



## **Meeting Agenda**

July 15, 2015

High Country Council of Governments

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- **Call to Order - Rhonda Herman**
- **Approval of March meeting minutes**
- **Oath of Office for new members**
- **Introduction of members**
- **Election of officers (Action)**
- **Adoption of By-Laws (Action)**

## **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and look ahead**

Phil Trew - HCCOG Director of Planning

### **Welcome new members & discussion:**

- **Ronne Grantham - Regional Director, NW Prosperity Zone, Dept of Commerce DWS**
- **Debbie Woodard - Dean, College Readiness, Wilkes Community College**
- **Jane Blackburn - Director, Appalachian Regional Library System**
- **Keith Devereaux - Apprenticeship Consultant**
- **Melissa Soto - Director, WAMY Community Action**

### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Update - Adrian Tait**

### **Public Comment Period**

### **Announcements**

### **Adjournment**

The next meeting of the High Country Workforce Development Board will be **Thursday, Oct 8th, 2015.**

## **High Country Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes March 12, 2015**

**Members Present:** Dan Barron (via GoToMeeting), Jason Carlton, Kim Cashatt, Kim Davis, Rhonda Herman, Tom Hughes, Trasa Jones, Mitzi Layell, Dan Little, Justin Ray, Sam Ray, Kory Wilcox, Bernice Wilson, and Sallie Woodring

**Staff Present:** Misty Bishop-Price, Rebecca Bloomquist, Don Sherrill, and Adrian Tait

**Guests:** Kim Bell, Anne Bowlin, David Burluson, Elizabeth Coleman, Cynthia Deyton, Mickey Duvall, Mike Fenley, Tanna Greathouse, John Greene, Charlene Gurber, Marty Hemric, Will Jones, Elaine Lockhart, Anita Lowe, Colby Martin, Dana Martinez (via GoToMeeting), Ginger Shaffer, Jim Stout, Pam Wilson, and Debbie Woodard

**Call to Order:** Chairwoman Rhonda Herman

**Approval of December Minutes:** Motion for approval was made by Trasa Jones and seconded by Tom Hughes.

**New Board Member Oaths of Office:** Kory Wilcox of GE Aviation in West Jefferson (Ashe County) and Bernice Wilson of BRP, Inc. in Spruce Pine (Mitchell County)

**Special Introduction:** Bill Slagle introduced himself as the new regional representative for the Northwest Prosperity Zone for the North Carolina Economic Development Partnership. The Northwest Prosperity Zone consists of the twelve counties in northwest North Carolina (Alleghany, Alexander, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey). Mr. Slagle's main area of focus will be expansion/recruitment projects, working with Chambers of Commerce regarding tourism, export projects, and agri-business. The Partnership's website is [www.edpnc.com](http://www.edpnc.com).

### **Presentation: [NCWorks Commission Strategic Plan](#) – Dana Martinez, Policy Analyst – NC Division of Workforce Solutions**

Ms. Martinez gave an overview of the NCWorks Commission Strategic Plan, in particular, the Strategic Action Plan containing four elements consisting of twenty steps (see attachment): System Alignment and Transformation, Strengthen Customer Services, Career Pathways, and Accountability.

- NCWorks Commission will be creating four committees based on the four elements, and board members statewide will be invited to attend those meetings.
- Data will be a key part of the Action Plan.
- Local workforce development boards statewide are being asked to adopt the Strategic Plan and have it mesh with their regional plans.

Chairwoman Herman will coordinate and chair a task force to work on the local strategic plan and will reach out to board members to participate.

**Dialogue: K-12 Funding and Schedules – Superintendents Dr. David Burleson (Avery County) and Dr. Marty Hemric (Wilkes County)**

Dr. Burleson and Dr. Hemric updated the Board on two critical issues now being discussed in committees at the state legislature: reduction in K-12 funding and local control of school calendars.

- K-12 Funding
  - Since 2008, there has been an erosion of operational funding for K-12 schools.
  - Local school systems have lost the ability to teach certain subjects at all levels due to funding cuts.
  - Local school systems need to be able to regain some flexibility at the local level with their budget.
- School Calendars
  - Local school systems no longer have control over the school calendar in their county and need to regain it.
  - The K-12 calendar needs to be able to align with the local community college so students from the high school can take courses at the community college campus.
  - The local school boards need to be able to have the flexibility to adjust for winter weather which would mean earlier start dates for the High Country region – allowing one semester to be completed and assessments taken in a timely manner prior to the Christmas break.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

Board members were directed to the WIOA – TEGL 19-14 (see attachment) and were provided an overview of the vision document by WDB Director, Adrian Tait. Mr. Tait stated that official guidelines on implementation are expected later in the spring.

**Request for Proposals (RFP)**

The HCWDB is procuring the delivery of services for WIOA Career Center Operator, Adult/Dislocated Workers/Business Services, and Youth Services for the seven-county region. Mr. Tait reviewed the RFP process and gave a brief overview of the document's specifications and timetable.

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • March 20, 2015        | RFP Release Date                |
| • March 30, 2015        | Bidders Conference – 1:00pm     |
| • March 30, 2015        | Letters of Intent Due – 5:00pm  |
| • April 24, 2015        | Proposal Deadline – 5:00pm      |
| • April 24-May 14, 2015 | Formal Review of Proposals      |
| • May 14, 2015          | HCWDB Notice of Selection       |
| • May-June 2015         | Contract Negotiations           |
| • July 1, 2015          | Anticipated Contract Start Date |

All documents and information pertaining to the RFP will be posted in a special section on the WDB website.

