



**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Jaime Link**  
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

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## **Employment First Full Council Quarterly Meeting** **Minutes**

October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
1:00pm – 3:00pm  
Zoom  
Meeting ID: 892 8067 2837

**Members Present:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, David Allgood, Bill Bates, Johnny Callebs Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Jeff Edwards, Tom Hamilton, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Annette Jett, Amy Luttrell, Cora McNabb, Amanda Owen, Merry Reid Sheffer (joined just after roll call), and Rebecca Wilson

**Members Absent:** Co-Chair Morgan Turner, Jessica Beaven, Staci Cain, Amanda Friend, Dawn Gardner, Leslie Hoffman, Zach Morgan, Lori Norton, and Larry Taylor

**Staff Present:** Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill, KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach, KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble, KYOVR Manager, Michelle Cobb, KYOVR Manager, Ron O'Hair, KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker, KYOVR Manager, Veronica Dale, KYOVR Division Director, Holly Hendricks, and KYOVR Assistant Director, Jonathan White

### **Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees to the meeting and a roll call was taken to establish a quorum. Administrator, Nanci Howard began by explaining that the draft Bylaws and Strategic Plan documents were included in the meeting packet that was provided to attendees prior to the meeting. She explained that Cabinet Legal Representation was present to answer any questions regarding the Bylaws draft and that the items were on the agenda for council approval. She reminded all attendees to maintain camera and audio connection throughout the meeting as well as making mention of other standard meeting etiquette items. Nanci reminded everyone to utilize the Dropbox link for access to all council meeting minutes and other resources. She stated that the Project NEON initiative with ODEP and Econsys had concluded and an agenda item was added to the meeting to discuss the opportunity to reapply for assistance to continue this work. Nanci explained that she would be working with Committee Chairs to determine standing committee meeting times throughout the 2024 year to eliminate the use of Doodle Poll as requested by most members. Nanci congratulated members on one year of service of the Council and reminded the group of the charge of the council. Deputy Secretary, Beth Brinly shared her gratitude for all the Council's work.

### **July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Meeting Minutes Approval:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley called for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting. **A motion was made by Member, David Allgood and a second was provided Johnny Callebs. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

### **Chair Report:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley began by thanking the Council and affiliated groups for all the work performed throughout the year, to assist in increasing competitive integrated employment opportunities. She stated that she would be adding two items to the meeting agenda.

### **Letter of Support for the postsecondary transition proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration grant:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley explained that the first item to be added to the agenda was a Letter of Support from the Employment First Council to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for postsecondary transition proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration grant. Member, Amy Luttrell asked Member, Cora McNabb what the age bracket was for the grant, and it was answered that the age bracket is 14 to 24 years of age. Katie called for a motion to approve the Letter of Support for postsecondary transition proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration grant. **Member, Amy Luttrell made the motion to approve the Letter of Support by the Employment First Council, to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, for the postsecondary transition proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration grant. A second was provided by Member, Jeff White. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

### **Draft Strategic Plan:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley explained that the draft Strategic Plan had been emailed to all Council Members and uploaded to Dropbox, prior to the meeting. She then briefly went over the draft with the group making mention of highlighted items such as the plan's timeframe, Vision, Mission, and Goals before calling for a motion to approve the item. Member, Amy Luttrell inquired if the committee talked about metrics and which were used to create the Strategic Plan and there was discussion between Katie, Cora McNabb, Jeff White and Amy regarding this. Katie stated that national compedium numbers were being used and that Amy had suggested ongoing communication to track data. There was a question from Member, Amy Luttrell, as to what the reason was for Goal 1: Objective 1:1: Research and identify variability of replicating the existing disability coalitions. Katie explained that there is a very successful group known as the Louisville Coalition Workforce Diversity that has successfully been replicated in Owensboro, KY and the Employment First Council would like to research the possibility of replicating that model across the state. Katie continued to explain there were some replication efforts that were not as successful, however there are other workforces across the state that the Employment First Council could work with to make sure disability, is included into. Amy asked if there was one or more audience for information warehouse in Goal 2 and who are those

audiences? Katie explained that the Advocacy and Education Committee has been working on developing a platform to house information to cater to a wide audience. There was discussion between Amy and Katie regarding this matter. **A motion was made by Member, Tal Curry to approve the Draft Strategic Plan and a second was provided by Member, Todd Coffey. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

