

MINUTES
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
April 11, 2017

A regular quarterly meeting of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board was held on April 11, 2017, beginning at 1:00 p.m., at the Arkansas Career Training Institute, 105 Reserve Street, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Chair Charles Clark presided with the following members present: Mr. Tom Anderson, Mr. Daryl Bassett, Ms. Karen Breashears, Mr. Lindsay Brown, Mr. Scott Bull, Ms. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Mr. Alan Hughes, Mr. Brian Itzkowitz, Mr. Bart Langley, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Rodney Loy, Ms. Maria Markham, Mr. Alan McClain, Ms. Katy Morris, Mr. George Nunnally, Mr. Mike Preston by proxy, Ms. Becky Rhinhardt, Mr. Kelley Sharp, and Mr. Robert Thorne. Mr. Jeffrey Allen, Mr. Chad Bishop, Mr. Robert East, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth, Mr. Michael Newcity, Mayor Harold Perrin, and Dr. Julie Roberson were unable to attend.

Chair Clark called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He then asked the members to turn to Agenda Item 1 in their books.

Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the January 10, 2017 Board Meeting: Chair Clark proceeded to Action Item 1, asking if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, **a motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by Mr. Rodney Loy, seconded by Mr. Alan Hughes, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Report of the Chairperson: Chair Clark began by reporting that Ms. Cindy Varner, ADWS Assistant Director and staff support to this board, has accepted an advancement opportunity with Goodwill Industries of Arkansas, Inc. as Vice President of Workforce Development. He stated that Ms. Varner had worked for the State for more than nineteen years and provided support to this board as well as its predecessor board for more than seventeen years. He reported that it is his understanding that she will be working with ADWS to assist with the transition to her successor to ensure a smooth transition. He also quantified that it was a good move for her and her family and that she will be missed. He also stated that even though she is not in attendance today the board would like to thank her for all of her efforts.

Next, he reported that he attended the monthly meeting, ADWS Director Bassett hosts, with the ten Local Board Directors, last week. He stated that ADWS is diligently working on the communication lines with the local areas to identify and assist in removing any barriers that businesses face throughout the State.

Chair Clark reported that he spent a great deal of time with Dr. Childers, Director, Arkansas Department of Career Education, at the Capitol during the legislative session. He reported that he did not think there was anything of consequence coming from the session that will affect ADWS as an agency, however there is a special session coming up in a few days, and recognizing

Senator Jane English in the audience, asked if that was correct, Senator English stated the session would begin in three days.

Next, Chair Clark reported at the January meeting that he would be attending the National Governors Association (NGA) State Board Chairs Winter Meeting, but he was unable; however Mr. Arnell Willis, ADWS – Workforce Investment Director, attended the meeting. He recognized Mr. Willis and asked that he report on the meeting.

Mr. Willis reported that he attended the NGA – National Association of State Workforce Liaisons Winter Meeting, February 23 – 26, 2017, in Washington, DC. He reported that he attended the opening session and heard presentations from Jennifer Garner, actress and early childhood advocate, and Mark Shiler, President, Save the Children. They were advocating for increased funding for early childhood education. Other topics included at the meeting were: Credentials as a Milestone for Career Pathways, Examples of Work in the New GIG Economy, Increasing Access to Work Based Learning, Return on Investment of Registered Apprenticeships, and High Performing Workforce Boards. Chair Clark thanked Mr. Willis and then recognized ADWS Director Daryl Bassett for comments.

Director Bassett began by reiterating our thanks to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for hosting the meeting in the ACTI facility, complementing the excellence of staff and leadership. He touched on the departure of Ms. Varner, indicating that she is still going to be assisting the agency from time to time. He thanked the ADWS staff for their work behind the scenes to make the meeting today happen. Next, he discussed the upcoming Special Legislative Session, reporting that ARWORKS will take center stage, which will impact ADWS as 45,000 – 65,000 individuals will be transferred to our agency for job services. He completed his remarks stating the he will provide more information on this topic at the July meeting.

Chair Clark thanked Mr. Bassett and then recognized Mr. Elroy Willoughby and asked that he provide the Staff Report.

Report of Staff: Mr. Willoughby began by reporting that most of the past quarter has been spent reviewing and providing feedback on the ten local workforce development board plans. He stated that a report from that review will be presented later in the agenda.

Next, he stated that at the January 10th meeting of the Board Ms. Varner reported that Arkansas had been selected to participate in a technical assistance project with the U. S. Department of Labor (USDOL) on asset mapping and skills gap analysis. Unfortunately due to a change in parameters of the project by USDOL and the timing of the start of the project coinciding with the start of the legislative session, we withdrew from the project. The work will still be conducted; we will just do the project in state with existing resources.