**Presentation: Collaboration with Yancey Public Schools - Pam Wilson, WIA Director for Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties**

Pam Wilson, WIA Director for Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties gave a brief presentation about the Mountain Heritage High School Sophomore Project on March 3, 2015.

- Collaborative Effort of NCWorks Career Center Youth Services, Mountain Heritage High School, Mayland Community College, Altec Industries, and New Buck Corporation.
- Approximately 160 sophomore students participated and split up into four groups.
- Agenda for the day:
  - Tours of Altec Industries and New Buck Corporation
  - Workshop on soft skills, local labor market, and appropriate use of social media
  - Tour of Mayland Community College Yancey Campus including the new Anspach Advanced Manufacturing School

Other upcoming events in which the NCWorks Career Center Youth Services in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey are involved:

- Avery High Career Fair – March 24<sup>th</sup>
- NCWorks Registration Workshop with 60 Avery High juniors – April 2<sup>nd</sup> (workshop will be repeated in the summer with Mitchell High)
- Grade 8 Project – April 1<sup>st</sup>
- Mock Interviewing with Mitchell High seniors – April 1<sup>st</sup>
- Workshop on interviewing skills – participants will contact interviewer (local businesses are helping out) who will score them on how they do in the interview. The score will be reviewed with their case manager. Participants will earn an interview outfit for taking part in the workshop.

**Director's Report**

Adrian Tait updated the Board on various items pertaining to career center marketing, the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative, and the certification of local career centers.

**Marketing Materials** – new posters were designed to focus on high school/early college-aged young adults as well as adults who may have returned to school. These posters have the contact information for all centers in the region and were distributed to staff for placement in the community.

**Work Ready Communities** – the Work Ready Communities application for Wilkes County was accepted. Watauga and Ashe counties are currently working on applications to submit by the end of March. Mitchell County is discussing submitting an application, and efforts will continue throughout the region.

**NCWorks Career Center Certification** – Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey centers have applied for certification as Level 2 Career Centers and are awaiting site visits at the end of the month. Once this step is completed - and there are no outstanding issues – all centers in the region will be certified.

**Public Comment Period**

Dr. Dan Barron provided an update of workforce-related activities in the Avery, Mitchell, Yancey library system. In particular, Dr. Barron reported that the library’s bookmobile visits all daycare centers in the three-county region and that it has received a grant to purchase bilingual computers to help children in the region. In addition, the children’s librarian has developed a curriculum that helps young children talk about access to and awareness of jobs/careers.

**Adjournment**

Trasa Jones made the motion to adjourn.



**July 2015**

**Call for officer nominations**

The High Country Workforce Development Board is seeking to fill two leadership positions for the 2015-2016 year.

**What's involved:**

To fulfill the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements; officers must be appointed board members representing a private sector industry. Officers will serve on the Executive Committee and be expected to attend board meetings, and additional committee meetings as required.

**Chair**

The duties of the Chair include: calling and presiding at meetings, appointing committees, and attend to the board's business.

**Vice Chair**

The duties of the vice Chair shall be to conduct the business of the board in the absence of the Chair and such other duties as assigned by the Chair.

Need:

Potential board members who may serve include:

1. Jason Calton
2. Bob Hege
3. Trasa Jones
4. Mitzi Layell
5. Bryan Peterson
6. Justin Ray
7. Dwight Simmons
8. Kory Wilcox
9. Bernice Wilson
10. Sallie Woodring

Please email [adrian.tait@highcountrywdb.com](mailto:adrian.tait@highcountrywdb.com) and indicate your selection for

1. Chair
2. Vice Chair

Nominations are due by close of business Monday July 13. Nominations will be gathered and developed into a slate of officers to be elected at the July 15th meeting.

## ARTICLE I — The Board

**Section 1 - Name:** The name of this organization shall be the High Country Workforce Development Board (WDB or Board).

**Section 2 - Service Area:** The area to be served by the WDB shall be Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties. This Service Area shall also be known as the Local Area.

**Section 3 - Purpose:** It is the purpose of the Board to serve as a governance board for workforce development in the Service Area and to provide policy guidance for and exercise oversight with respect to activities conducted under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act for the Service Area in partnership with the High Country Workforce Development Consortium (Consortium).

a. **Duties and Responsibilities:** Duties and responsibilities of the WDB are as follows:

1. **Local Plan:** to jointly develop a Local Plan with the Chief Elected Official in coordination with appropriate community partners to address the workforce development needs of the Service Area;
2. **Workforce Research and Regional Labor Market Analysis:** to assist in the development and implementation of the Local Plan;
3. **Convening, Brokering, Leveraging:** to convene local stakeholders in the development and implementation of the local plan under Section 108 of the WIOA and in identifying

non-Federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities;

4. Employer Engagement: to lead efforts in engaging a diverse range of employers and entities in the region;
5. Career Pathways Development: to lead efforts in the Local Area with education partners to develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment;
6. Proven and Promising Practices: to lead efforts in the Local Area to identify and promote proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers; to disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other Local Areas for meeting such needs;
7. Technology: to develop strategies for using technology; to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, workers, and jobseekers;
8. Program Oversight: in partnership with the local Consortium, the Board shall conduct oversight for local youth workforce investment activities, local employment and training activities, and the one-stop delivery system; ensure the appropriate use, management, and investment of funds to maximize performance outcomes under Section 116 of the WIOA;



