

NICE Community Coordinating Council
Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2026 | 3:30-4:30PM ET

I. Introduction and Ground Rules –Susana Barraza, NICE Program Manager

- a. The NICE Community Coordinating Council was established to provide a mechanism in which public and private sector participants can develop concepts, design strategies, and pursue actions that advance cybersecurity education, training, and workforce development.
- b. Members are encouraged to participate in the meeting via the platform chat space. We will also be introducing polls throughout the meeting.
- c. Reminder: The meeting is not intended for marketing or other commercial purposes.

II. Opening Remarks

- a. Academic Co-Chair – Zarina Blankenbaker, Ph.D., President, Tarrant County College – Northwest
 - i. Zarina highlighted NICE’s engagement with community colleges and higher education as a sustained commitment to aligning education and workforce needs.
 - ii. Zarina noted many participants would convene at the AACC Workforce Development Institute and encouraged continued discussion on resilience and institutional adaptability.
 - iii. Zarina emphasized higher education’s urgent and consequential charge to cultivate evolving skills and talent at scale.
 - iv. Zarina underscored the importance of supporting learner progression amid competing demands and limited resources.
 - v. Zarina described NICE as distinctive for providing a coherent, integrated framework mapped across the full career continuum.
 - vi. Zarina stated NICE brings education, industry, and government together in operational ways that address the “missing middle.”
 - vii. Zarina positioned NICE as a model for other sectors moving toward skills-based education and hiring.

- b. Industry Co-Chair – Michael Alicea, Principal and Public Director, The Alicea Group
 - i. Michael reinforced that the NICE Framework helps industry avoid “reinventing the wheel” by providing usable structure for cybersecurity workforce efforts.
 - ii. Michael observed progress in filling cyber roles while emphasizing a continuing gap and that AI will not close it entirely.
 - iii. Michael thanked attendees for contributing through calls, conferences, and committees.
- c. Government Co-Chair – Karen Wetzal, Director of NICE, NIST
 - i. Karen noted she also continues as lead for the NICE Framework and emphasized the Framework’s role in building shared language across stakeholders.
 - ii. Karen outlined priority focus areas for the year, including AI impacts, emerging technologies, work-based learning, career entry challenges, and improved workforce data.
 - iii. Karen shared that the Department of Commerce annual budget was approved, supporting NICE’s ability to move forward.
 - iv. Karen encouraged ongoing engagement and outreach via NICE channels.

III. Featured Content

- a. Report Roundup – Learning from Good Ideas

Accreditation Model for Cybersecurity Competency-Based Community Clinics

Presented by Talisa Jackson, Senior Manager, Programs, Workcred

URL: <https://share.ansi.org/wc/Shared%20Documents/Workcred-Reports/Accreditation-Model-for-Cybersecurity-Competency-Based-Community-Clinics.pdf>

- i. Talisa introduced Workcred’s mission to strengthen workforce quality by improving credentialing systems.
- ii. Talisa described the growing demand for cybersecurity talent and employer reports of gaps in hands-on experience and soft skills.
- iii. Talisa explained “community cyber clinics” as community-based, outside of universities, providing real-world experiences and community service.
- iv. Talisa stated there is no standardized framework today to ensure consistent quality, rigor, and outcomes across clinics.
- v. Talisa presented an accreditation model developed through an NSF-funded partnership with Cyber-Ready Professionals.

- vi. Talisa described the model's intent to document and validate industry-relevant competencies gained through clinic participation.
 - vii. Talisa emphasized the model supports consistent, supervised learning experiences and development of soft skills.
 - viii. Talisa noted alignment with national workforce frameworks and ongoing relevance methods (e.g., job task analysis).
 - ix. Talisa shared the model was developed through literature review, focus groups, and peer review processes.
 - x. Talisa stated Phase 2 priorities include piloting, scaling, and collecting broader community feedback.
 - xi. A question was raised about legal liability for clinics supporting external organizations.
 - xii. Talisa responded that the model addresses liability by requiring clinics to demonstrate insurance and procedures/oversight mechanisms.
 - xiii. A question was raised about how pilot participants will be selected.
 - xiv. Talisa stated the pilot will be volunteer-based, leveraging existing clinic networks and welcoming additional volunteers.
- b. Framework Feature – Applications and Uses of Workforce Framework for Cybersecurity

NICE Framework Updates Open for Public Comments

Presented by Michael Prebil, Cybersecurity Workforce Analyst, NICE

URL: <https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2026/01/your-input-matters-comment-proposed-nice-framework-updates-february-2-2026>

- i. Michael shared that NICE Framework v2.1.0 components were recently released.
- ii. Michael highlighted a comprehensive update to the Cybercrime Investigation work role developed with FBI and DOJ.
- iii. Michael noted updates to AI Security competency area knowledge and skill assignments.
- iv. Michael described additional administrative updates to tasks, knowledge, and skills to clarify and reduce duplication.
- v. Michael shared that the public comment period for v2.2.0 is open and includes proposed new work roles and competency areas.
- vi. Michael encouraged attendees to review and submit comments and to share ideas for future development cycles.

