing...* be changed to read *Designing and directing...* The workgroup also recommends that *Our Vision* be simplified to read: *A world class workforce for our region's businesses*. Mr. Tipton thanked workgroup members Carol Coulter, Jim Halsey, Susan Pittman, and staff Carole Coates for their work on this project. Mr. Tipton said the update is consistent with the previous plan, which members are familiar with. He said the workgroup likes the way the first letter of each of the first words of *Our Priorities* forms the acronym *DREAMS* which fits well with what the Board is trying to say. Mr. Tipton said the *Our Goals and Strategies* items have already been reviewed by respective WDB committees. He stated that once approved, the ultimate goal is to have the Strategic Plan implemented by July 1, 2008. The workgroup plans to present a finalized professional-looking document for review at the April 2008 WDB meeting which will be available to the public. Mr. Tipton asked members if this document actually reflects the Board's positions and if this is what the Board wants to say in a public document. Mr. Tipton made a motion that the Strategic Plan Update for 2008-2011 with the revisions be adopted; Sam Ray seconded. Carole Coates commented that Board staff have taken this plan to the WIA service providers for comment and will also be presenting it to various business, community, and government leaders for input as a way to validate that the plan meets the community's needs. If there are significant comments or recommendations then those would be brought back to the Board. Mr. Tipton added that p. 27 of the Board Book includes specific goals established by the WDB committees to back up the overall Strategic Plan. Marie Gwyn asked if the percentages on p. 27 had been decided upon. Ms. Coates responded that those numbers are what each committee is still continuing to work on to set the baseline by the third quarter of this program year in order to set goals for next program year. Ms. Coates said that section identifies specific goals and strategies to stand behind the language of the Strategic Plan Update itself. Gwyn Harris commented that p. 27, no. 5-6 would be easier to read by revising *Increase in number* to *Increase the number*. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Mr. Pratt asked Ruby Greene to introduce the program on Incumbent Worker Grants. Ms. Greene stated that it was her pleasure to introduce two companies that have received Incumbent Worker Training grants. She said the presenters will tell the Board how the grant has benefited or impacted their companies. Ms. Greene especially thanked Vanya Baker for sharing at the last minute when another grant recipient was forced to cancel last Friday. Ms. Greene then introduced Steve Forrest, President of Brushy Mountain Bee Farm in Moravian Falls, NC. Ms. Greene said that Mr. Forrest had told her after her second visit to his company that she was the first person from the government who said they were there to help him and really meant it.

Mr. Forrest reported that what Ms. Greene said was the truth. He said he was incredulous to the help that the grant has been. Mr. Forrest said he is incredulous as to what the program is and what it has done for his business. He said he could not even begin to tell the Board the impact the grant has had on his business. Mr. Forrest stated that what has happened to his business due to the Incumbent Worker Training grant program is like the old saying, *Give me a fish and I eat today; teach me to fish and I eat for a lifetime*. Mr. Forrest invited members to attend a luncheon November 7 at the company to see the impact of the training program. He stated that NC Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry will present the company with the agency's SHARP safety award that day. Mr. Forrest invited anyone interested to come to that event, talk to his employees, and see how things have changed for them. Mr. Forrest reported that his company sells \$4 million worth of beekeeping supplies yearly. They started with nothing 30 years ago, and now they are the third largest bee supply company in the nation. Prices are competitively set, meaning the profit margin is small; therefore, thought of getting his cost down using LEAN techniques really thrilled him. Experts looked at his woodworking shop where most of the problems were coming from. They completed flow charts then efficiently organized the shop. The experts divided the assembly areas into work stations that had every tool and supply that was needed for production. Mr. Forrest said he and his shop manager had not been able to determine the actual cost of the products they made. He noted that this is very difficult because of how the process works. For instance one unit of wood may be used to produce as many as four different items and each item comes in different sizes. LEAN experts were able to identify waste in materials and time and make recommendations for more efficiency. The experts set up an Excel chart for his business that just nails it to the penny. Mr. Forrest said he tried for years to figure out how to do that but was never able to do it on his own. With a new costing system, Mr. Forrest is now in the driver's seat and can price items appropriately. He stated the company ships beekeeping equipment all over the world, mostly to Europe and tries to be competitive with other companies, which really demands accuracy in inventory and shipping. The experts completely reorganized their whole warehouse by putting up signage showing where things are and putting things where they are most efficient. This setup is just recently up and running, so the real impact is yet to be determined. Mr. Forrest said the impact of this grant on his business has been unimaginable for him. He said the payback to the government will be quick because of the taxes that will come from increased productivity. They are going to make more profit, their employees are going to make more money, they are going to be more efficient, and their sales are going to increase. As a smaller business, Mr. Forrest said that he has missed the ball in many fields managerially even though he believes he is fairly clever. When these experts came in it was very obvious to them. The experts teach efficient ways to go about things along with instructing on how to get employees excited and involved in the procedure. Mr. Forrest said it has helped his business tremendously. Mr. Forrest sincerely thanked all WDB members for giving him this grant opportunity and helping him with his business.

