

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
**January 25, 2022**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on January 25, 2022, beginning at 10:03 a.m. The meeting was conducted in-person and remotely utilized Zoom and teleconference. Chairman Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock III, Ms. Karen Breashears, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Secretary Mike Preston, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mayor James Sanders, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, and Mr. Robert Thorne.

Mr. Randy Finnegan, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Governor Hutchinson, Mr. Charles Johnson, Ms. Holley Little, Dr. Maria Markham, and Mr. George “Gan” Nunnally were unable to attend.

Chairman’s Opening Comments: Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. upon seeing a quorum.

**Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the October 19, 2021, Full Board Meeting:** Chairman Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the October 19, 2021, Full Board meeting minutes.

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the October 19, 2021, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Ms. Karen Breashears, followed by a second motion by Dr. Julie Roberson. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Chairman Tom Anderson – Approve, Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Absent, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Scott Bull – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Absent, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Approve, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, and Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve.

Report of the Chairperson: Chairman Anderson discussed with the Board regarding the National Governor’s Association (NGA) DC Conference’s postponing due to the rise of Omicron cases across the states.

Report of Director: Chairman Anderson recognized Board Member and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) Director, Dr. Charisse Childers to address the Full Board. Dr. Childers addressed potential technical issues during the Board Member roll call and asked that any members present who did not hear their name called to let the record show their presence at today’s meeting. Dr. Childers stated the Arkansas Press Release announced Arkansas’ unemployment declined to 3.1% in December. The previous unemployment rate prior to this report was 3.4%. In October of 2019, Arkansas’ civilian workforce was 1,363,806, and as of December 2021, Arkansas’ civilian workforce was 1,353,108, totaling a 10,700-person difference. In unemployment, there are now less than 5,000 people as compared to this time last year. Dr. Childers mentioned the 60-Minute Special, “The Great Resignation”, in discussing the change in workforce

and the employer-employee relationship amidst COVID-19. She stated that from a recent report, there are currently 1.5 jobs for every unemployed person in the state, showing that although the jobs are available there just aren't people to fill them. Dr. Childers explains that they are working with the Department of Corrections and Community Corrections in programs to assist individuals to get back into the workforce once they are released, which has been successful as employers are willing to hire individuals with felony records to work in positions under certain conditions.

Report of Board Director: Chairman Anderson recognized Board Director Chad Brown and asked him to provide his report. Director Brown made the Board aware of scheduled meeting dates to visit the local workforce areas with himself and Assistant Director Thomas. The goal being to sit down with the Local Board, build a better relationship, and work out any concerns. He told the Board Members about the creation of a Arkansas Workforce Development Board YouTube page, where Full Board meeting recordings will be available for those who wish to watch them. Director Brown reminded the Board of the Statement of Financial Interest forms due at the end of the month.

Report of Staff: Chairman Anderson recognized Board Staff, Mr. Eddie Thomas, to address the Full Board. Mr. Eddie Thomas highlighted that state staff is working with core partners on the State Plan modification, and over the next few weeks, will be working to imbed information and data regarding the workforce system. The deadline for the State Plan will be March 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Agenda Item 2 – Information – Stipend vs Expense Reimbursement:** Chairman Anderson recognized Board Director Chad Brown to discuss the language surrounding stipend and expense reimbursements. Director Brown explained that any potential questions regarding which reimbursement is requested can be directed towards him moving forward to avoid confusion.

**Agenda Item 2 – Action – Council Resolution 2201-1 Board Member Stipends:**

Chairman Anderson addressed the Board stating that the first meeting of each calendar year, Arkansas law allows Boards and Commissions to approve member stipends. Chairman Anderson asked for a motion for the Board to approve the stipends for 2022.

A Board Member asked what the amount of the stipend would be for 2022.

Director Brown stated that by law the stipend is up to \$110 for each full board meeting or its committees.

**A motion to approve the stipends for 2022 was made by Ms. Abby Houseworth, followed by a second motion by Mr. Brian Marsh. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Chairman Tom Anderson – Approve, Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Absent, Mr. Randy Finegan – Absent, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Approve, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Approve, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, and Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve.

**Agenda Item 4 – Informational – WIOA Title I Program Policy Process:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Board Director Brown to address the Board about WIOA policy and approval. Director Brown stated an issue of statewide policies not being placed on State Board agendas and therefore not reaching local levels. He stated they will put state wide policies that will affect all local areas on the State Board agenda moving forward.

Dr. Childers asked for clarification on whether it will be for informational purposes rather than action items. Director Brown stated it will be purely informational.

**Agenda Item 5 – Informational – AR COVID Recovery Readiness:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Eddie Thomas to address the Board with the Department of Labor’s (DOL) report on Arkansas’ COVID Recovery Readiness. Mr. Thomas stated the findings revealed that Arkansas is ready for COVID recovery and reemployment with only two areas of concern: the use of technology and service delivery and the other being outreach. Details to these consultations are in the report package.

**Agenda Item 6 – Informational – Workforce System Evaluation:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Elroy Willoughby to address the Board regarding the Workforce System Evaluation Update Findings and Recommendations. Mr. Willoughby discussed Finding #1 on co-enrollments and the recommendation of developing data collection methods to effectively track and monitor rates of co-enrollment. Finding #2 focused on partner programs and agencies making sure they are aware of other potential programs exist to help the community. They recommend that AWDS leadership and AWDB work with all workforce area to identify and engage additional community partners, and to provide training and assistance to those partners in data collection techniques. Finding #3 talked about the business survey results done by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Arkansas’ Walton College of Business. The recommendation that ADWS address each of the concerns expressed in the survey. Finding #4 addressed customer survey results regarding WIOA programs and Workforce Center staff. The recommendation expressed an evaluation on the phone system with a potential upgrade for it.