Mr. Willoughby reported that on March 2 – 3, 2017, a statewide WIOA Partners meeting was held in Hot Springs, with 275 individuals in attendance. He reported that the agenda was developed to reinforce the three priority areas established by the Board in the Workforce

System Vision – Customer Service, Innovation and Service Design, and Systems Integration and High Quality Staffing. He directed the member’s attention to a copy of the agenda from that meeting, provided at their seats, so that they could see what information was provided and how it tied back to building staff capacity in those three areas. He concluded by stating that out of state speakers from Colorado and Kentucky shared best practices on implementation of sector strategies. Chair Clark thanked him for the report.

Committee Reports:

Chair Clark asked Mr. Brian Itzkowitz, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, to provide a report of Committee activities since the October quarterly meeting.

Mr. Itzkowitz began by reporting that the Strategic Planning Committee met this morning without a quorum, therefore the minutes of the January 10th meeting, will be approved at the next committee meeting.

Next, he stated that the committee heard a report from committee member, Karen Breashears, regarding the review of regional and local plans. The report indicated that the regional and local plans were submitted by local boards by the December 30th deadline, and that the review team reviewed the plans during the months of January and February. The review team’s compiled comments were provided to local boards February 28th through March 10th. The overall comments indicated that local plans lacked the necessary details regarding partnerships, strategies for workforce development, outreach strategies to target populations, implementation of sector strategies and career pathways, and engagement of the business community. Each local board has been given a list of specific areas of deficiency that need to be addressed. Local boards have until late May to submit a revised plan, and the Strategic Planning Committee will hear a final report and make a recommendation to the full board for approval in July.

Mr. Itzkowitz reported that the committee heard a report on the work of a group of state and local level staff creating a statewide WIOA Title I-B policy manual for use by case managers in the workforce centers providing services through the adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs. The group has developed twelve policies so far, regarding eligibility for services, veterans’ priority of service, on-the-job training, incumbent worker and customized training, and work experience. The group had hoped to present those twelve policies to the committee for approval this quarter; however, due to new federal guidance issued in March by the U.S. Department of Labor, the workgroup is revising some of the policies. Staff will present the final version to the committee in July for review and approval.

He stated that the committee heard a progress update on the committee’s action plan put together by staff to aid the committee in monitoring their required activities.

He completed his report by stating that the next meeting of the committee will be on July 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Next, Mr. Scott Bull, Chair of the Program & Performance Evaluation Committee provided a report on committee activities since the last full board meeting. He stated that the Program & Performance Evaluation Committee met this morning and approved the minutes of the January 10th meeting.

He stated that the committee heard a staff report from Elroy Willoughby regarding the various USDOL webinars and teleconferences that had been conducted during the past quarter. Mr. Willoughby had shared that some of the progress that states had made in relation to performance had been stifled due to changes in the USDOL performance file layouts and schemas.

Mr. Bull reported that the committee heard a report on new federal guidance issued on March 1st that had an impact on performance accountability as well as staff's efforts to work with the U.S. Department of Labor to finalize a reporting strategy that will ensure that the State experiences a consistent increase in the number of individuals served from the targeted populations, such as homeless, dislocated homemakers, and ex-offenders, among others. The U.S. Department of Labor has strongly encouraged States to increase their outreach and services to participants in these special categories.

The committee also heard a report from staff of the four core WIOA partners, Mr. Elroy Willoughby (ADWS), Ms. Bridget Criner (Department of Career Education), Mr. Jonathan Bibb (Arkansas Career Training Institute – Arkansas Rehabilitative Services), Ms. Cassandra Williams and Mr. Brian Sanders (both with the Department of Human Services – Division of Services for the Blind, relating to their respective programs' efforts to gather and report on performance data.

In conclusion Mr. Bull stated that there were no changes made to the Committee Action Plan and that the next committee meeting is scheduled for July 11, 2017.

Chair Clark asked Mr. Tom Anderson, Chair of the Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Oversight Committee, to give a report of the Committee's activities since the January quarterly meeting.

Mr. Anderson reported that the TANF Oversight Committee had met this morning and approved the minutes of the January 10, 2017, committee meeting. He reported that the committee heard an update on recently passed legislation, Act 314 of 2017, which made the new drug screening and testing program for TANF permanent, and no longer a pilot program. He stated that the committee heard a report on two new TANF initiatives. The first, a collaboration with Our House, Inc., in Little Rock, focuses on creating a job placement pipeline for those families who are homeless or near homeless. Mr. Anderson explained that the project has a two generation approach working with both the parents and the children through the Our House portfolio of services provided and will begin on May 1, 2017. The second initiative is the implementation of Work-Based Learning, a form of subsidized employment, in

collaboration with the state's community college system through the Career Pathway's Initiative. He stated that the initiative will enhance the already successful Arkansas Career Pathways program, and more importantly give low-income job seekers receiving TANF assistance an opportunity to participate in work-based learning opportunities.