9. Negotiation of Local Performance Accountability Measures: the local Board, Consortium, and the North Carolina Governor shall negotiate and reach agreement on local performance accountability measures as described in Section 116;
10. Selection of Operators and Providers: the local Board, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official for the Local Area, shall:
  - i. designate and certify one-stop operators, may terminate for cause the eligibility of such operators;
  - ii. identify eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities and may terminate for cause the eligibility of such providers;
  - iii. identify eligible providers of training services;
  - iv. identify eligible providers of career services
  - v. work with the State to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of career services and training services serving the Local Area and that these services are provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice;
11. Coordination with Education Providers: to coordinate activities with education and training providers in the Local Area;
12. Budget and Administration: to develop a budget for activities in the Service Area that are consistent with the Local Plan and duties of the Board;
13. Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities: to annually assess the physical and programmatic accessibility in accordance with applicable provisions under Title I of the

WIOA and of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 of all one-stop centers in the Service Area;

- b. To ensure that the Local Fiscal Area Agent contracts for an outside audit of its own financial procedures annually. The WDB has audit review rights.
- c. The Workforce Development Board shall not operate or manage career centers but shall serve in the role of governance providing planning, monitoring, evaluation, and oversight of the selected operators and partners.

**Section 4** - The Board shall act as local partners with the Consortium in the implementation of the WIOA, and provide guidance to staff in the development of the Local Plan. The Board will review the Local Plan for approval by the Consortium prior to submission to the North Carolina Governor.

## ARTICLE II — Membership

**Section 1** - The voting members of the Workforce Development Board shall be appointed by the County Commission Chairs or designated chief elected official for WIOA purposes of each county (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey) in a manner consistent with federal and state laws and regulations governing the Board.

**Section 2** - The High Country Workforce Development Board shall consist of a minimum of twenty-three (23) voting members. The Board shall have fourteen (14) private sector members who are appointed by Boards of County Commissioners or their Consortium representatives (two (2) appointments per County Consortium Representative) in accordance with the WIOA. The Consortium shall appoint nine (9)

public sector members of the WDB by a vote of a majority of the total number of members of the Consortium.

### **Section 3 - Board Membership Composition**

#### **Private Sector/Business Member Seats** (14 seats):

- No less than 51% of total board composition;
- Two (2) seats from each county with one seat expiring in an odd-numbered year and the other in an even-numbered year (fourteen (14) total) beginning July 1;
- Shall be appointed from key industry sectors or key local businesses aligned with local or regional economic development strategies;
- Should have optimum decision-making authority within their organizations. Owners, managers, or Human Resource managers are appropriate. They may represent small or large businesses or organizations representing businesses as described in the WIOA; and
- Nominations shall be provided by local business groups such as chambers of commerce, economic development commissions and business trade associations;

#### **Public Sector Seats** (9 seats):

Whereas private sector/business members are representing the workforce needs of their organization, sector, and county, public sector members are representing their organization with a regional perspective. These Board members shall be regional representatives and shall be appointed through a majority vote of the Consortium. All public sector members shall be in accordance with WIOA Section 107 (b) (2) and shall include:

- No less than 20% of total Board composition shall be representatives of the workforce within the Local Area and include the following:
  - Labor: shall be a representative from a labor organization, who has been nominated by a labor federation, or other representatives of employees.
  - Apprenticeship: shall be a representative from the North Carolina Apprenticeship Program or similar organization focusing on apprenticeship activities.
  - Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): Organizations with demonstrated experience in addressing the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment including veterans' organizations and youth organizations.
- Adult Education and Literacy: The regional adult education and literacy program directors shall nominate a representative to serve in this role.
- Post-Secondary Education: The regional post-secondary educational institutions shall nominate a representative to serve in this role (to include community, state, and private colleges in the Service Area).
- State Employment Service: The Department of Commerce will nominate a regional representative to serve in this role.
- Economic Development: The local economic development commissions or directors will nominate a representative in this role.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Agency: The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation shall nominate a regional representative to serve in this role.

### **Ex-Officio Members**

The Consortium may appoint other members of the community in an ex-officio role that may be helpful in an advisory role to further advance the mission statements and goals. The WDB may add non-voting members at its discretion, to include elected officials or their representatives.

**Section 5** - All appointments and reappointments will be for a two-year (2) period, with alternating terms. Vacancies shall be filled by the procedures prescribed for all other appointments and shall be for the remainder of the term.

## **ARTICLE III — Officers**

**Section 1** - Chair: Voting members of the Workforce Development Board shall elect the Chair from the Private Sector Representatives who are eligible to serve pursuant to the requirements of state and federal law. The chair shall call and preside at meetings, appoint committees, and through the Board's support staff, perform such other duties as directed by the Board.

**Section 2** - Vice-Chair: The eligibility requirements shall be the same as for the Chair. The duties of the Vice-Chair shall be to conduct the business of the Board in the absence of the Chair and such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair.

**Section 3** - Term of Office: The term of office shall be for a period of one (1) year; however, officers may succeed themselves. Elections shall be held at the last regularly scheduled meeting of each Program Year. The terms of office shall begin on July 1 of each year.

