

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
**November 7, 2023**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened on November 7, 2023, beginning at 11:15 a.m. The meeting was conducted in person. Chairman Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Thomas Anderson, Commissioner Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock III, Ms. Karen Breashears, Dr. Charisse Childers, Mr. Miles Crawford, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. William French, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Ms. Rachel Mize, Mr. Clint O'Neal, Ms. Latanyua Robinson, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Ken. Warden, and Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes.

Governor Sarah Sanders, Mr. Randy Finegan, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Mr. Charles Johnson, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. George Nunnally, Mr. Robert Thorne, and Ms. Candice Lawrence were unable to attend.

A quorum was established.

**Chairman's Opening Comments:** Chairman Anderson moved to the first agenda item.

**Agenda Item 1-ACTION-Full Board Minutes Approval:** Chairman Anderson moved to approve the minutes from the full board meeting held on September 26, 2023.

**A motion was made by Dr. Ken Warden to approve the minutes and seconded by Ms. Karen Breashears. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.**

**Agenda Item 2-ACTION/INFORMATIONAL:**

**Chairman's Report-** Chairman Anderson provided four future dates for next year's quarterly board meetings. The board meetings routinely take place around the third Tuesday of the month at the beginning of each quarter. The dates proposed are January 16, 2024, April 16, 2024, July 16, 2024, and October 15, 2024. The dates proposed were accepted by board members and the board members were encouraged to save the dates. Chairman Anderson recognized Nicholas Lalpui, United States Department of Labor (USDOL)-Employment and Training Administration- Region 4 Administrator for his presence at the board meeting.

**Director's Report:** Dr. Charisse Childers gave a brief introduction of Secretary McDonald. Dr. Childers recognized Nicholas Lalpui, Region 4 Administrator for USDOL and Mr. Jim Smith. Mr. Jim Smith is the father of Rosanna Smith, who works alongside Mr. Lalpui. Mr. Jim Smith owns The Keith-Smith Company, a three generation family owned business in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

**Remarks from Secretary McDonald:** Secretary McDonald thanked Mr. Jim Smith for attending the board meeting. Secretary McDonald also thanked the board members for their commitment and willingness to serve as members of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. Next, he shared his vision of working towards the goal of getting more Arkansans employed and raising the workforce labor participation rate. He also discussed the importance of a customer centered service delivery model, where the customer feels valued and important.

**Remarks from Nicholas Lalpui:** Mr. Lalpui thanked the board members on behalf of USDOL for their service to the state of Arkansas and for the great work they are doing through the public workforce system. He stated that there are so many opportunities and things that the state board can do that can improve the lives of fellow citizens and improve the economic conditions of Arkansas. He provided insight on legislative acts that should be included in the state's strategic plan. He mentioned and provided a brief overview of the Infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Acts. Every single investment that is made in the state of Arkansas has a workforce component. He concluded his remarks by stating the board

members have a tremendous opportunity to lay out a plan for Arkansas' economic development and growth through their state strategic plan.

**Agenda Item 3-INFORMATIONAL-ADWB Bylaws Amendment:**

Deputy Director Thomas referred everyone to pages 8-47 in their agenda packets to show the marked up copy of the AWDB bylaws amendments. The amended bylaws will be sent to the Governor's office for review and approval. After the Governor's office has reviewed the bylaws, the bylaws will be brought back to the board members for an official vote. Mr. Thomas briefly highlighted each section of the bylaws notating specific language that was added to or stricken from each section.

**Agenda Item 4-Informational-WIOA State Plan Requirements:** Deputy Director Thomas referred everyone to TEGL 4-23 in the agenda packets. TEGL 4-23 provides guidance published by DOL and the requirements for the 2024-2027 WIOA state plan. The plan must be completed by March 4, 2023 and entered into the portal as established by USDOL. A draft copy of the plan will be submitted to the AWDB by early January for comments from the board and public.

**Agenda Item 5-Informational-Governor's Workforce Strategy:** No presentation. Mike Rogers was not in attendance for the board meeting.