#### **2024 Project NEON Application Renewal:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley provided brief explanation of the 2024 application for renewal of Project NEON. She indicated that the likely focus would be on Provider Capacity and bringing an increase in competitive integrated employment for persons with disabilities. There was no discussion of this item and Katie called for a motion to approve the 2024 Project NEON Application renewal. **Member, Jeff White made the motion to approve the 2024 Project NEON Application Renewal and a second was provided by Member, Tal Curry. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.** Member, Rebecca Wilson made a comment that there are provider issues particularly in rural areas. Member, Frank Huffman asked if OVR has their own job coaches for minors in rural areas. Staff support, Deana Wilson-Kimble answered that there is a team of job placement specialists covering the state of Kentucky both in person and remotely for areas that do not have a designated staff member. Staff Support, Holly Hendricks further commented that the job placement specialists do not provide long term support services. Katie stated that the Council hopes to accomplish long term support through Project NEON.

#### **Committee Presentation(s)/Discussion(s):**

**Employer Education & Engagement Committee:** Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer stated that the committee has developed a webinar series that is prepared to launch. However, due to a lack of quorum at the recent committee meetings, the group has been unable to move forward with this task. She encouraged members belonging to the Committee to reengage in meetings and asked that any other Council Members that may be interested in joining the committee, to do so. She stated that the committee is hopeful to launch the webinar in 2024 and encouraged questions and suggestions be sent to her for consideration. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley thanked Merry and stated that upon voting in the Bylaws today, the committees would be able to move forward in actions items by consensus of Council Members present at any given meeting.

**Provider Capacity Committee:** Chair, Jeff White stated that the Committee had met multiple times throughout the quarter and there were no action items to bring forward at this time. He explained that the committee decided to expand its membership to invite and include case managers, employment specialists and counselors to provide enough information for a well-rounded understanding of the challenges providers face. He stated that many of the challenges the Committee has discussed are ones that need to be transitioned to other committees as they are challenges outside of the Committee's scope and gave examples of these. Jeff went on to say that the Committee would be bringing actions items for consideration to the next quarterly meeting, such as how to expand the knowledge base and ways to address the use of prevocational services for adults. Jeff mentioned that the Committee had the opportunity to make a presentation before the Kentucky Association of Private Providers in which the Committee received good feedback regarding the Employment First Council.

**Transition Committee:** Chair, Jessica Beaven was not present and Co-Chair, Frank Huffman commented on behalf of the committee. He stated that he had not attended recent meetings due to schedule conflicts and stated that the last item he recalled discussing amongst the Committee was the benefits issue and getting consumers to better understand the process. He then stated that he was aware that Medicaid would pay for transportation to work if there was a waiver in place however there was a waiting list for those who did not have a waiver. He asked what could be done to fix this issue. He stated the waiver issue is problematic for consumers to find transportation that graduate, do not have a waiver in place and who have already exhausted OVR services for this benefit. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley agreed that this is an issue that all the Committees need to address and reminded everyone that committee meeting minutes are available to review in the meeting materials packet and Dropbox platform.

**Advocacy & Education Committee:** Chair, Amanda Owen stated that the Committee has been working to develop a QR code to allow quick access of resources and information to the five targeted audiences, which consist of self-advocates, families, providers, and professionals and employers. She stated there was an example of a flyer containing a QR code shared in the meeting materials packet. Amanda explained that the Committee had intended to use the Padlet platform to house and organize the collected information however it had recently failed the universal design test, so the Committee is exploring other options at this time. Amanda further explained that the Committee is continuing to gather and develop resources and information into the five categories so at such time an alternative platform is determined, the information can easily be loaded to the platform for dissemination. She invited Council Members to feel free to send information or resources pertaining to the five targeted audiences to the Advocacy & Education Committee for housing until such time that it can be loaded onto the chosen platform.

**Policy Committee:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley explained that this committee had been voted into existence at the April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, quarterly meeting and had prior been a work group that was working in conjunction with Project NEON. She stated that the Committee had reviewed a number of policies between Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, BDID and the Department of Education Policies Guidelines and how they measured against the Employment First appointment concept of being the first and primary option for people who desire to go to work. The Committee is working to determine gaps in policy which would be filed in the annual report and inform state legislature of areas needing improvement. Katie stated that it had been overlooked to appoint a Chairperson to this committee and called for nominations to be brought forward. Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler nominated herself for the position. Katie expressed encouragement for Diana to serve as Chair for this committee as she also serves as the Legislative Liaison of the Council and these two roles can blend. There were no other nominations made and Katie called for a motion to appoint Diana Merzweiler the Chair of the Policy Committee. **Member, Cora McNabb made the motion to appoint Diana Merzweiler to serve as Chair of the Policy Committee. A second was provided by Member, Amy Luttrell. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Calles, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