## ARTICLE IV — Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct

In an effort to maintain the high standard of conduct expected in the management of its affairs, the High Country Workforce Development Board adopts the following Code of Conduct applicable to all members:

No Board member shall engage in or do the following:

1. Use the name, endorsement, or services of the Service Area for the benefit of any person, or authorize such use, except in conformance with WDB policy;
2. Accept or seek for oneself, or any other person, any financial advantage or gain other than nominal value offered as a result of Board affiliation;
3. Disclose any confidential Workforce Development Board information to any person not authorized to receive such information or use such information to the disadvantage of the Service Area;
4. Take part in any religion, anti-religious, or partisan political activities in the discharge of Board duties;
5. Take any action which results in a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, in accordance with Federal Uniform Administrative Requirements;
  - a. Conflict of Interest arises when any of the following may be positively or negatively affected by an action under consideration by the WDB:

- i. the business in which a member, or one of the immediate family of a member, has a financial interest;
- ii. the public or non-profit agency which employs a member, or one of the immediate family of a member; or
- iii. the public or non-profit agency on whose Board a member, or one of the immediate family of a member sits.

**Immediate Family** shall be defined as a member's spouse, parents, children, and siblings.

- b. Members must declare any potential conflict of interest in writing upon joining the Board and thereafter at the first meeting of each Program Year. When a potential conflict of interest arises during the year, the member will immediately notify the WDB Chair and the Workforce Development Director in writing.
- c. The Conflict of Interest provision applies equally to Board meetings, or personal contact with members outside of meetings, for the purpose of influencing or affecting the member's thinking or decision-making.
- d. WDB members must make a conflict declaration upon the introduction of any agenda item that raises a real or apparent conflict of interest and must abstain from discussion and voting after declaring the conflict. Meeting minutes must show all conflict declarations and abstentions.
- e. Where there is a real or apparent conflict of interest, WDB members must refrain from participating in all stages of the procurement process, including the following:

- i. participating in the planning process to the extent of advocating that a certain type of service be included or excluded;
  - ii. participating in the development, review, or approval of the procurement method and instrument which a member, one of the immediate family of a member, or the entity a member represents intends to respond to by submitting a proposal;
  - iii. participating in the provider selection process including discussing or voting on one's own or a rival proposal (one which competes for funding from the same source); and
  - iv. attempting to influence a planning or funding decision by lobbying or advocating for or against a plan for proposal.
- f. No member who has a conflict of interest may serve as a WDB officer or committee chair.

It is the responsibility of each member and alternate of the Workforce Development Board to govern the actions of all Board members in compliance with the Code of Conduct. If a member thinks there is a possibility of a conflict of interest, real or apparent, on the part of another member, it is his or her affirmative responsibility to immediately bring the matter to the attention of the Board or Executive Committee.

Upon the assertion of a possible violation of this policy, the Chair or Vice-Chair will appoint an ad hoc committee to review the circumstances, report their findings to the Board for discussion and vote, and recommend a course of action in the event a member is found to be in violation. Action may include, but is not limited to, a



declaration that the member's seat is vacant and a request to the appropriate Consortium representative or Consortium Board to make a new appointment.

This Code of Conduct conforms to the Federal Uniform Administrative Requirements (Common Rule).

## ARTICLE V — Staff

**Section 1 - WDB Support:** The WDB shall be supported in the performance of its duties by the Workforce Development Director and/or staff provided by the Local Area Fiscal Agent. This staff shall be responsive to the needs of the WDB and shall support the WDB in its mandated functions

## ARTICLE VI — Board Meetings

**Section 1 - Regular Meetings:** The Board shall meet on a quarterly basis or as otherwise designated by the chairperson.

**Section 2 - Special or Called Meetings:** The Chair, and the Workforce Development Director, may call special meetings of the Board as required or with a majority decision of Board members.

**Section 3 - Quorum:** For any regularly, or otherwise properly, called meeting, the voting members present shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 4 - Voting:** All actions of the Board shall be determined by a majority of the quorum. The adoption and amendments of the by-laws shall be by a two-thirds vote of the members present. Each member of the Board shall have one vote and no proxy votes shall be allowed.

**Section 5 - Order of Business:** The Chair shall be responsible for orderly business of the Board and for calling items on the agenda. During the course of considering items on the agenda, only members of the Board shall participate in the discussion except 1) by prior arrangement with the Chair upon request of a member of the Board or 2) during the public participation period.

**Section 6 - Agenda:** The agenda for Board meetings shall be developed by the Board staff and by the Chair.

**Section 7 -** The rules set forth in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, shall govern the procedures of the Board, unless otherwise agreed upon by the members.

**Section 8 - Public Notice:** Meetings of the Workforce Development Board shall be open, and it shall be a stated policy that interested citizens or groups will be heard on workforce development matters in accordance with Article V, Section 5. Workforce Development Board meetings should be publicized and operated in accordance with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

**Section 9 - Reimbursement:** Workforce Development Board members who do not have compensation available from their employing agencies shall be reimbursed for board related meeting expenses. Funds for such reimbursement will be provided by the Local Area Fiscal Agent. The Local Area Fiscal Agent will be responsible for maintaining records of reimbursements.