**Agenda Item 6-Informational-WIOA Core Partner PY 22 Annual Reports:**

Deputy Director Thomas provided an overview of performance measures for Titles I & III for PY' 22: July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023.

Dr. Trenia Miles provided an overview of the population served through their Adult Education-Title II program. She discussed, race, ages, and race/ethnicity of population served. Total population served for Adult Education is 16,669. For the purposes of WIOA, 9,736 individuals have been served. Enrollment is slowly increasing for the demographic of people who are between the ages of sixteen and thirty four. Their overall retention rate went up from 2% to 58%. The employment rate goal after the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter doubled from 25% to 54%.

Commissioner Joseph Baxter provided a brief overview of the program goals that were achieved in Title IV- Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In 2022, a total number of 13,00 clients were served versus only serving 10,000 clients in 2021.

Dr. Cassandra Stokes stated the Division of Services for the Blind has served 1,167 individuals. Out of that 1,167, 149 individuals completed competitive employment goals of obtaining a four year degree or completing two year career training. 189 clients received credential attainment through ongoing training. The Division of Services for the Blind has been recognized as an agency for Most Improved in credential attainment category. Dr. Stokes ended her presentation by showing a video of Jose Mendoza. Mr. Mendoza is a client of DSB who is gainfully employed as a retail advisor and interpreter for Goodwill Industries of Arkansas.

**Agenda Item 7-Informational-Reimagine Grant Update:** Shenaye Johns provided an update regarding the Reimagine grant. Monthly reports are given by Shorter College and University of Arkansas Global Campus (UAGC) providing information on retention and outreach efforts. To date, both universities have enrolled over 3,500 individuals into their respective programs. UAGC and Shorter College requested a no cost extension of the Reimagine Grant. Both universities have been granted a one-year extension by the United States Department of Education.

**Agenda Item 8-Informational-Crawford County Adult Education Center-Alternative Sentencing:**

Dr. Debbie Faubus Kendrick provided information on the Crawford County Adult Education Center Alternative Sentencing Program. In 2010, Arkansas received a grant from the Department of Justice to develop innovative ways to confront crime and then resolve it. The program was started by Barbara

Hamilton and David Butler. It was initially called Smarter Sentencing. In the Spring of 2021, Smarter Sentencing changed their name to Alternative Sentencing Program and began a formal partnership with the District Court of Crawford County.

**Agenda Item 9-Action-Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas Certification Approvals**

Dr. Claudia Griffin referred board to the last few pages of the agenda. A center certification review of Eastern Arkansas workforce centers was completed. A memo of understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreement was not established by the workforce centers in West Memphis and Forrest City, thus a recommendation was made by state staff to provisionally approval the workforce centers contingent on the creation of the Memo of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreement. The workforce centers in Helena and West Helena were not able to be certified due to those respective workforce centers being in the process of relocating. State staff recommended that those centers be given six months to become in compliance.

Mr. Len Blaylock requested that the deadline for the West Memphis and Forrest City workforce center to be moved up to January. He also requested a report to be given at the first board meeting of 2024 to show that West Memphis and Forrest City workforce center were able to meet their compliance goals.

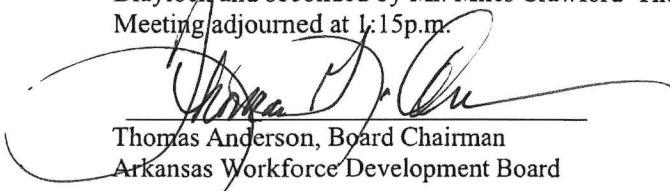
A motion was made by Mr. Clint O'Neal to approve the recommendation for the workforce centers and seconded by Judge Brandon Ellison. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.

Board Open Discussion: None


Public Opportunity to Address the Board: Justin freeman, DHS SNAP Employment and Training representative requested time to meet with appropriate subcommittees regarding a partnership with WIOA programs.

Announcements: None

Adjourn: Chairman Anderson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Len Blaylock and seconded by Mr. Miles Crawford. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 1:15p.m.



Thomas Anderson, Board Chairman  
Arkansas Workforce Development Board



Charisse Childers, Director  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Victoria Hall  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*