

**Fairfax County Economic Advisory Commission**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**J. Hamilton Lambert Conference Center Rooms 9 &10**  
**April 19, 2022**

The April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Economic Advisory Commission meeting was convened at the Fairfax County Government Center's J. Hamilton Lambert Conference Center in rooms nine and ten.

**1. Welcome (10 minutes)**

Chairman John Foust opened the meeting with a warm welcome to the Economic Advisory Committee (EAC) and guests in attendance. In his welcome he recognized the work done to organize and facilitate the March 23, 2022, EAC workgroup session. Chairman Foust also commended the synthesis of the session's solutions and recommendations.

**2. Work-Based Learning: Employer Participation Solutions (60 minutes)**

Rebecca Moudry, Director, Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives introduced the Work-based Learning: Employer Participation Solutions portion of the meeting, gave an executive overview of the EAC workgroup session, and reinforced the purpose of the meeting. In her remarks, Moudry reviewed the needs and opportunity-based assessment that framed discussions at the workgroup session.

**Overview of Work-Based Learning Challenges & Current Initiatives**

Bill Browning, Manager, Workforce Innovations, Fairfax County Workforce Development Programs, Department of Family Services addressed existing initiatives and employer challenges with work-based learning (WBL). The initiatives highlighted in his presentation were the NOVA chamber of commerce's Greater Washington Apprenticeship Network, Fairfax County Public Schools' Career and Technical Programs, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority's Work in Northern Virginia website, and the Northern Virginia Community College's Career Services and Internship Fairs. The presentation reinforced the notion that a successful work-based learning program offers a continuum of activities. Browning mentioned that employers often find it difficult to implement a full spectrum of activities because of regulatory considerations, cost, time, and lack of expertise.

**Proposed Working Group Solutions**

Theresa Benincasa, Manager, Economic Mobility, Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives closed the presentation with the four solutions developed at the work group session on work-based learning: work-based learning exchange for employers; new internship and apprenticeship cohorts; a work-based learning opportunity fund; and strengthening existing initiatives.

**Discussion and Feedback**

The EAC discussion of the four proposed solutions, brought forth by the March 23<sup>rd</sup> work group session, advocated for policy change with a focus on creating employment pathways for underrepresented communities and veterans. There was consensus among committee members, about the necessity of paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities and mentorship programs. EAC members touted mentorship as a method for ensuring that individuals develop the soft skills and cultural understanding necessary for

workplace success. There were also calls for the region to reconsider bachelor's degree requirements for entry level positions, particularly high-demand cyber security jobs.

Victor Hoskins, President and CEO, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (EDA) opened the discussion with support for the solutions presented and observations from the authority's efforts. Funding cohorts could help employers scale their programs, in Hoskins opinion. Hoskins spoke to the disconnect between businesses and resources for work-based learning. As a solution, the EDA has developed the Work in Northern Virginia website as an effort to connect employers with resources. Using his own career experience as an example, Supervisor Foust expressed his interest in using WBL as a recruitment strategy to bring more professionals to the area. Work based learning, especially remote programs, could help Fairfax County attract talent from other parts of the country. Terry Clower noted that an opportunity fund would be most useful for small and medium-sized businesses.

Supervisors Rodney Lusk, Penelope, (Penny), Gross, and Dahlia Palchik urged the group to think of existing talent in the county and consider how public private partnerships could support workforce outcomes. Work based learning could help immigrant, displaced, and historically excluded groups have equitable access to careers in the area. Gross argued that WBL may also help veterans transition into the civilian workforce. Palchik made remarks about WBL being an opportunity for the county to offer early paid internships to improve the career trajectory for early career workforce, especially those in the 16-24 age group. The Presidential Management Fellows Program and the George Mason University's Clearance Ready Program were used as examples of programs available for recent graduates, but Palchik suggests that placement opportunities are broadened for those who have not obtained a bachelor's degree.

Supervisor Lusk spoke to the area of opportunity along the Richmond corridor and a new initiative to improve economic outcomes for Lee District residents. Among the initiatives Lusk mentioned was the WISH – Workforce Innovation Skills Hub a new training center that is intended to bring paid pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to the Lee District. In addition to work-based learning, the center will also offer wrap-around services to address barriers to employment such as childcare, equipment needs, and access to transportation. Supervisor Gross implored the group to develop programs for immigrant and displaced persons in the county. Gross spoke to the lack of alternative licensure programs for those who have emigrated to the United States. She proposed a partnership with Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) and a "1-800-WBL" number as ways the county could operationalize and broaden the reach of such efforts.

Committee members requested that the Department of Economic Initiatives complete additional benchmarking against other jurisdictions and market research on sectors that could be served before acting towards a solution. Doing so, would help the county avoid duplication, bolster existing programs, and address existing gaps. Members of the EAC believe there is an opportunity to study employment barriers from the employee, or job seekers, perspective and learn from the union trades. The Department of Economic Initiatives will report back to the group when a course of action is determined.

### **3. Sports Tourism Task Force Update (20 minutes)**

Supervisor Pat Herrity gave an update on the work completed by the sports tourism task force. He reiterated the importance of sports tourism to the local economy and its potential impact on the hotel and hospitality industry. Herrity regards sports tourism as a solution for reducing the hotel and hospitality reliance on government travel. His presentation addressed existing infrastructure needs, travel costs related to sporting events in the region, and the impact that has on families in Fairfax. Members of the task force supported the sports tourism presentation and discussion. A member, from the hospitality industry, spoke to the potential return on investment related to infrastructure development. Supervisor

Foust noted that sports tourism related public private partnerships could contribute to maintaining Fairfax County's competitive standing amongst neighboring counties.

#### **4. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned after discussion of the sports tourism taskforce update.