**Agenda Item 7 – Action – High Concentration of Eligible Youth:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Eddie Thomas to address the Board regarding traditionally allocated funds to the local workforce areas with High Concentration of Eligible Youth. Mr. Thomas introduced grants manager Shalon Bogard and Doss Burgess to explain the funding allocation methodology. Mr. Burgess explained the purpose is to award funding for assistance to the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) for “Eligible Youth” found in the WIOA law, Title I, Section 129. He stated they propose any area that has a weighted percentage of Eligible Youth equal to 23% or more will share in the funds. Funding will also be per LWDB based on ADWS Youth High Risk Percentage. Mr. Burgess highlighted the summary and allocation per Local Area as shown on the presentation. All awarded funds must be expended by February 28, 2023, with financial reports due no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and performance reports due quarterly no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following the end of each quarter.

**A motion to approve the agenda item was made by Mayor Sanders, followed by a second motion by Mr. Len Blaylock III. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Chairman Tom Anderson – Approve, Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Absent, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Approve, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Approve, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr.

George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, and Mr. Robert Thorne – Absent.

**Agenda Item 8 – Informational – REIMAGINE Grant Update:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Eduardo Lemm to provide a grant update to the Board. Mr. Lemm discussed the additional efforts made focused on removing employment barriers in order to increase the rates of participant success in the REIMAGINE program. In addition to Unemployment Insurance claimants, the project has made concerted efforts to assist other populations, including the Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) Program participants, Veterans, individuals previously attached to the Criminal Justice System, and individuals living in rural areas. He stated there has been an increased number of participants residing in the Delta Region of the state. ADWS continues to work closely with the subrecipients, shorter College and University of Arkansas Global Campus, by engaging them and networking with the WIOA Partner Programs, the ten Local Workforce Development Areas, and more.

Board Member Candice Lawrence asked if they have found access to internet or to computers to be an issue for some participants, and if so, are there other locations for participants to take the training course?

Mr. Lemm states that one of the subrecipients can provide free laptops, computers, and internet access free of charge available through this grant, as well as, at their local workforce centers.

**Agenda Item 9 – Informational – PY20 WIOA Titles I & II Annual Summary:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Elroy Willoughby to explain this report to the Board. Mr. Willoughby discussed the addition of the “Impact of COVID” per the DOL’s request, as well as the utilization of Arkansas’ Virtual Job Fairs. Mr. Willoughby explained they thought it was important to include the Arkansas Labor Market report because of its breakdown of the Local Workforce Areas. Additional information regarding the evaluation will be included in the subsequent State Plan per DOL’s request. Included in the summary are success stories from participants in various programs across the state.

**Agenda Item 10 – Informational – Western Development Area Update:**

Chairman Anderson recognized Executive Director Sasha Grist and WIOA Director Dennis Williamson from the Western Workforce Development Area to provide an update on the activities going on in their area. Mr. Williamson discussed that last year they met with Magazine High School to put together a student driven Job Fair, where the students became the presenters. Collaboratively, they worked with other partners for character and profile building, so they could navigate communications with employers. He stated they had 33 graduating seniors that worked the tables, each with profiles, and met with 24 employers from 6 different counties. Every single one of the students were offered a job opportunity the first week after their upcoming graduation. Mr. Williamson encouraged Board Members to reach out to fellow employers for assistance in furthering this opportunity again in the upcoming years for more opportunities for youth.

Ms. Grist provided a few suggestions she believed the Local Boards and State Board could collaborate to reach their goals. She stated the State Board could assist the LWA by advocating when local events are happening and reach out for collaboration with the type of events going on in their local areas. She explained involvement on both ends would allow for more success in the events held across the state on a local and state level.

Mr. Dennis provided a YouTube video to present to the Board of a success story from their area. However, due to technical issues there was no sound and the video could not be played.

**Agenda Item 10 – Informational –Administrative Forms**

Chairman Anderson recognized Staff Member Tyler Gibbons to address the Board regarding administrative forms. Mr. Gibbons reminded the Board that with the new year there are Member information forms that must be filled out. Specifically, he emphasized the importance of the Statement of Financial Interest due at the end of January that all Members must provide.

Ms. Lawrence asked if non-applicable forms needed to be submitted. Director Brown stated that any non-applicable forms will only be requested if a reason is found to do so.

**Board Open Discussion:** Chairman Anderson asked Board Members for any additional items for discussion. Chairman Anderson stated he was to discuss how the Board Members would like to carry out meetings moving forward

Mayor Sanders stated that the Board play it by ear as things have changed with the Omicron variant.

Chairman Anderson asked Board Members on their thoughts regarding starting Committee meetings starting back again.

Ms. Miles and Ms. Breashears expressed the Committees being vital and therefore virtual meetings being preferred moving forward.

**Public Speaking Opportunity:** Chairman Anderson addressed members of the public attending the meeting through electronic means and extended the opportunity to speak before the Full Board.

**Announcements:** Chairman Anderson stated the next Full Board meeting is set for April 19, 2022. Board Staff will keep everyone aware of any changes to the schedule or the type of meeting, whether virtual or in-person, as the State progresses through COVID-19 under the guidance of Governor Asa Hutchinson.

**Adjourn:** As presented, Chairman Anderson adjourned the AWDB Full Board meeting at 11:35 a.m., on a motion made by Mr. Len Blaylock III, followed by Mr. Robert Thorne making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes were recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Chairman Tom Anderson – Approve, Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Absent, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Scott Bull – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Absent, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Absent, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Approve, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, and Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve.



Thomas Anderson, Board Chairman  
Arkansas Workforce Development Board



Chad Brown, Director Workforce Development  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Tyler Gibbons  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*