**Section 11 - Minutes:** The Local Area staff shall keep minutes and provide copies to all WDB members.

**Section 12 - Attendance:** Positions of WDB members, or their designated alternate representatives, who miss two (2) consecutive regular meetings shall be declared vacant. The Consortium representative responsible for the vacant seat's appointment will be notified by the WDB staff to appoint a representative to fill the vacancy.

**Section 13 - Alternates:** Each WDB member may request that an alternate be appointed by the appropriate Consortium Representative to attend in the WDB member's absence. The WDB member will be responsible for keeping his/her alternate informed of the meetings and information pertaining to the meeting(s) the alternate will attend for the WDB member. The alternate will vote as a WDB member in the absence of the member. Alternates must be from the same category of representatives (i.e. business/industry, agency) as the WDB member for whom the alternate is appointed.

## ARTICLE VII — Committees

**Section 1 - Committee Structure:** The WDB shall, as necessary, be organized into standing or ad hoc committees to carry out its functions and responsibilities as assigned. The Chair and committee members shall be designated by the WDB Chair. Committees shall be chaired by a board member. Committee members are subject to attendance requirements as outlined in Article VI, Section 12.

**Section 2 - Executive Committee:** The Chair, Vice-Chair, past Chair, and other members appointed by the Chair shall compose the Executive Committee.

**Section 3 - Committee Authority:** The High Country Workforce Development Board recognizes that each committee serves as policy maker and systems builder for its specific area and delegates to its

committees authority and flexibility to accomplish the goals and assignments for the tasks under their authority so long as the committees are functioning within the framework of the Board's underlying philosophy.

**Section 4 - Quorum:** Committees have the same quorum requirements as outlined in Article V, Section 3.

**ARTICLE VIII — By-Laws Amendment Procedure**

These by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Board by a two-thirds vote of the quorum present, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting. Amendments will not take effect until approved by a majority of the Consortium Board.

Adopted this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July, 2015 by a majority vote of the Consortium Board.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Consortium Chief Elected Official Date

I hereby certify that during the regular organizational meeting of the High Country Consortium on July 1, 2015, these By-Laws were adopted.

 (attest)  7/1/15  
Date

# COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDDS)

## 2015 PERFORMANCE REPORT



### High Country Council of Governments

**August 17, 2015**

High Country Council of Governments  
468 New Market Boulevard  
Boone, NC 28607  
828-265-5434  
Website: [www.regiond.org](http://www.regiond.org)

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## **Introduction**

High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) was designated an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) on March 23, 1976. As a requirement of the EDD designation, HCCOG periodically develops Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) that meet EDA criteria. CEDs serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

The most recent CEDs developed by HCCOG was adopted on August 20, 2012. The next full CEDs update is planned for 2016. The High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) serves as the Strategy Committee to assist HCCOG staff in developing the CEDs. The HCWDB is comprised primarily of private-sector representatives.

The CEDs analyzes regional demographics, infrastructure, economic sectors, and economic development efforts. It also identifies economic development goals and objectives, local economic development projects, projects deemed vital to the region, and performance measures by which to gauge implementation of the CEDs.

This Performance Report discusses the current economic conditions in the region, provides updates on the CEDs goals and objectives, and provides status reports of the vital projects identified in the CEDs.

The HCWDB recommended approval of the HCCOG CEDs 2015 Annual Performance Report (APR) on July 15, 2015. The APR was made available for public review for 60 days prior to approval by the HCCOG Executive Board on August 17, 2015.

## Analysis of Regional Economy

The region's January 2015 labor force was 92,590, up 1,146 from 2013. Unemployment rates at the regional level fell from a 2013 annual rate of 9.0%, to a January 2015 rate of 6.2%.

Manufacturing accounted for 10% of regional employment in 2014. Government jobs account for 13% of employment in the region in 2014 (down 1% from 2013), with healthcare, retail trade, and hospitality industries also providing large shares of employment.

All of the counties in the region are tourist destinations, and tourism is a major component of the regional economy. The table below contains 2012 data regarding economic impact of tourism in the region.

### TOURISM IMPACT, 2013 (most recent data available)

County	Expenditures	Payroll	Jobs	State and Local Tax Receipts from Tourism
Alleghany	\$22.00 million	\$3.84 million	180	\$2.48 million
Ashe	\$47.71 million	\$6.83 million	370	\$4.93 million
Avery	\$104.97 million	\$23.32 million	1,180	\$9.73 million
Mitchell	\$21.06 million	\$3.11 million	160	\$1.8 million
Watauga	\$216.72 million	\$46.45 million	2,520	\$18.96 million
Wilkes	\$67.48 million	\$9.62 million	510	\$4.82 million
Yancey	\$32.78 million	\$5.17 million	230	\$3.71 million

SOURCE: NC Dept. of Commerce

All Counties saw an increase in tourism expenditures and tax revenues from 2012 to 2013.

Agriculture remains a major component of the region's economy, specifically Christmas Tree and livestock production. The most recent Census of Agriculture is for 2012. Total cash receipts for agricultural products sold for all seven counties in 2012 are included in the table below for comparative purposes.