- vii. Michael promoted upcoming NICE Framework Users Group calls as a venue to learn, share use cases, and highlight higher education research using the Framework.

IV. Community Progress Reports

a. Project Progress Reports

- i. NICE K12 Cybersecurity Education Conference
December 7-8, 2026, New Orleans, Louisiana
Presented by Felicia Lamb, iKeepSafe
URL: <https://www.k12cybersecurityconference.org/>
 1. Felicia provided a recap of the prior year's K12 conference, including strong attendee feedback and a sold-out event.
 2. Felicia reported nearly 400 attendees, 100+ speakers, 10 pre-conference workshops, and a sold-out exhibitor hall.
 3. Felicia described keynote speakers, multiple panels, and strong student engagement programming.
 4. Felicia highlighted National Cyber Signing Day as a celebratory event recognizing students pursuing cybersecurity pathways.
 5. Felicia announced the next conference will be December 7–8, 2026 in New Orleans, Louisiana, with workshops on December 6.
 6. Felicia shared planning committee opportunities with monthly meetings and volunteer/program support needs.
 7. Felicia stated hotel venue details are expected in late March and the call for proposals is expected in early April.
 8. Felicia encouraged participants to use the conference website mailing list for updates.

V. Featured Topic

- a. *Central Maryland Cyber Regional Alliance, Howard Community College*
Presented by Bronwyn Bates, Workforce Programs Manager, Howard Community College
URL: <https://www.howardcc.edu/programs-courses/continuing-education/>
 - i. Bronwyn introduced Howard Community College and provided regional context between Baltimore and Washington, DC.
 - ii. Bronwyn described the grant's goals to expand a cybersecurity apprenticeship program, add employers, and grow apprentice participation.

- iii. Bronwyn explained the apprenticeship model launched in 2020 with AT&T, including paid work, education pathways, and support for clearance processes.
- iv. Bronwyn described the Cyber-Ready Clinic internship partnership serving nonprofits through assessments and implementation planning.
- v. Bronwyn emphasized apprenticeships and clinic models address the “entry-level requires experience” challenge through structured hands-on learning.
- vi.
- vii. Bronwyn reported successes including forming an advisory board, expanding partnerships to adjacent counties, and multiple internship cohorts completed.
- viii. Bronwyn shared that 30 nonprofits have been served to date and that additional funding is being pursued to expand clinic programming.
- ix. Bronwyn identified a challenge recruiting new apprenticeship employers due to regional dynamics and employer reluctance to take on no-experience apprentices.
- x. Bronwyn stated the program is pivoting toward non-cleared, mid-size employers and critical infrastructure/municipal organizations.
- xi. Michael Alicea suggested positioning the college’s wraparound support and experienced mentors as a key value proposition to employers.
- xii. A question was raised about building self-employment or gig-work readiness skills for students.
- xiii. Bronwyn described career development supports and portfolio-building to enable contracting pathways where applicable.
- xiv. A question was raised about pre-apprenticeship models for 11th–12th graders.
- xv. Bronwyn confirmed youth apprenticeship “school-to-apprenticeship” pathways and partnerships with the local school system.
- xvi. Karen Wetzel noted broader RAMPS community momentum and shared that RAMPS participants will present at the NICE Conference & Expo (June 1–3, 2026, Philadelphia).

VI. Closing Remarks and Next Meeting Reminder

The next NICE Community Coordinating Council Meeting will be **March 24, 2026**, at 3:30PM ET.

Upcoming Meetings:

- [NICE K12 Cybersecurity Education COI](#): February 12, 2026, 3:30 – 4:30 PM ET
- [NICE Cybersecurity Career Ambassadors COI](#): February 13, 2026, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET
- [NICE Promote Career Discovery WG](#): February 18, 2026, 3:30 – 4:30 PM ET

Upcoming Events:

- [NICE Webinar Series](#):
- [2026 NICE Local Stakeholders' Engagement Event \(LSEE\)](#): March 20, 2026, 1:00–3:00 PM ET
- [NICE Conference & Expo](#): June 1-3, 2026, Philadelphia, PA
- [Cybersecurity Career Week](#): October 19-24, 2026
- [NICE K12 Cybersecurity Education Conference](#): December 7-8, 2026, New Orleans, Louisiana
- NICE Events [Calendar](#)