Ruby Greene then introduced WDB member Vanya Baker, Human Resources Director at Wilkes Regional Medical Center in North Wilkesboro, NC. Ms. Baker reported that the hospital has been measuring customer service and patient satisfaction for a very long time. The general feeling in healthcare is that people do not really know how good the treatment is that they are getting. Instead, they know how well they are being treated, and that is how they judge their healthcare. Much of it depends on the friendliness of the staff along with the compassion and caring they receive. Ms. Baker said the hospital had used the same national customer service company to measure patient satisfaction for a number of years, during which time the hospital scored very high: in the 90-95th percentile. Performance was measured on a 5-point scale and both "excellent" and "very good" ratings were considered. About two and a half years ago, the hospital to a new company, which only considers the "excellent" category in determining satisfaction. This new method reflected a customer satisfaction ranking in only the 20th percentile. She noted that the hospital still ranked in the 90-95th percentile if the top two rankings were considered. She said the customer service firm says that the higher a customer's initial ranking is, the easier it is to move that ranking up to the next level and with the highest rank, the more likely it is to get repeat business. Staff were devastated with the new ranking system. Therefore, hospital applied for the Incumbent Worker grant to initiate customer service training for all 962 hospital employees in half-day seminars along with some follow up. Now the consultant comes in quarterly to train all new employees. Since the customer service training was completed, the hospital has won a 4-star national award this year for customer service and the follow-up customer service and patient satisfaction ranking were in the 80th percentile. The ranking for their new OB floor received a 5-star rating and was in the 95th percentile. The hospital has been very pleased with these results after receiving the grant. Ms. Baker thanked the Board for the grant which she said had been very beneficial.

Carole Coates commented that the grant to Wilkes Regional Medical Center caused Board staff the most work. She said although this was a relatively small grant dollar-wise, an enrollment form must be completed and keyed into the WIA management information system for each employee who receives training and Wilkes Regional has had the highest number of trainees by far, and in only a two-week period. Vanya Baker stated that the hospital held three classes a day each lasting four hours for six days a week for two weeks during the initial training period.

Carole Coates presented Workforce Briefings, during which she reported that the WDB is proud of the Incumbent Worker grant program and is pleased to have had recipients in every round—sometimes multiple recipients—from a limited pot of money available statewide. Ms. Coates said this is one of the best services the Board can offer through WIA. Ms. Coates reported that there have been a couple of plant closings in the region that have called for rapid response meetings. Taylor Togs in Yancey County has announced its closing affecting around 125 workers. There is a small facility in Taylorsville in Alexander County where 35 people will lose their jobs. Ms. Coates stated that Henredon in Burke County has announced its closure and that a number of people from Mitchell County worked there. Rapid Response meetings have been held at both companies, and WDB staff have been following up with employee meetings. Altec in Yancey County is interested in doing some hiring from both plants and are talking with Board staff about putting on a job fair specifically for those people. Altec has some management openings that have been shared with Taylor Togs management staff, so opportunities may grow out of this. Ms. Coates reported that the annual National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Forum is being held February 23-26, 2008 in Washington, DC. Registration is now open. All members planning to attend need to contact Ms. Coates so staff can assist in registration and hotel booking. Firm commitments are needed at this time because hotels will charge if guests come or not. Ms. Coates stated that the forum keynote speaker is Daniel Pink who is an expert on business services, technology, and entrepreneurship along with being a contributing writer to the *New York Times* and contributing editor to *Wired* magazine. Mr. Pink has written several books, the last one called *A Whole New Mind* that charts the rise of right-brain thinking in modern economies and explains the abilities that must be mastered by individuals and organizations in a world that is becoming increasingly automated and outsourced. Ms. Coates said the conference theme is Collaborate, Advocate, and Innovate: Helping America Work with a number of issue forums and workshops all directed toward workforce board members so they can come back and transform them into strategies. The political satire group Capitol Steps will be performing one night. She reported that pp. 52-54 of the Board Book contain monitoring reports from the Division of Employment and Training for both the WDB's Hurricane Katrina grant and regular program year 2006 operations. Ms. Coates reported that there have been some name and organizational changes at the state. There have been two organizations associated with the Board for a long time: 1. The Division of Employment and Training (DET)—the entity the Board works with that funding funnels through from the federal level which interprets the policies and procedures from US Department of Labor, provides technical assistance, and does monitoring; and 2. The Commission on Workforce Development—the policy group that has been staff to the State Workforce Board (which is also called the Commission on Workforce Development) and looks at broad policy issues. These two groups have now merged into the Division of Workforce Development (DWD) so there is no longer a DET. The State Workforce Board will continue to go by the name of Commission on Workforce Development, but the staff are all DWD. Ms. Coates reported that catalogs and bookmarks from the *Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree* were on the tables for members interested in purchasing gifts while orders were still being taken for this year. Ms. Coates reported that she had been exposed to the booklet *Good to Great for the Social Sector* by Jim Collins who has written two other books aimed at the business sector called *Good to Great* and *Built to Last*. The book *Good to Great* was written for businesses and was about transforming businesses from being good to being great businesses. These principles were formulated from a process of rigorous research that took over five years to complete and were based on business practices covering a 15-year period to demonstrate ability to sustain performance over time. After the book was written, about one third of the comments and requests that came in were from the social sector, or human service organizations. Mr. Collins realized that there were some different issues at work for these kinds of organizations and prepared the booklet to demonstrate how these organizations can use the same principles to achieve greatness. Ms. Coates said she is pleased to see that the WDB is working to achieve these kinds of results, with one example being the Strategic Plan Update. She said the booklet is a quick read and easy to absorb. Ms. Coates said she hopes Board members will embrace this opportunity since she believes the booklet is something that will help members in their role as Board members. An investment was made to provide copies of the booklet to all Board members as well as to the Board's WIA service provider supervisors and the Board staff. Staff have read the booklet and are working from it to develop some of their own strategic goals and internal processes.