Next, Mr. Anderson reported that the committee heard a report on the Arkansas Workforce Integrated Network System (ARWINS) IT development project. He said that the committee is pleased to inform the board that the system is currently in production at three ADWS local offices and is slated to begin a gradual training and implementation into more ADWS local offices in May. He said that the digital platform is now a comprehensive case management system capable of handling additional programs such as WIOA and others.

Mr. Anderson continued reporting that the committee heard a strategy provided by staff to increase the number of low income, needy families receiving Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA). The proposal will link the income eligibility standard as a percentage of the annual Federal Poverty Level for the TEA program which will enable workforce development services within reach of more able-bodied adults with children (currently on SNAP and Medicaid) by enrolling them in the TEA program. Within the program are mandatory work requirements, work-support services, and individual responsibility compliance features that can be extended to additional participants on government assistance.

Mr. Anderson stated that on behalf of the TANF Oversight Committee, we wholeheartedly support the TANF program's proposal to increase the income eligibility standards in Arkansas. He said that this non-legislative policy adjustment is long overdue and will not only help workforce development in Arkansas but also introduce efficiencies and collaboration across governmental bodies. He stated that it is now our expectation that the TANF Division will work with the Department of Human Services, the Department of Higher Education and the local business community to modernize the TEA program. He concluded by saying that the committee and its members are committed to helping the TANF Division implement this critical initiative.

Partnership Efforts to Advance Apprenticeship in Arkansas: Chair Clark recognized Ms. Karen Breashears, board member and President/CEO of the National Apprenticeship Training Foundation. Ms. Breashears directed the member's attention to the book provided at their seats with apprenticeship information specific to their local area. Ms. Breashears provided information on the efforts that she and other Registered Apprenticeship representatives have been working on over the last few months to better connect Registered Apprenticeship employers and training providers with the ten local workforce development boards.

Open Discussion: Chair Clark moved to the open discussion item. Mr. Brian Itkowitz posed a question concerning the unemployment rate being at a low level however it is not the true unemployment rate. Mr. Daryl Bassett responded stating that the unemployment rate is at 3.7 percent, which is good, but there are still roughly 900,000 unemployed for various reasons. He stated that about half of those are over the age of fifty-five and retired, but that leaves around

460,000. Some of those we categorize as people who don't want to work, they say they want a job but have not looked for employment within the last twelve months. He stated that we have pockets of unemployed that we must find a way to reach by thinking outside of the box. Perhaps those that are fifty-five and retired need to be re-trained to begin new and different careers; we, as a board, must find a way to address these pockets. We need to identify their needs and address that demographic.

Mr. Scott Bull stated that he had recently read an article regarding the national unemployment rate and the fact that it is not a true unemployment rate either. He said that the article discussed the underemployed as well. He asked if the ADWS kept records of that demographic and if it were combined what would the true unemployment rate be, and if that figure could be shared. Mr. Bassett stated that we do have that information, that he did not have a figure but that it was significantly north of 3.7 percent.

Chair Clark stated that we will hold the last two meetings of the year in the central Arkansas area if there are none opposed. Hearing no opposition he added that during one of our last meetings it was discussed that we have a meeting in El Dorado. He stated that South Arkansas University would like to make a presentation to the board during the fourth quarter showcasing their efforts to partner with employers in that region.

Dr. Charisse Childers discussed the involvement of all of the partners since the beginning of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act going back to 2014, and wanted express her appreciation for all of their great effort and work making sure that we as a State were prepared, had our plan together, and that we were again ahead of the curve. She stated that she had heard at the national level that Arkansas was on track for success. Next, she thanked Mr. Alan McClain, Mr. Jonathan Bibb, and their staff, for their hard work in making the ACTI campus successful. Lastly, Dr. Childers returned to Ms. Breashears apprenticeship presentation and discussed the State Apprenticeship Office at the Department of Career Services, which is primarily focused on adult apprenticeship programs. She thanked Ms. Breashears for her interest and willingness to help the board understand the apprenticeship world.

Announcements: Chair Clark announced that the next meeting of the full board would be held on July 11, 2017, at 1:00 p.m., with committees meeting at 10:00 a.m. The location will be announced at a later date.

Adjourn: Chair Clark adjourned the meeting at 1:52 p.m., **on a motion made by Mr. Lindsey Brown, seconded by Mr. Brian Itzkowitz, and carried unanimously.**



Charles Clark, Chairman



Arnell Willis, Director Workforce Investment
Department of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Kim Kight
Department of Workforce Services Staff*

Approved at the July 11, 2017, Full Board Meeting