### TOTAL CASH RECEIPTS FOR COMMODITIES, 2012

County	Receipts (includes livestock, dairy, poultry, and government payments)
Alleghany	\$46.05 million
Ashe	\$46.21 million
Avery	\$26.15 million
Mitchell	\$6.14 million
Watauga	\$6.58 million
Wilkes	\$303.11 million
Yancey	\$7.33 million

SOURCE: NC Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services

The service industry plays a dominant role in the economy of the HCCOG Economic Development District. Encompassing retail trade, health services, food service, lodging,



business services, finance, and real estate, the service industry represents the largest employment sector in all seven counties. The tourism economies of all seven counties contribute significantly to the region's service economy.

Retail sales are a common indicator of commercial activity at the county level. The table below provides data on taxable sales in the District based on sales tax data.

**Taxable Sales**

	Total Taxable Sales 2011-12	Total Taxable Sales 2012-13	Total Taxable Sales 2013-14
Alleghany	\$61,905,000	\$58,282,301	\$61,431,825
Ashe	\$186,617,000	\$180,561,624	\$185,386,598
Avery	\$176,832,000	\$179,786,863	\$191,625,082
Mitchell	\$130,086,000	\$122,249,020	\$126,840,182
Watauga	\$629,687,000	\$633,572,655	\$682,189,368
Wilkes	\$478,407,000	\$477,045,774	\$508,402,082
Yancey	\$98,554,000	\$99,926,831	\$97,630,995

**SOURCE: NC Dept. of Revenue**

## Goals and Objectives Performance Report

### **Goal #1: Build on the Region's Competitive Advantage and Leverage the Marketplace Actions**

- High Country COG continues to staff the Region D Development Corporation (RDDC), which provides US Small Business Administration (SBA) loans to eligible small businesses. The Development Corporation is governed by a Board comprised of government, lending, and business professionals in the seven-county region. During the past year, staff serviced a \$4.7m loan portfolio.
- Completed the Alleghany County and Town of Sparta Economic Development Plan
- Continued work on the Mitchell County Economic Development Plan
- Developed mapping program to assist Ashe County Economic Development Commission in evaluating properties for commercial/industrial development potential
- Developed mapping program to assist Town of North Wilkesboro in evaluating existing and available commercial properties in downtown
- Developed CDBG Economic Development and EDA Public Works grant applications for funding to improve water and sewer service to PRC Industries in Mitchell County, facilitating business expansion
- Developed NC Commerce and NC GoldenLEAF Foundation grant applications for funding to retrofit building for American Emergency Vehicles in Ashe County, facilitating business expansion
- Developed EDA Public Works grant application for funding to improve water service to multiple beneficiaries in Town of Wilkesboro, facilitating business expansion
- Coordinated solicitation and ranking of local projects for consideration by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in its new Emerging Opportunities Program

### **Goal #2: Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure**

#### Actions

- Participated in the NC Source Water Collaborative, a statewide effort to engage various governmental agencies in protecting drinking water supplies
- Continued to assist Town of Ronda in securing funding to extend waterline to homes with contaminated wells. Project will also improve service to Louisiana-Pacific and Certainteed. Work in FYE 2015 included grant administration.
- Continued operation of the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO). One of the key functions of the RPO is to advocate for highway projects in the region. During FYE 2015, the High Country RPO developed a Priority Needs List of transportation projects in the region used by NCDOT in statewide project ranking.
- Completed the Avery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- Began work on the Wilkes County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

- Developed TIGER grant application for Town of Blowing Rock for funds to construct Middle Fork Greenway
- Developed EFLAP grant application for Town of Blowing Rock for funds to construct sidewalk connecting downtown to Blue Ridge Parkway
- Updated the Town of West Jefferson's water, sewer, and zoning GIS data
- Completed administration of Town of Crossnore's new wastewater treatment plant construction
- Developed ARC grant application for Town of Beech Mountain to fund improvements to Buckeye Creek Road
- Developed ARC grant application for Town of West Jefferson to fund town-wide water and sewer system improvements

### **Goal #3: Create Revitalized and Vibrant Communities**

#### Actions

- Updated maps of the AppalCART transit system routes
- Administered Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to construct new Senior Center in Yancey County
- Administered four countywide CDBG Scattered Site Housing projects. Program provides funding to rehabilitate or replace housing for low-income households.
- Administered three county-level NC Housing Finance Agency Single-Family Rehabilitation grants
- Developed grant applications to NC Housing Finance Agency for Urgent Repair funds to repair homes in three counties
- Developed grant applications to NC Housing Finance Agency for Single-Family Rehabilitation funds to repair homes in three counties
- Administered Urgent Repair grant funds in six counties
- Began administration of two CDBG Infrastructure grants for the Town of West Jefferson. Projects consist of water and sewer system rehabilitation in two low-income neighborhoods
- Assisted Wilkes County in updating E-911 property addressing system, recommending changes to inconsistent/unclear addresses, and importing data into Planning, Fire, Dispatch, and EMS Departments. Project will improve emergency response service in the county.
- Continued work on Corridor Management Plan for Mt. Mitchell Scenic Drive in Yancey County. Plan is prerequisite to applying for Federal Scenic Byway designation and funding.
- Created ARC GIS Online web apps for Town of Wilkesboro to provide the public with data on civic operations
- Developed FEMA grant application for the Town of North Wilkesboro for funds to purchase new aerial fire truck

- Facilitated retreat of Town of Wilkesboro and Town of North Wilkesboro administration and elected boards to discuss development of joint development regulations for the two towns

