

**Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
Economic Initiatives Committee (EIC)  
J. Hamilton Lambert Conference Center (Room 11)  
September 20, 2022**

**Meeting Summary**

**Board Members present:** EIC Chairman Supervisor John W. Foust, EIC Vice-Chairman Supervisor Daniel G. Storck, Board of Supervisors (BOS) Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay, BOS Vice Chairman Penelope A. Gross, Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw, Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn, Supervisor, Rodney L. Lusk, Supervisor Pat Herrity, Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik, Supervisor Kathy L. Smith

**Chairman's Opening Remarks**

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, the Economic Initiatives Committee met to discuss a draft proposal for the Work-Based Learning Opportunity Fund and the expansion of Fairfax County's small and local business supports. In his opening remarks, Chairman Foust introduced both agenda items and described their relevancy to the committee.

**Item 1. Work-Based Learning Opportunity Fund Proposal and Review**

The first agenda item was the draft proposal for the Work-Based Learning Opportunity Fund pilot program. The item was presented by the program's development team for the purpose of obtaining feedback from the Board of Supervisors. Rebecca Moudry, Director, Department of Economic Initiatives, shared the presentation's objective and the year-long timeline of activities that informed development of the proposal. Michael Becketts, Director, Department of Family Services described how the Department of Family Services supports workforce development in the region and how the proposed program relates to other countywide strategic efforts. Theresa Benincasa, Manager, Economic Mobility, Department of Economic Initiatives gave an overview of the program's components and its goals. Daniel Mekibib, Assistant Division Director for Workforce Development, Department of Family Services described insights from the market research that had been completed to date. Bill Browning, Manager, Workforce Innovations, Department of Family Services presented the proposed program metrics, budget request, and next steps.

The Work-Based Learning Opportunity Fund is a two-year pilot program developed by the Department of Economic Initiatives (DEI) and Department of Family Services (DFS) based on recommendations from the Economic Advisory Commission (EAC). The draft program seeks to address current workforce challenges, enhance employee-led work-based learning programs, and create talent pipelines in Fairfax County. The program will serve prospective workers and also target private and non-profit employers seeking to implement or strengthen work-based learning in Fairfax County. Drawing from EAC recommendations, the program will feature five components: 1. employer recruitment and support; 2. job coaching for employers and job seekers; 3. supplemental training and upskilling; 4. coordination of a network of workforce development cohort programs; and 5. wage matching incentives for participating employers and workers. The program will measure success with metrics related to business partner engagement, increased work-based learning opportunities, employer match success rates, and program sustainability. As part of the final proposal, DEI and DFS will request a \$2,885,000 budget for implementation of the pilot program.

In the discussion, several supervisors complimented the program's innovative approach and asked for clarification on its wage matching and job coaching components. Supervisor Foust remarked that the program, if approved by the board, has the potential to demonstrate Fairfax County's willingness to pursue creative economic development solutions. Supervisor Walkinshaw advised that there be further development of the wage matching component to ensure that the program is sustainable. Supervisor Gross sought clarification of the legal structure of the intended incentives, as well as the expected worker commitment. Supervisor Lusk inquired about duration and types of services that will be offered as part of the program's employee-focused job coaching. Supervisor Palchik asked for more information about how the program would meet employment needs such as language skills, certification, and licensing.

Several supervisors also made recommendations for consideration. Chairman McKay recommended that the program remain distinct, supplement current work-based learning programs in the county and ensure that eligibility criteria remain flexible enough to allow all residents of the county to participate. Supervisor Palchik suggested that the program have a clear exit strategy to ensure that the work will continue after the County's two-year pilot. Supervisor Smith asked that the final proposal include information about the program's marketing and outreach strategy. Supervisor Storck proposed that the program include streamlined application processes and additional wrap around services for workers.

Regarding the proposed program metrics, Foust remarked that he would like participant experience testimonials to be collected. Lusk recommended the inclusion of average salary growth information as a metric of success. Supervisor Herrity requested program metrics from the City of Alexandria's work-based learning program for comparison. At the discussion's end, Supervisor Foust encouraged the development team to schedule individual meetings, with the supervisors, to answer any additional questions. The Work-based Learning Opportunity Fund team will finalize program details and present the final proposal in early 2023. When appropriate, the final program proposal will be brought to a Board of Supervisors meeting as an action item.

## **Item 2. Small Business Support Updates and Evolution**

Meaghan Kiefer, Division Manager, Local and Small Business, Department of Economic Initiatives presented the activities and resources offered by the Small Business and Local Business Development Division of the Department of Economic Initiatives. Kiefer also introduced the new Vendor Pitch Portal platform and Business Experience (BizEx) program enhancements as part of the updates to the committee. The small and local business development division supports Fairfax County businesses in three ways: 1. process facilitation; 2. ecosystem development; and 3. resource deployment. As part of its resource deployment strategy, the division has implemented a "starting a business" webpage, created business specific guides, and organized entrepreneurship events.

The Vendor Pitch Portal is a collaborative project between the Department of Economic Initiatives and the Department of Material Management (DPMM) that launched in August of 2022. The platform streamlines procurement processes by allowing vendors to submit information about their products and services for consideration. Information submitted via the portal is then shared with pre-identified department procurement leads. The Vendor Pitch Portal has been developed to connect prospective vendors to procurement opportunities with Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools. While the platform is open to all prospective vendors, it was established to support small, diverse, women, and veteran owned businesses. DEI and DPMM will continue to advertise the platform and adjust as additional vendor needs are identified.

DEI is also planning to develop a resource navigator as part of the focus to support entrepreneurs and small businesses. The navigator will support appropriate referrals to community partners, promote

available services and resources, identify service specialization, and help small businesses access the right information at the right time. The new resource navigator will offer businesses an interactive program archive and better collect insights to inform service provision. The technology solution will be hosted by the web-based network, SourceLink.

Supervisor Foust expressed his interest in seeing the new BizEX solution implemented in Fairfax County. Foust shared his favorable impressions of how the solution had been implemented in other jurisdictions. Supervisor Storck spoke to the platform being helpful for small and local businesses owners, and he opined that the platform would establish the County as a creditable resource. Like recommendations made earlier in the meeting, Supervisor Palchik asked that business owners in the towns of Vienna and Herndon be made aware that they can access Fairfax County's small and local business support services. Between Fall of 2022 and Summer of 2023, DEI will finalize its contract with SourceLink, establish an engagement team, develop additional resources, and prepare for the solution's launch.