Ms. Coates reported that the WDB's new website is still under development but is now live. She said this is a project requested by the Board and is in line with its strategic goals. Ms. Coates stated that GoWilkes.com has developed the website working closely with Rebecca Bloomquist. The Board has a website as well as each of the JobLink Career Centers. The JobLink websites are still under construction. Ms. Coates introduced Rebecca Bloomquist to provide an update for the Board. Ms. Bloomquist demonstrated the WDB's website live on overhead projector available at www.highcountrywdb.com. Ms. Bloomquist explained that upon completion the JobLink sites will be accessible either through the Board site or individually by direct access such as at www.ashejoblink.com for the Ashe JobLink Center or

www.alleghanyjoblink.com for the Alleghany JobLink Center. Ms. Bloomquist demonstrated how to access the website *Calendar of Events* to find out when upcoming meetings and events will be held in the region. Ms. Bloomquist shared that the website *Headlines* contain interesting things going on in the region for others to know about, such as the current *Headline* about the Mitchell County youth winning the Governor's Award. Ms. Bloomquist continued to demonstrate the website's different pages and links. Maria Cunningham asked if there would be any success stories added to the Board website, such as from Steve Forrest and Vanya Baker's Incumbent Worker grant reports today. Ms. Coates responded that those types of items could go under the *Headlines* section of the website which can be quickly updated with brief information. Ms. Bloomquist demonstrated the *Get in Touch* section (online questions that are submitted currently go to a general information email which Ms. Bloomquist receives). Ms. Bloomquist then took questions from Board members. Ms. Bloomquist said the website has been live for approximately one week. Ms. Coates stated that the website will continue to be developed and will be more complete as time progresses. She said since the Board now has a place online to put items like upcoming meetings, the Strategic Plan, and meeting minutes, public access will be much easier allowing for greater familiarity with the work of the WDB.

Mr. Pratt addressed Other Member Business by encouraging members if possible to attend the National Association of Workforce Boards Forum in February 2008. Mr. Pratt said he found the event very informative and an excellent networking opportunity. Ms. Coates reminded members to complete the meeting evaluation forms placed on the tables.

Mr. Pratt asked for public comments. With no comments given, the meeting was adjourned.

The next Board meeting will be Thursday, December 13, 2007 at 3:00 p.m. at the High Country Council of Governments in Boone.

**High Country Workforce Development Board
Attendance Sheet
October 11, 2007**

%	Name	Nov 06	Dec 06	Feb 07	April 07	June 07	Aug 07	Oct 07
43%	Jim Halsey							
71%	Scott Moncrief (eff 3/06)							
71%	Jayne Phipps-Boger							after start
86%	Barbara Barlow (eff 9/28/06)							
83%	Vacant (Ashe Private)							
100%	Carol Coulter							after start
86%	Sam Ray	after start						
43%	Susan Pittman							
100%	Marie Gwyn							
50%	Vacant (Mitchell Private)							
60%	Steve English (eff 2/5/07)							
57%	Connie Barnette						after start	
86%	Doug Pratt							
57%	Sandra Reese							
50%	Ben Shoemake (eff 12/06)							
71%	Vanya Baker							
83%	Maria Cunningham (eff 12/06)							
100%	Anne Bowlin							
100%	Gwen Harris							after start
33%	Vacant (Yancey Private)							
100%	Earl Tipton (eff 8/07)							
0%	Vacant (At Large CBO)							
0%	Vacant (At Large Labor)							
		78%	80%	75%	60%	74%	70%	61%

PRESENT
ABSENT
VACANCY

Youth Council Members Present

Jennie Harpold and Tommy Williams