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| **Members Present:** | **Members Absent:** |
| Dr. Windsor Sherrill\*, Chair  | Ms. Valerie S. Richardson\* |
| Col. Craig Currey | Ms. Susan H. Cohen |
| Mr. Jay Holloway  | Dr. Tim Hardee |
| Ms. Felicia Johnson | Mr. Tyler Servant |
| Ms. Elaine Morgan  | Sen. Ross Turner |

**Welcome and Opening Remarks Dr. Windsor Sherrill, Committee Chair**

Dr. Windsor Sherrill, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes from October 19, 2023\* Dr. Sherrill**

Col. Craig Currey motioned to approve the October 19, 2023, meeting minutes. Mr. Jay Holloway seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

**Career Exploration and Virtual Reality Mr. Adam Paige**

Mr. Adam Paige, Director of Workforce Initiatives in the Workforce Development Division, provided an update on the Committee's ongoing priority of using virtual reality technology for training and career exploration.

The EmpowerU: Futures Unlocked Model is a career exploration program and pathway for Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth to use virtual reality technology for career exploration. In addition to giving DJJ participants classroom instruction, the program provides individuals with tips for building their resume, communicating with employers, and dressing for success. Participants can also earn the WIN Professional Skills Credential. This initiative involves an 8-week training program that runs four times per calendar year. The program measures successful outcomes through participant completion rates, resume completion, individualized action plan completion, and post-release career path declaration. Upon release, participants are referred to their local SC Works Centers and WIOA Programs for additional job search assistance and services.

The Committee will receive updates on the progress of the EmpowerU initiative in Program Year 2024.

**Rural Initiative Plan Mr. Charles Myers**

Mr. Charles Myers, Rural Initiatives Manager, presented DEW’s Rural Initiative Plan to make DEW and SC Works services available to jobseekers and employers.

Mr. Myers elaborated on the significant impact of the Rural Initiative Plan, particularly on Tier 3 and 4 counties, which traditionally face higher unemployment rates and longer durations of unemployment compared to urban counties. In the Summer of 2023, Phase I of the Rural Initiative Plan was launched, bringing SC@Works Road trips to 17 rural counties, benefiting 896 job seekers, 503 employers, and community partners across 27 locations. The state's four workforce regions have dedicated Rural Outreach Coordinators and Specialists, ensuring that the SC Works Career Coach effectively serves high-priority unemployed populations.

Future phases of the Rural Initiative Plan include increasing collaboration with local organizations and individuals who aim to assist with the local population's unique needs. A second SC Works Career Coach is in procurement to increase outreach and technological access in rural areas. As these new phases of the Rural Initiative Plan take effect, the number of jobseekers, employers, and community partnerships served by the Career Coach will continue to increase in 2024.

Mr. Myers emphasized that the SC Works Career Coach is available to more than just rural areas. The Career Coach is available to any population or user with a demonstrated need.

**Other Business/Adjourn Dr. Sherrill**

Dr. Sherrill reminded members that the next SWDB meeting will be on March 28, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.