



NEW RIVER/MOUNT ROGERS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA CONSORTIUM BOARD

CULTIVATING TALENT FOR THE REGION

MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board was held at Wytheville Community College in Grayson Hall Room 112. It was called to order by Chair Biggs at 10:03 am.

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Chair Biggs led the moment of reflection which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll call of localities present was conducted by Reneé Sturgill. A quorum of the Board was not present but a sufficient number of Executive Committee members were present.

Board Members in Person

Montgomery County: Mary Biggs, Chair
Bland County: Cameron Burton
Grayson County: Michael Hash
Washington County: Charlie Hargis
Smyth County: Shawn Utt
Galax City: Sharon Ritchie

Staff Present

Jenny Bolte
Della Wheeler
Marty Holliday
Reneé Sturgill
Angi Chandler
Kimber Simmons (remote)

Guests Present

Beth Carico, People Inc
Mike Miller, WDB Chair

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Hargis for Approval of the December 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes and a second was given by Mr. Hash. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Biggs opened the floor for public comments. Hearing none, she proceeded to the next agenda item.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Executive Committee was called to order and brought to the floor that Chair Biggs and Vice Chair Mr. Hargis would continue their positions for another year. Mr. Hash made a motion to approve and Ms. Burton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD UPDATE

Workforce Development Board Chair Mr. Miller mentioned that the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation has a new website, which was welcomed news.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SUMMARY

Ms. Bolte began with the ARC grant updates that are getting close to funding decisions such as the Community Project and Power grants. She also spoke about the Youthbuild grant which has been re-applied for. There are other submitted projects awaiting funding decisions, and still others that are being explored.

She mentioned that she continues to work with EO, trying to collaborate. She wants to work closely with them in good faith, and doesn't wish to overtax any current partners.

Ms. Bolte discussed her meeting with Virginia Works for the purpose of collaboration. It was very positive. They want to work closely with the Workforce Boards, and Ms. Biggs mentioned that Virginia Works has staff devoted to outreach.

Ms. Bolte stated that the Workforce Development Board will be retaining People Incorporated as Program Operator, extending their contract for another year instead of putting a request out for bids.

Ms. Bolte has developed a pre-apprenticeship program; both Virginia Works and the Virginia Board of Health have given their approval. It focuses heavily on employability in healthcare positions. She has also developed a pre-apprenticeship program for the lineman program in conjunction with People Incorporated. Virginia Works is studying it at present.

Ms. Bolte mentioned that the Workforce Board recently completed Federal monitoring for the Youthbuild grant. The Federal Officer couldn't attend in person, but it went well. Ms. Chandler was recently invited to speak to the Youthbuild Convening by Antonio McCoy with Youthbuild Global. It was attended by all nationally awarded programs as well as Jeff Hunt, Division Chief with the Department of Labor. Some of the items she spoke about were partnering with children's homes, how to build partnerships, how to be a good partner and how to connect with their local workforce board. The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board was recognized for being one of the most successful programs in the US.

Ms. Bolte stated that she will be in Abingdon next week with the ARC's Appalachian Leadership Institute. Vice Chair Hargis invited her to speak at the Board of Supervisors meeting while there.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

The One-Stop and Program Operator Reports were given by Ms. Carico, whereby mentioning that the demand for services was overwhelming at present. Ms. Bolte stated that when recently writing the Power grant, she included People Incorporated and their "Cars" program for the transportation component in order to assist more participants in the region.

Ms. Chandler gave her report about the Board Discretionary grants. One item she mentioned was that Total Action Against Poverty as grant recipient for the Pathway Home grant will be requesting a no cost extension. For the Reboot grant, there is a new class starting soon in Pulaski County. She encouraged the members to read the success stories which were quite impactful.

Ms. Simmons spoke about job fair season and gave the number of companies slated to attend. She also mentioned Foster's Closet, a resource for jobseekers to obtain free interview clothing. It welcomed 23 people recently at the New River job fair.

Ms. Holliday gave a Special Projects report. There are three sector partnerships going at present. She encouraged members to reach out if there are any businesses they would like contacted. She mentioned that the Arise grant curriculum is nearly finished. For the Foundation report, she stated that for the ARC Ready grant, Lean Six Sigma training has begun and it is very challenging. Ms. Holliday also added that the Board is working with GenEdge, and that manufacturers in the region are looking for a specific type of training.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Bolte commented that Board Members and Staff were still operating on the previous business travel rate of \$.625 per mile and \$.50 per mile respectively. She stated that gas prices will be rising and that she would like to get everyone up to the current standard IRS business rate which is used by the Department of Labor: \$.725. The rate will be rounded up to \$.73. With the Executive Committee still in session Chair Biggs asked for a motion to approve which was made by Ms. Burton and seconded by Mr. Hash. Additionally, Chair Biggs signed a written Resolution for this change.

NEXT MEETING

The next Consortium Board Meeting will occur as a joint meeting with the Workforce Development Board on May 20, 2026 at the Wytheville Meeting Center; lunch will be provided.

MISCELLANEOUS

A 2026 Consortium Board Meeting Schedule was distributed, Ms. Carico offered everyone a job fair schedule link, and Ms. Chandler gave information about Foster's closet and how it operates.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Biggs adjourned the meeting at 11:31am.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Renee Sturgill", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Renee Sturgill
Finance Manager