**Goal #4: Develop Healthy and Innovative People**

Actions

- Developed CDBG Commerce Fellows Grant application for Ashe County. Grant will provide funding for Ashe County staff to obtain training in Community and Economic Development
- Completed Greenway Master Plan for Mitchell County
- Developed NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) application for Town of Elk Park to fund improvements to existing park
- Developed NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) application for Town of Seven Devils to fund development of Otter Falls Park
- Developed ARC grant application for Wilkes County Schools to fund the Project ADMIT, which will expand technology training in High Schools
- Workforce development efforts in the region are overseen and coordinated by the High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB). Workforce Development Boards are authorized under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which also funds WIOA activities. HCCOG staff administer the WIOA funds.
- During FYE 2015, 10,981 job seekers throughout the region accessed the NCWorks system while there were approximately 23,000 visits at the seven NCWorks Career Centers in the District.
- Employers were served with postings of 1,848 jobs totaling more than 6,600 job openings.
- During FYE 2015, 157 youth in the region participated in WIA youth services activities.
- During FYE 2015, 166 individuals who have lost their jobs due to economic reasons and 2,633 other adults were provided services to include occupational skills training, counseling, and career services through the Adult and Dislocated Worker program.
- Assisted the Career Centers in all seven counties with earning certification as NCWorks Career Centers under the NCWorks Commission guidelines.
- Facilitated career pathways initiatives in the region which will connect the K-12 education system, community college system and career centers with local employers.
- Assisted Ashe, Wilkes, and Watauga Counties in pursuing designation as NCWorks Certified Work Ready Communities

## Vital Projects Performance Report

- Alleghany County's Economic Development Plan includes strategy to lobby NC Utilities Commission for extension of natural gas service
- Sparta Western Loop project (NCDOT TIP Project R-4060) is included in the NCDOT STIP, scheduled for construction in 2016.
- Ashe Food Incubator – project is identified in Blue Ridge Seeds of Change 5-county plan. Funds are being sought to hire manager and to develop sustainability plan.
- Avery County has formed Telecommunications Committee with the goal of expanding service in the county
- Town of Banner Elk has purchased former Banner Elk Elementary School, and is considering use of part of the building for business assistance
- Crossnore's new wastewater treatment plant is complete
- US 19E widening through Mitchell County (Project R-2519B) is under construction
- Town of Spruce Pine has secured funding for water and sewer improvements to serve PRC Industries and Mitchell Industrial site
- Additional water supply (intake) for the Town of Boone - The Town is in the process of developing a new water intake on the New River; work during FY 2015 included right of way acquisition
- Former Watauga High School demolished; property currently listed for sale
- US 321 widening through Blowing Rock is under construction; completion scheduled for 2016
- Expansion of Wilkes County Landfill included in County's Solid Waste Management Plan; scheduled for 2018
- Town of Wilkesboro is lead entity on the W. Kerr Scott Reservoir intake project. Project is anticipated to begin construction within one year.
- Wilkes County Law Enforcement Center – property has been acquired for the project and architectural plans are complete
- US 19E widening through Yancey County is comprised of two NCDOT projects. Both projects (R-2519A and R-2519B) are under construction.
- The TRACTOR farm product aggregation center is in operation in Yancey County. Current needs include recruiting more growers, expanding product base, and increasing staff.

## Performance Measures

The following performance measures and associated figures are used to evaluate implementation of the CEDS:

### Number of jobs created

235

### Number of jobs retained

631

### Amount of private investment leveraged for projects in the region

\$21,966,300

### Unemployment rate

The region had a 2013 unemployment rate of 9%. The unemployment rate for the region in January 2015 was 6.2%.

### Income

Average household incomes for the region dropped from \$49,230 in 2013 to \$47,640 in 2014.

### Number of new business starts

No data available

### Increase in municipal water supply and wastewater treatment capacity

The Town of Sparta/Independence, VA water intake project has resulted in 1.0mgd new water capacity.

The Town of Boone water intake project will increase the Town's capacity by 1.5mgd.



July 2015

### Director's Update

The High Country Workforce Development Board and our regional system continue to implement innovative approaches to connect employers with local talent while adapting to numerous changes in North Carolina's approach to workforce development. We continue to partner closely with our K-12 schools, community colleges, Dept of Commerce staff and the many agencies that work in our region. Here are a few of the many things we've been working on this Spring/Summer

#### **NCWorks Commission Board Performance Criteria**

The NCWorks Commission (AKA the state level workforce board) is developing performance criteria that all local workforce areas will be measured against. I have attached the current criteria and also a report showing our achievement against this criteria. 2015/2016 will be a period to phase in the usage of these performance measures. Of particular note is the requirement to spend 35% of our expenditures on training.

#### **Career Pathways Certification**

Career Pathways continue to be an emphasis both locally, statewide and nationally. WIOA places clear emphasis on the development of career pathways at all education levels to serve many different types of customers, from high school students to dislocated workers. The High Country must have a minimum of 2 certified career pathways. Meeting this minimum will allow us to qualify to receive additional funding from a DOL grant that was recently awarded to NC. As soon as the Certified Career Pathways applications are available we will be working closely with schools and colleges in the area to apply for this designation.

