

MINUTES
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
July 19, 2022

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on July 19, 2022, beginning at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Chairman Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock III, Ms. Karen Breashears, Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Finegan, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Ms. Latanyua Robinson, Dr. Trenia Miles, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Mr. Brian Marsh, and Ms. Betsy Barnes proxy for Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Mr. Robert Thorne.

Mr. Miles Crawford, Mr. William French, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Rachel Mize, Ms. Holley Little, Dr. Maria Markham, Mr. Gan Nunnally, Governor Hutchinson, Mr. Charles Johnson, Ms. Holley Little, Secretary Mike Preston, and Mayor James Sanders were unable to attend.

Chairman's Opening Comments: Chairman Anderson introduced three new Board Members: Latanyua Robinson, Rachel Mize, and William French. Chairman Anderson also thanked Board members Johnney Key and Jeff Griffin, whose appointments expired in May, for their service on this Board.

Chairman Anderson informed the Board that they will be going back to voice voting, with the exception of roll call, for this and future meetings.

Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minute Approval: Chairman Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the April 19, 2022, Full Board meeting minutes.

Hearing none, a motion to accept the January 25, 2022, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Ms. Karen Breashears, followed by a second motion by Ms. Rebecca Ives. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Report of the Chairperson: Chairman Anderson congratulated Ms. Karen Breashears on her new role as Vice Chair for the AWDB at which time Chairman Anderson recognized Ms. Breashears for comment. Next Chairman Anderson informed the Board that the AWDB will be returning to in-person meetings starting in Calendar Year 2023. Lastly, Chairman Anderson informed the Board that he submitted a support letter for Shorter College to receive a grant to renovate the Argenta Depot for workforce development programs.

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 started her report by stating that she is looking forward to returning to in-person meetings as she believes it adds value to the work we do and the Board's engagement and then congratulated the new Board members. Next, as a sitting member on the Arkansas Women's Commission, Dr. Childers provided an update on the history and recent meetings of the Commission. Governor Hutchinson re-established the Women's Commission in 2022 and asked tasked the Commission on furthering the success of women in Arkansas. Dr. Childers posted links, in the chat, to Commission meetings, videos, and reports. She mentioned that the next meeting will be in Russellville and stated it is open to everyone.

Report of Staff: Chairman Anderson recognized Board staff, Mr. Eddie Thomas, to address the Full Board. Mr. Thomas began by providing an update on the Reimagine Arkansas Workforce Initiative which is a grant provided by the Department of Education for \$13 million provided to a local Board and ADWS. To

date a total of 1290 participants have enrolled in the program with 157 completers. The top programs studied at Shorter through this initiative are Entrepreneurship, Small Business Management and Human Resources. At U of A Global Campus (UAGC) the top programs studied are healthcare, business, and technology. To-date, we have spent roughly \$3.5 million out of the \$13 million awarded and looking to extend the grant into a fourth year of a three-year grant. Mr. Thomas will be providing the Board and Dr. Childers recommendations going forward with the grant.

Next Mr. Thomas gave an update on Title I and Title III performance negotiations and stated that Mr. Elroy Willoughby will providing further details later in the meeting. State staff met with DOL in late May to discuss performance levels of PY22 and PY23. On June 3rd, Dr. Childers received a letter finalizing the performance numbers at which time state staff conducted performance negotiations with local boards.

Mr. Thomas provided an update regarding the WIOA Roundtable and Executive Committee meeting which will be held next week to discuss the State Plan modifications and to start planning the Fall 2022 WIOA Partners Meeting scheduled for the October 19, 2022 thru October 21, 2022, which will be held in person in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Mr. Thomas continued his report by informing the Board that one trend being noticed is measuring the effectiveness and the outreach between all programs, specifically Title I in PY21 numbers reflect a total of 1829 participants served, 905 adults, 215 dislocated workers, and 709 youth. ADWs is working with the Local Boards on future strategies and outreach plans to make sure we fulfill the intent of WIOA.

Next, Mr. Thomas informed the AWDB that Mr. Phil Harris and the TANF team have been working with WIOA program and local workforce development boards to provide additional funding for work-based learning opportunities to youth and adults in the state. To-date the award has been given to six of the ten local workforce boards with a few more projects pending. Approximately \$4 million dollars have been awarded. Mr. Thomas thanked TANF and Mr. Harris for their support with the workforce projects.

Mr. Thomas provided an overview of a recent listening session meeting hosted by DOL with states and local workforce boards that highlighted their national priorities which included job quality, equity, training driven by demand, expanded stakeholder engagement in state and federal partnerships, and workers centered approach at all levels. The Office of Employment and Training Administration is also scoping out three national training opportunities including conducting targeted and impactful marketing, innovative and flexible and responsive funding of programs, and effective strategies for leveraging the labor shortage ensuring that marginalized communities rise to the front lines of employment and access to quality jobs.

Mr. Thomas informed the AWDB that DOL will be visiting Arkansas on September 12, 2022, thru September 16, 2022, and will be monitoring West Central Workforce Development Area. In addition, at the beginning of the fiscal year, DOL will be monitoring the State for compliance.

