

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Lisa Greene, Chair

The meeting of the West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board meeting was held on Thursday, August 8, 2024, at Smokin In Style BBQ in Hot Springs and via TEAMS.

Members Present In-Person: Greg Black, Karen Breashears, Pati Brown, Darla Crump, Kim Darling, Cynthia Gleghorn, Herman Grayer, Lisa Greene, Neal Harrington, Ron Magby Mason Robinson, Gary Troutman,

Members Present via TEAMS: Brent Black, Ben Freeny, Jessica Gunn, and Tammy Passafiume

Members Absent: Tanif Crotts, Kelli Embry, Jimmy Hart, Jeremy Hughes, Allan George, Venorris Webb-Delesline and Cindy White-Hamilton

Staff: Dwayne Pratt, Martha Boyer (Online), Margaret Dearmon, Cora Easterday, Erica Parker, Ian Bishop, and Carrie Pratchard

Guests: Joe Darling, April Henderson, Andy Hightower, Kenneth Moore, Thomas Pittman, April Shepherd, Lori Strumpf, Teresa White, Lisa Willenberg, and Angie Zimmerman

Ms. Greene called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. and gave an invocation.

Chair Comments:

Ms. Greene asked everyone to introduce themselves since there are new members and visitors at the meeting today.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Greene asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 13, 2024, meeting. Ms. Breashears made a **motion** to approve the minutes and was seconded by Ms. Crump. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Excused Absences:

Ms. Greene said that the following members have requested to be excused from the meeting today: Kelli Embry, Alan George, Jeremy Hughes, Judge Hart, and Cindy White Hamilton. Mr. Troutman made a **motion** to approve the requested excused absence and was seconded by Mr. Harrington. Motion carried unanimously.

Review of PY-23 Budgets:

Ms. Greene turned the floor over to Ms. Pratchard, Finance Manager, to review the PY-23 budgets. Ms. Pratchard went over the funds for WIOA. She reported that we received two additional grants this year for High Concentration of Youth and Outreach. She reported that the new funding in the amount of 1.19 million. We have started receiving the grant forms, but they have not been approved yet. She asked if there were any questions and discussion followed.

Board Staff Report:

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Lisa Greene, Chair

Ms., Easterday said that we meet the deadlines to get the Center Certification and Board Certifications submitted. We have received comments back on both of them and we are addressing them to the State. The certification teams will probably have to meet one more time to go into more detail. We have to talk about changing the Russellville center to a comprehensive center. We are close to getting the One Stop Operator sub agreement completed and Carrie will talk about that a little bit later.

Ms. Easterday went over the report on the numbers of enrollments in PY-23 and how many clients are being served by each career advisor. We have included the estimated total training dollars and the estimated total supportive service dollars.

Ms. Easterday reported that we finished performance negotiations with the State. This went well and we were able to negotiate and get a couple of levels lowered. She said it was a great learning experience for her.

Ms. Easterday gave a staff update and said we are still looking to hire field staff, two in the Russellville office and one in Hot Springs. We are still trying to fill the Business Engagement position. Interviews are in progress.

Ms. Easterday mentioned that at the last meeting she shared a Work-Based Learning Plan that we had put together that encompassed Incumbent Worker Training, On-the-Job Training as a standalone or in part with Apprenticeship Training and Customized Training. I have taken what you said and put it into a prettier document that we can provide to employers in our area.

Ms. Easterday said that that concludes her report unless you have questions. Discussion followed.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Ms. Greene stated that the Executive Committee met to discuss the new budget for the One Stop Operator and a Sector Partnership Budget. The agreed up total for the One Stop budget was \$80,913.30. The second approval of \$11,386.20 for the Sector Partnership Budget. The Board needs to ratify the approved motions of the Executive Committee. Ms. Pratchard reported that through the budget was essentially approved, we had to negotiate a few of the documentation and policy items to make sure we could support the costs as far as our monitoring concerns with the State. We have been working really close with Andy and Lori to make sure all those things were in order. Through those discussions and conversations, there were some changes that needed him to make to their structure. The changes are just changes to their structure and do not make any changes to the services provided or the team makeup. Andy will be an actual employee of the business where before he was a sole proprietor under a LLC. Lori will be a part-time employee of Hightower Workforce Initiatives. The contractor relationship has been kind of a struggle that goes all the way back to DOL monitoring in 2022. This helps to align us better to meet the compliance requests from DOL and the State. With those changes, the budget needed a little bit of tweaking because with employees there are FICA taxes and the cost of employee wages and such. Ms. Pratchard went over the changes in the revised budget in the packet. Discussion followed. Ms. Greene as for a motion to ratify the

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Lisa Greene, Chair

Executive Committee's approval of the changes in the revised budget to \$82,323.16. Ms. Crump made a **motion** to ratify the Executive Committee's approval of the changes in the revised budget to \$82,323.16, seconded by Mr. Black. Motion carried unanimously.

Planning/Performance/Finance Committee:

Ms. Grayer reported that the committee met on July 18, 2024, and discussed the Local Plan update, which Ms. Dearmon will discuss in a bit. We also discussed monitoring services, which Carrie will report on shortly. During the meeting we reviewed initial ETP Programs from the following providers: **Heavy Equipment Operating Academy-Heavy Equipment Operator Course**; **Cops CDL Academy-CDL Training** and **National Park College Adult Education-Phlebotomy**. After discussion, the committee approved all three providers programs, however the Heavy Equipment Operating Academy is approved contingent on them passing the ADA requirements.