#### **Consortium Business Review**

Speaking of designation, staff have been busy working with representatives from each of our seven counties to complete the paperwork necessary to establish a designated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Workforce Area. Each county had to adopt a resolution and agreement to work together as the High Country area. These counties then also appointed a commissioner as a member of the High Country Workforce Consortium. The Consortium then requested the Governor to designate our area as the High Country Workforce Development Area, the Consortium appointed our public sector board members (see roster) and approved our by-laws (see by-laws). The Consortium will continue to oversee the board and provide perspective from elected officials.

#### **Budget Cuts**

Last year we saw our PY2014 available funding reduced by \$746,000. This year our PY2015 funding has again been reduced by \$376,000. Yet the system of career centers not only continues operations in each county but we plan to expand operations in several of our counties. Our partnership with NC Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions has made it possible to hire additional staff in Ashe and

Alleghany Counties. Doing more with less may be one reason why the High Country Workforce Area was noted in a recent NC Governor's Report on Efficiency in Government. We are only able to do this through one of the strongest partner networks in the state. We work well with others.

### **WorkReady Communities**

Ashe, Wilkes and Watauga Counties have applied for the NCWorks Certified WorkReady Communities Designation. The next round of applications are due Sept 30. Interested Counties should convene a planning meeting with the required stakeholders to prepare their applications.

### **Staff Reorganization**

With the many WIOA changes also comes the need to evaluate our own work and our focus. Board staff has recently undergone a restructuring in order to better focus our efforts in the year ahead.

Don Sherrill - Performance and Accountability Manager (formerly Operations Director)

Much of Don's work has been focussed on budgets and metrics and with this change we are emphasizing the renewed focus on how we measure our effectiveness, what services we are delivering, compliance and monitoring, and where our funding is going. If it can be reported, accounted for or put in a spreadsheet, Don is the guy.

Misty Bishop-Price - NCWorks Operations Manager (formerly Systems Manager)

Misty's efforts will focus on our network of NCWorks Career Centers and customer service. She will work to share best practices, keep frontline staff up to date, train staff in details of WIOA, support the needs of centers, and engage our many partners.

Rebecca Bloomquist - Communications and Business Services Coordinator (formerly Special Projects Coordinator) As businesses become in increasing focus of our work, Rebecca will lead our efforts to convene employer meetings, develop strategic partnerships, and coordinate our regional staff.

### **New Member Orientation Schedule**

We want to get new board members started off right. Please join us to learn what you've gotten yourself into. If neither of these dates work, let Adrian know and we'll get personal.

Friday July 24th 9-11

or Monday July 27th, 9-11

### **The WIOA Plan**

WIOA places emphasis on both local and regional workforce planning efforts. This year is considered a transition year with many planning elements carrying over from last year. We put together the plan in a very short timeframe (3wks) and the process was all staff. The plan is available now for public comment on our website. Have a look and let us know if you have any comments.

Next year, expect our board and partners to be much more involved in a regional collaborative effort to write a comprehensive workforce plan.



## RFP Process

Most of you know that our most recent Request for Proposal process encountered an unexpected situation when we received more proposals than anticipated and were challenged to compare regional bids with county level bids. An apples to oranges comparison. We stopped our process and have revised our RFP specifications to encourage *regional* bids and to more effectively compare regional bids with smaller county bids. We will release the revised RFP July 20, announce contractors at the Oct Board meeting, and have extended existing contracts with service providers for the July to Nov period. We will be reaching out to form a small review committee that will review proposals and make recommendations to the board.

## Upcoming Conferences

Stay tuned for info on the Fall Partnership Conference. With over 1000 people and 60 sessions, the conference is THE place to learn about workforce development efforts. If you are interested, mark your calendars for Oct 28-30



## Mobile App

North Carolina's veterans now have a powerful new tool to help them get back to work—the newly released NCWorks mobile app.

NCWorks Online allows vets to apply for jobs at least 24 hours in advance of the general public and search for careers by using their Military Occupational Code (MOC). By entering their MOC, veterans can find job postings that match the duties they performed in the military.

Using the mobile app, job seekers can search for work by typing in keywords or by using their finger to draw a circle around a selected region; all job postings available within that area will be displayed on screen. Users can also share job postings through text message, e-mail, and social media, including Facebook and LinkedIn.

“Veterans are hard-working, loyal, and know how to work together to get the job done,” said Will Collins, assistant secretary of Workforce. “By making it easier to connect them to employers, we are helping these deserving men and women take a successful step in their careers, fulfill the need for employers to find qualified workers, and strengthen our economy.”

Registration for NCWorks Online is free. The app is free to download for the iPhone, iPad and Android devices. Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions operates the NCWorks app.

## New NC logo

North Carolina recently began the soft launch of the new logo and branding. Check out this site to learn more. Billboards are popping up across the state and this logo will also be adapted into a new NCWorks logo and branding. Expect to see the new logo sometime this Summer as we roll it out across the NCWorks system.

<http://brand.nc.gov/>



## New Website Features

Our **website** is full of good info. Bookmark it. If you ever wonder about our schedule of meetings, our latest news, or contact info for other board members. It's here:

<http://highcountrywdb.com/about-us/our-board/>

If you are a **digital calendar** user you will like this

<http://highcountrywdb.com/about-us/our-board/hcwdb-meetings-events/>

(you can add this calendar to your calendar, smartphone, or tablet, with the link at the bottom right of the calendar image)

## COG Outstanding Workforce Board Member

Don't forget nominations are due July 15. Follow the link to submit yours!

[Outstanding Workforce Development Board Member \(Form Link\)](#)