

## MINUTES

Land of Sky P20 Council Q3 Meeting  
Henderson County Chamber of Commerce  
204 Kanuga Rd, Hendersonville, NC 28792  
Sept 10, 2025: 11am-1:30pm

### **Attendees:**

Dr. Ivry Cheeks, Dr. Kevan Frazier, Claudia Gutierrez, Pam Hartley, Josh Kersey, Deanna LaMotte, Dr. Gene Loflin, Lisa Mann, Emily Martin, Tracie Metz, Emily Nicholson, Dr. Tracy Parkinson, Brandon Priester, Drew Pollick, Scott Rhodes, Samantha Sircey, Katlen Smith, Mark Sternal, Melissa Zenz

---

### **Agenda & Discussion Summary:**

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Emily Nicholson welcomed attendees and facilitated introductions, particularly to recognize new members and guests.

#### **2. Historical Context and Process**

- **Tracie Metz** shared the background of the Strategic Plan (SP), noting that the last plan was created in 2019, before the involvement of many current staff and Council members.
- **Dr. Gene Loflin** spoke about *Collaborative Leadership* and its ongoing role.

#### **3. Plan Sections Review & Discussion**

- **Collaborative Leadership and Shared Community Commitment (p.9)** - *Dr. Gene Loflin* highlighted the importance of cross-sector collaboration to advance shared educational and workforce goals. With the goal of elevating regional storytelling, resource-sharing and learning networks.

- **Learner Readiness (p.11)** - *Dr. Ivry Cheeks* emphasized the need to begin career development planning earlier than 8th grade. She asked members to highlight impactful words in the Learner Readiness section. She noted the importance of awakening students' awareness of their talents to support long-term local workforce development.
- **Postsecondary Access, Transitions, and Success (p.13)** – *Dr. Tracy Parkinson* discussed top influences on student decision-making: cost, scholarships, and the net price after scholarships. The importance of strengthening access to financial resources and trusting that students make their post secondary decisions that best support their needs at that point in their lives.
- **Workforce Preparation and Career Pathways (p.16)** – *Emily Martin* led this section about building clear roadmaps and upskilling pipelines, while supporting learners of all ages in accessing family-sustaining careers aligned with regional industry needs.
  - *Emily Nicholson* highlighted the importance of the guiding resources listed on p.17 and ensured they receive appropriate visibility.

---

## Strategic Action Planning Exercise

Attendees worked in groups to select one action from the plan and envision success in 2026, answering the question:

*“It’s the end of 2026 and the action you’ve chosen has been a huge success. What did we do right to get there?”*

### Highlights:

- **Dr. Gene Loflin** proposed employer-led engagement through **regional business advisory boards** aligned with K-12.
  - Suggested format:
    1. Introductory meeting
    2. Training session for educators
    3. Follow-up meeting

- Objective: Pilot in one career field, evaluate, and replicate.
- Funding needed for a facilitator.
- The model is being trained through community colleges using Perkins funds but was stalled during Hurricane Helene.
- **Mark Sternal** explored **career exploration through technology**, including use of a beta version NC Careers app featuring a personality quiz. Discussed the importance of gamifying and digitizing the experience to make it more engaging for students.
- **Dr. Tracy Parkinson** emphasized **adult learner outreach** — second-chance pathways, awareness, and individualized student goals. The aim is to widen access and fill the “top of the funnel” with more potential postsecondary learners.
- **Drew Pollick** presented the idea of a “**Career Signing Day**”, a public event where students sign onboarding documents with employers. This could be live-streamed and marketed regionally, not tied to a specific school, to increase visibility and prestige.
- **Emily Nicholson** mentioned work underway on a signing pledge and a Q4 work brief, tying efforts together and establishing next steps.

## Adjournment

The meeting concluded with a sense of shared purpose and next steps for moving strategic actions forward.

Next Meeting: Tuesday November 18, 2025 | Mars Hill University | 11am-1:30pm