Mr. Thomas provided an update on ACGT Work Ready Communities and stated that 34 of 75 counties are participating and 20 counties are certified as Work Ready Communities and in the maintaining phase. Mr. Thomas congratulated Southeast Arkansas for becoming the first Work Ready Region in the Arkansas. Mr. Thomas also congratulated WJ Monagle, of the Little Rock Workforce Development Board, for receiving a DOL \$2 million dollar reentry grant presented by Secretary Walsh in June. Mr. Thomas also congratulated Dennis Williamson for being elected to Region 6's Board of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals.

Mr. Thomas concluded his report and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions, which there were none.

Report of Board Director: Chairman Anderson recognized Board Director, Chad Brown, to address the Full Board. First, Director Brown congratulated Ms. Karen Breashears on becoming the Vice-Chair of the AWDB. Secondly, Director Brown reminded the members to check their emails for missing forms that are needed for their files. The two forms that that Director Brown stated were mandatory every year are the Orientation Form and the Stipend forms.

Next, Director Brown updated the Board on the road trips that he and Mr. Thomas have been completing with the next trip being West Central. Mr. Brown stated that the purpose of the trips are to better the relationships between the state and the local areas with the goal of understanding what the state can do better and vice versa.

Mr. Brown provided an update on the Board's social media accounts.

Lastly, Mr. Brown provided an update to the Board regarding its committee's and the need to reorganize the committee's due to appointment expirations and new board members. Director Brown stated that the new rosters will be ready for the Board's review at the October 18th Board Meeting.

Mr. Brown concluded his report and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions, which there were none. Chairman Anderson announced that if any Board members arrived late to let us know so their attendance can be documented.

Agenda Item 2 – Informational – Wachter Boot Camp: Chairman Anderson gave a brief overview of Wachter and recognized Ms. Franci Heflin for her presentation. Ms. Wachter began her presentation by informing the members that Wachter has been around since 1930 and started as an electrical company and throughout the years moved into low voltage and data; however, Wachter recently started low voltage registered apprenticeship that started in January 2022. Their target audience is high school students that feel college is not for them or someone that is looking for a career change. Wachter prefers that candidates have little to no knowledge so they can be trained in accordance to Wachter principles.

Chairman Anderson opened the floor for questions and comments.

Len Blaylock asked if there is housing available in Lowell. Ms. Heflin stated that it is a two week training and that Wachter covers the cost of a hotel while the participant is in training.

Candice Lawrence asked if Wachter has reached out to Be Pro Be Proud to help in the coordination of their efforts and get the word out. Ms. Heflin stated that she has reached out to them and working to set something up.

Chairman Anderson asked if there were any other questions. With no other questions, the Chairman proceeded to the next agenda item.

Agenda Item 3 – Informational – WIOA Policy Update: Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Eddie Thomas to provide this update. Mr. Eddie Thomas started with an overview of the revised Debt Collection Policy and provided background to the need of the policy. Mr. Thomas explained that this policy gave the local areas rights and explained that this policy has included consequences, with the most extreme being the decertification of a local board for failure to adhere to collecting debt. Mr. Thomas mentioned that he hoped this policy never has to be used; however, DOL recommended we have something in place just in case. Another policy is the Eligible Training Provider Policy and that policy describes the criteria for a training provider to be approved for the official list and how the local board approves individuals based on in-demand occupations.

Lastly, Mr. Thomas directed the Board's attention to the bottom of the agenda where recent and/or issued policies have been released by ADWS and continued to provide a summary of each of the four policies listed.

Before concluding Mr. Thomas' presentation, he asked Director Brown if there is anything he did not cover in his explanation of the Debt Collection Policy. Director Brown asked Eddie if this policy could wait till the next Board Meeting or would it need to be approved in an Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Thomas replied and stated it would probably need to go before the Executive Committee.

Mr. Thomas concluded his report and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions.

Agenda Item 4 – Informational – PY2022 – 2023 WIOA Titles I & III Negotiated Performance Levels:

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Elroy Willoughby to present Titles I & III negotiated performance levels. Mr. Willoughby restated the information that Mr. Eddie Thomas stated earlier, then directed the Board attention to the PY2022 and PY2023 page in their packet. At this time, Mr. Willoughby gave an in-depth explanation of WIOA Title I Adult, WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker, WIOA Title I Youth, WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services negotiated levels. Next Mr. Willoughby pulled up a two-year historical perspective to show the members.

Mr. Willoughby concluded his presentation and opened the floor for questions. Chairman Anderson complimented Mr. Willoughby for his presentation and noted that it looks like we (Arkansas) is moving the ball forward.

Agenda Item 4 – Informational – WIOA Core Partner Program Updates: Chairman Anderson mentioned that Director Brown is working on providing a standing spot on the agenda for the Core Programs under WIOA. Chairman Anderson recognized Dr. Miles for her updates on Adult Education.

