

Community Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes



Federal Reserve
Bank of Dallas

April 9, 2025

Council Attendees:

Carine M. Feyten, Texas Woman's University (Chair)

Awais Azhar, HousingWorks Austin

Peter Beard, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Carlos Contreras, Goodwill Industries of San Antonio

Rashida Dawson, (Formerly with) United Way of Northwest Louisiana

Paula Harris, (Formerly with) Astros Foundation

Dawn Hommer, Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico

Melanie Johnson, Collaborative for Children

Michael Medalla, Toyota North America

Gregory Williams, Odessa College

Federal Reserve Bank Staff in Attendance:

Lorie K. Logan, Kseniya Benderskaya, Donald Bowers, Roberto Coronado, Molly Hubbert Doyle, Cassandra Huhn, Robert Leigh, Jane Santa Cruz, Allison Schmidt, Xiaohan Zhang

Administrative:

Dr. Feyten called the meeting of the Community Advisory Council ("Council") to order at 1:00 PM.
Dr. Feyten and Bank senior leadership made introductory remarks.

Overview of Community Engagement and Development (CED) Department & Regional Executives Strategy Presentation:

Roberto Coronado, Senior Vice President and Senior Economist, presented on recent updates to the Community Engagement and Development ("CED") department, including department priorities, current work streams, and a new strategy for Regional Executives embedded across our district. Discussion centered on how Council members may best connect with Regional Executives in their respective communities and continue supporting CED's efforts outside of Council meetings.



Disconnected Youths and Short-term Credentials Presentation:

Xiaohan Zhang, Senior Research Economist, delivered a presentation regarding trends in levels of disconnected youth over time and growing demand for short-term credentials in the labor market. Discussion centered on data limitations for understanding the complete scope and impact of short-term credentials. Members shared that credentials of value are an important trend but there's a need for better data collection as well as employer input to ensure that completing credentials easily translates to job placement and work-ready skills. Several members also shared that they are seeing a generational shift in young adults having less interest in driving. In response, some higher education institutions are beginning to offer support for students to obtain driver's licenses to fully leverage the value of completing in-demand credentials, certifications, and trainings by being able to drive to work.

Upcoming Workforce Needs and Opportunities:

Council members noted that, while recent job reports may reflect hiring, companies and organizations are experiencing high levels of uncertainty in the current environment. Discussion ensued regarding the uncertainty, which may hinder workforce participation due to hiring freezes, lay-offs, firings, or company downsizing. Several members explained that their local employers shared feedback about valuing job-readiness skills in addition to required knowledge and skills. There is a need to incorporate job-readiness skills like communication, punctuality, and physical stamina into ongoing training and learning opportunities. Council members connected to higher education institutions noted their expansive course offerings, including micro credentials, credentials, dual credit, associate and bachelor's degree paths to meet student and workforce needs. One member shared that their organization was partnering with a local school district to support career and technical education and work readiness skill-building at the high school level. By taking a long-term view of workforce needs, this organization is working to address workforce development and education attainment issues with an earlier intervention approach.

Challenges and Opportunities in an Evolving Funding Landscape:

Council members shared mixed concerns about the current funding landscape. Some members shared that their organization had already lost federal funding while others shared that they were anticipating losing funds, including federal funds, or philanthropic funds. A few members noted that their organizations had not experienced any changes at this time. One Council member explained that their organization worked to reduce their dependence on federal funding several years ago and shifted to a more diversified funding mixture. Many Council members agreed that high levels of uncertainty in the current environment are preventing individuals, companies and institutions from making commitments such as philanthropic donations, grantmaking, staffing, and other big decisions. One member noted that many philanthropic institutions are shifting away from grants

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that prioritized or incorporated diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts due to the current environment, so non-profit organizations are having to pivot in new ways.

In terms of higher education institutions, a Council member noted that it may be a challenge to ensure that financial aid is available for students in the future. Additionally, members discussed that there is a need to prioritize student support, including maintaining open lines of communication about available resources, and encourage students to continue seeking services at their college or university. One Council member described an anticipated challenge related to a current bond initiative that is expected to impact costs of construction projects in the future. The Council member stressed the need for flexibility in budgeting projects due to potential rising costs, inflation, and other contextual changes because what is currently budgeted in the bond package may shift significantly over time.

Housing Affordability and Recent Developments

A Council member shared that not much has changed in the housing sector since the last Council meeting in the fall of 2024. The Council member added that, like in other industries, there is a lot of uncertainty stemming from potential lack of future investments and federal funding sources being rescinded. Recent changes in trade and immigration policies may mean that the cost of building materials will increase, and the construction industry will experience a shortage of workers. Several Council members noted that their communities are experiencing an increase in homelessness. Discussion ensued regarding the impact of continued increases in home and rental rates, coupled with a lack of affordable housing options coming online, and higher risks of eviction and homelessness for low-income residents. Further discussion ensued regarding recently passed New Mexico legislation and approved funding for housing programs that also cap certain fees, including latent application fees and late rent fees.