Ms. Dearmon went over the changes to the Local Plan after a review by the State. This will have to go out for another 30-Day comment period because of the substantial changes including closing the Malvern Workforce Center. Discussion followed.

Ms. Greene asked for a motion to approve the committee's recommendation of approving all three ETP with Heavy Equipment Operating Academy approved contingent on them passing the ADA requirements and that any new providers must be in business for at least a year before a program can be approved. Ms. Breashears made a **motion** to approve the recommendation of the committee, seconded by Ms. Brown. Motion carried unanimously. Ms. Greene also asked for a motion to approve the changes in the Local Plan based on the Russellville office being a comprehensive center, closing the Malvern office. Mr. Robinson made a **motion**, seconded by Ms. Breashears to approve the recommendation for the changes to the local plan and for it to go out for 30-Day comment Period

Ms. Greene turned the floor over to Ms. Pratchard to discuss the monitoring services. Ms. Pratchard reported that we have a contract with Witt O'Briens to perform the external monitoring as soon as they get their schedule set up. She said that she has set up SharePoint in order to share the documents with the monitors. Discussion followed.

New Business

Ms. Greene said that we are starting a new segment of the board meeting for our core partners to give a short update on their program. Ms. Darling represented as the Adult Education partner and gave a report. Ms. Gleghorn was the Voc Rehabilitation partner and gave her report. Ms. White-Hamilton was not able to be at the meeting, so Ms. Easterday gave the report for Wagner-Peyser. Ms. Greene thanked all of them for their reports.

One Stop Operator's Report:

Mr. Hightower gave an update on the following:

- Contract – He thanked the board for the renewal of their sub agreement. Once that is complete, they will begin work on the tasks that are included.

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Lisa Greene, Chair

- Strategic Plan – He reported that a strategic planning retreat for all partners was conducted on June 12, 2024. They were pleased with the turnout with most partners represented.
- MOU and Infrastructure (IFA) Development and Negotiation – He reported that once the OSO agreement is executed, there are two agreements to finalize. One agreement that will cover July 2021 -June 2024 is approved and will be sent to gather signatures. The OSO will collect the Career Services data that has been provided by the partners into the existing draft, and that agreement will be shared with partners for review. Once reviewed, the board will sign and it will be sent to ADWS for approval and then on to the partners for signature.
- Work Based Learning Policy and Employer Applications – Lori conducted a training for all staff on the policy and how to communicate the various options to employers. A follow-up training session is being scheduled.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC):

Mr. Moore gave a report on the WOTC program and the benefits of business to participate in it. He discussed who and who doesn't qualify for the WOTC program. He talked about how WOTC reduces an employer's cost of doing business; how it can reduce an employer's federal income tax liability; there is no limit of the number of individuals an employer can hire to qualify to claim the tax credit and certain tax-exempt organizations can take advantage of WOTC by hiring eligible veterans and receiving a credit against the employer's share of Social Security taxes. Discussion followed.

Mr. Troutman stated it is ironic that we are the Workforce Board and Ms. Easterday is down two staff members. I have been involved with them through workshops and it is no reflection on you or your operations. It was better for Ms. Vaughn to work in Benton. Mr. Troutman also gave an update that Garland County just hit their goal of being an ACT Work Ready Community. Ms. Easterday was asked to tell what it means to be an ACT Work Ready Community and gave an update on the other counties progress of meeting their goals.

Ms. Easterday introduced Erica Parker as the newest member of the WCAPDD team. She works with Ms. Pratchard in the Finance Department.

Ms. Easterday also mentioned that she has been thinking for some time now how I can engage the other core partners other than just title I-B. I will be reaching out to the members on the board that represent the core partners and ask them to give a brief five minute presentation of what they have going on in their program. I thought that would be the best way to help us know what is going on outside of just title I-B.

Open Floor for Discussion and Adjournment:

Ms. Greene asked if anyone had anything to discuss and Mr. Troutman said that he and Cora have been trying to eliminate the doughnut in Southwest Arkansas, especially in Pike County on the ACT Readiness. We tried unsuccessfully with Murfreesboro and then in Glenwood and ran into a roadblock there. Pike County is pretty much a part of our workforce, and I would like to

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Lisa Greene, Chair

see it increase. He also mentioned a Workforce Conference in Atlanta on October 2-4 and would encourage anyone that is interested to come and attend. The SHURM grant that we received locally looks like we are going to spend the remaining fund on testing. We are in the process of scheduling our 3rd annual Draft Day at Lake Hamilton in April and more information will be given later. Ms. Darling said she was happy to direct some business toward Hot Springs. On October 23-25, the Arkansas Association of Continuing in Adult Education will be hosting its annual conference in Hot Springs instead of Little Rock. We are looking forward to spending two or three days at Oaklawn Racing and Casino Resort. She said she may be reaching out to some of you for help in getting items for the registration bags.

Adjournment:

Ms. Greene adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.

Lisa Greene, Chair

Date

LG/md