- **Adult Education:** Dr. Miles provided a brief overview of Adult Education due to new members being appointed to the Board. Dr. Miles stated that the main area of focus is getting individuals a GED. Dr. Miles provided Arkansas statistics of the current situation of those needing a GED, individuals taking the exams along with pass and completion rates and explained that Arkansas was not ready to go virtual during the pandemic since many of the individuals have computer literacy issues. These literacy issues also had a significant affect on the GED providers since many of them are retired and not properly trained on computer systems. Dr. Miles also gave an overview of WAGE and its current status in Arkansas. She mentioned that Adult Education wants to continue to expand their partnerships with business and industry to offer more on-the-job workplace classes, continue partnerships with WIOA partners, and local providers. The goal is for participants to transition back into society or improve their economic outlook.

Dr. Miles concluded her presentation and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions.

Len Blaylock had a question about the Level I WAGE Certificates regarding the methods that train teachers how to navigate the course and the learning management system and sked who the teachers are that Dr. Miles referenced and what level they came from. Dr. Miles stated that many of the teachers came from elementary and/or are retired. She explained that there are teachers that taught elementary through high school. Dr. Miles explained that the professional development and training for these teachers come from the staff at the Adult Learning Center. Mr. Blaylock asked if any of the teachers could also be working on their WAGE Certificate as they were teaching, and Dr. Miles stated that the teachers are not working on their WAGE certificate while teaching and that they are only focusing on the adult learners. Dr. Miles went on to explain the platforms that are utilized as part of the program.

Chairman Anderson opened the floor again for questions and comments, which there were none.

- Division of Services for the Blind: Chairman Anderson recognized Ms. Betsy Barnes to provide an update for the Division of Services for the Blind. Ms. Barnes apologized for Ms. Williams absence due to her attending the CSAVR Executive Session. Ms. Barnes introduced herself and began her PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Barnes started by explaining the eligibility criteria for their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, then a brief overview of the program. Ms. Barnes stated that all VR services must relate directly to preparing the consumer for their specific employment goal. Next, she provided an overview of the Pre-ETS Summer Programs which included Jump Start and Robotics Programs. Ms. Barnes went on to discuss older individuals who are blind and followed with an overview of the Vending Facility Program. Next, Ms. Barnes provided the AWDB members an overview of the Arkansas Information Reading Services program. This program broadcasts readings of local and national newspapers and magazines through a dial-in telephone system. Lastly, Ms. Barnes provided an overview of DSB's accomplishments for State Fiscal Year 2022. She provided the following statistics:
 - 1054 served – 145 gained employment which is an increase of 4.14% over last year
 - 90 individuals served over 55 years of age
 - Currently supporting 135 clients with ongoing training to increase their career earning potential
 - 81 students received Pre-Employment Transition Services training ages 16-21

Ms. Barnes concluded her presentation and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions.

Candice Lawrence asked for more information in the programs and copy of the presentation. She stated she is very interested in the reading services program. Ms. Barnes asked if Elroy Willoughby could send the presentation to Ms. Lawrence, and he agreed.

Chairman Anderson asked if there were any other questions, and thanked Ms. Barnes for her presentation.

- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services: Chairman Anderson introduced Rehab Commissioner, Mr. Joe Baxter. Mr. Baxter started his presentation by explaining the goal of Rehab which is to serve individuals with disabilities so they can lead successful and independent lives. Mr. Baxter discussed two recent events that helps fulfill the mission of ARS: 1) Statewide Needs Assessment presented to the State Rehabilitation Counsel during their recent quarterly meeting. The results of that meeting will require updates to the State Plan, 2) Data migration as ARS moves into a new case management system which is expected to go live October 1st. Lastly, Mr. Baxter discussed two open houses in Little Rock and North Little Rock that were extremely successful.

Mr. Baxter concluded his report and opened the floor for questions. Chairman Anderson also asked if there were any questions and thanked Mr. Baxter for his report.

Board Open Discussion: Chairman Anderson opened the floor for Board members. No comments or questions were raised.

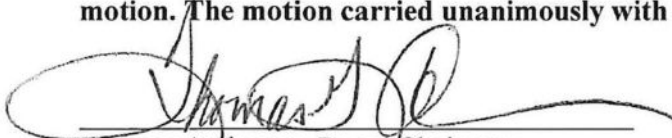
Chairman Anderson did draw the Board's attention to the policy section and noted that various policies will be added to this section for informational purposes if changes were made.

Public Speaking Opportunity: Chairman opened the conference line for public comment. There were no comments on the phone or in the Zoom chat.

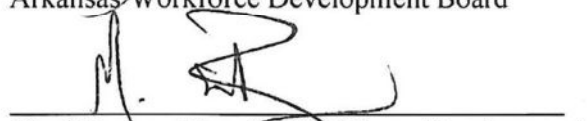
Announcements: Chairman stated that the next Board meeting is scheduled for October 18 and stated he was looking forward to getting back to normal business.

Len Blaylock asked if the Wachter information could get sent out so he could get to all the Senators.

Adjourn: As presented, Chairman Anderson adjourned the AWDB Full Board meeting at 11:12 a.m., on a motion made by Mr. Len Blaylock, followed by Judge Brandon Ellison making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.



Thomas Anderson, Board Chairman
Arkansas Workforce Development Board



Chad Brown, Director Workforce Development
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Chad Brown
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*