**Bylaws (Adhoc) Committee:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley gave a brief explanation of the Bylaws Committee work and intent to dissolve the group upon acceptance and approval of the Bylaws Draft presented at the meeting. She called for any discussion to be brought forward regarding the Draft Bylaws. It was also mentioned that Legal Cabinet Representation was involved throughout the

creation of the Draft Bylaws. Staff Support, Betty Whittaker stated that every draft had been reviewed by Cabinet Legal Team and revisions were made as needed. No questions were offered, and Katie called for a motion to approve the Draft Bylaws. **Member, Amanda Owen made a motion to accept and approve the Bylaws as written in the draft format. Member, Amy Luttrell provided a second to the motion. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

**2024 Quarterly Meeting Schedule:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley called to set dates for the 2024-year quarterly meeting and explained that these meetings would be posted publicly. She reminded everyone that the Council had been meeting quarterly on the second Friday from 1: 00 to 3:00 pm eastern standard time and asked if the council would like to continue this schedule into the 2024 year. Katie explained that if the schedule was kept, the meeting dates would be as follows; January 12<sup>th</sup>, April 12<sup>th</sup>, July 12<sup>th</sup>, and October 11<sup>th</sup>. Member, Frank Huffman stated he would ask his caregiver to check his schedule. **Member, Todd Coffey made a motion to continue the quarterly meeting schedule on the second Friday as stated and a second was provided by Member, Amy Luttrell. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley restated the motion as follows; the second Friday, quarterly, beginning in January from 1:00 to 3:00 pm eastern standard time. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.** Katie explained that the administrative staff would send out calendar invites to all council members and anyone who does not receive an invite but wishes to attend should reach out to Nanci Howard for an invitation. She also explained that all meetings are held in person and offer a virtual option for attendance. She recommended that in person attendance is the preferred option.

#### **Additional/Public Comments:**

Member, Amanda Owen shared that her nonprofit Puzzle Pieces was invited by the Chamber of Commerce in Owensboro, Kentucky, to participate as a provider in the panel discussion at the Inclusive Workforce Summit. She mentioned there were nearly 200 employers in attendance of this event which was a major win for the Employment First movement in having the opportunity to engage in conversations surrounding workforce diversity and disability, with these employers. Member, Frank Huffman stated that transportation is one of the biggest barriers and he asked if an OVR case could be re-opened for a consumer after they had gained employment and if they still needed transportation. Staff Support, Holly Hendricks stated that an individual would need to reapply and be determined eligible for services at which point the counselor could include transportation assistance to maintain employment. However, this was dependent upon the individual reapplying and being determined eligible for services as OVR would not be able to reopen the original case. She also stated there is no limit to the number of times a person can apply. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley stated there would be a transportation seminar coming up on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and suggested that the Council be aware of that. Member, Jeff White stated "Maria" would be attending the Employment Spotlight meeting on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 3: 30 pm and offered to send Frank Huffman an invitation to attend that meeting as it would be centered around transportation. Guest, Dr. Tonika East stated the State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children would be hosting its quarterly meeting Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am at the Sauer building and encouraged any stakeholders to attend. Guest, Johnny Collett stated he is pleased with the work the Council is performing and made comparison to similar work across the country.

**Action Items:**

- **Motion to approve the minutes from the July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to approve the Letter of Support by the Employment First Council, to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, for the postsecondary transition proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration grant. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to approve the Draft Strategic Plan. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to approve the 2024 Project NEON Application Renewal. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to appoint Diana Merzweiler to serve as Chair of the Policy Committee. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to accept and approve the Bylaws as written in the draft format. The motion passed without opposition.**
- **Motion to continue the quarterly meeting schedule on the second Friday, quarterly, beginning in January from 1:00 to 3:00 pm eastern standard time. The motion passed without opposition.**

**Adjournment:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Member, Amanda Owen made the motion to adjourn. Member, David Allgood provided a second to the motion. A vote was taken and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Diana Merzweiler, Annette Jett, Jeff White, Todd Coffey, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, David Allgood, Cora McNabb, Jason Wheatley in for Gretta Hylton, Amy Luttrell, Bill Bates, Tom Hamilton, Johnny Callebs, were in favor. The motion passed without opposition.**

**Next Meeting Date:**

Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
1:00pm – 3:00pm  
Hybrid Format  
Location: TBD

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