

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
**October 18, 2022**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on October 18, 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, Ms. Karen Breashears, Eddie Thomas proxy for Dr. Charisse Childers, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Finegan, Mr. William French, Mr. Randy Henderson, Mr. Gan Nunnally, Ms. Rachel Mize, Mayor James Sanders, Ms. Latanyua Robinson, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Reel, Bridget Criner proxy for Dr. Trenia Miles, Dr. Julie Roberson, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Shana Chaplin, Cassondra Williams-Stokes, Mr. Robert Thorne, Mr. Charles Johnson, and Mr. Len Blaylock III.

Mr. Miles Crawford, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Maria Markham, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Governor Hutchinson, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Secretary Mike Preston were unable to attend.

Chairman's Opening Comments: Chairman Anderson introduced two new Board Members: Shana Chaplin and Brian Reel.

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

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the July 19, 2022, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Mr. Kelley Sharp, followed by a second motion by Mayor James Sanders. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

**Agenda Item 2 – ACTION – Executive Committee Minute Approval:** Chairman Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the September 15, 2022, Full Board meeting minutes.

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the September 15, 2022, Executive Committee meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Mr. Robert Thorne, followed by a second motion by Judge Brandon Ellison. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

Report of the Chairperson: Chairman Anderson gave an overview of the Workforce Conference, sponsored by the National Governor's Association (NGA), in Oklahoma that he, Eddie Thomas, and Board Director Chad Brown attended.

Report of Director: Assistant Director Eddie Thomas was the proxy for Dr. Childers and provided a dual report.

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. The subrecipients of the grant were Shorter College and University of Arkansas Global Campus. AD Thomas provided details for the grant which included total amount of expenditures and participant enrollments. It is a three-year grant that expires in 2023.

Next Mr. Thomas gave an update on the September monitoring completed by the Department of Labor (DOL) for the West Central Local Development Area/Board. AD Thomas mentioned that DOL expressed their appreciation to West Central for their cooperation during their monitoring visit.

AD Thomas stated that DOL will coming to Arkansas in 2023 to monitor the Western Local Development Area/Board along with the State of Arkansas, which Director Brown will discuss during his report. Mr. Thomas explained that his staff will start their monitoring cycle starting next week and will follow the model of USDOL and will return to a hybrid method of on-site and desk reviews.

Mr. Thomas continued his report by informing the Board that we will have monitoring visits from the Veterans program (JVSG), Office of Foreign Labor Certification, and Department of Education for the Reimagine Grant.

Next, Mr. Thomas informed the AWDB that the low number of enrollments is a concern on the state level and that he and his staff are working with the local workforce development areas and other partners to understand the targeted populations and those served under WIOA. He explained that Rebecca Edwards, the Targeted Populations Supervisor, has established a team which consists of two members from each local workforce area to start addressing these issues. This team has been meeting to discuss strategies on how to reach these populations and will provide quarterly reports to the local areas.

Mr. Thomas informed the AWDB that his staff are working on a few policy issuances which are 1) Local Board Certification, 2) Arkansas Workforce Center Certifications, 3) Regional and Local Plans Two-Year State Plan Modification.

Next Mr. Thomas provided an update on the WIOA Partners Meeting, October 19-21, which will be the first in-person meeting in the last several years. Mr. Thomas proceeded to provide agenda topics that will be discussed at this meeting to include, but not limited to Partner Program and Performance Updates, neighboring states presentation, employer panel, and keynote speakers.

Mr. Thomas concluded his report and turned it over to Chairman Anderson for questions. Karen Breashears stated that a couple of board members asked that the Partners Meeting agenda be sent to the Board.

Ms. Shana Chaplin asked about low completion rates for the Reimagine Grant and asked if the outcomes are based on enrollments or completion. She also asked if we know why the completion rates are so low. AD Thomas provided an explanation that is based on criteria with trends tied to enrollments and completions. AD Thomas stated that they are working with Department of Education to maybe adjust some of those outcomes and performance measures.

Ms. Chaplin then asked if payments to recipients and subrecipients based on enrollments or completion. AD Thomas stated that it's based on enrollments.

Chairman Anderson asked if there were any other 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. Shana Chaplin and Mr. Brian Reel to the AWDB.

Next, Director Brown thanked Brian Marsh for inviting him to be the Keynote Speaker at the Goodwill Sponsorship Luncheon and asked if Mr. Marsh would like to provide the Board an overview of the event. Mr. March gladly accepted and provided an overview. Some of the highlights he mentioned are listed below.

- Yearly luncheon to celebrate award winners – Employer of the Year, Partner of the Year, Graduate of the Year, Employee of the Year
- Employee of the Year was an employee who went through the Reentry Program and has worked his way up through the organization and is now a Director in the Reentry Program.

- Reentry Program has a recidivism rate under 6%.
- Over 250 people attended

Mr. Marsh thanked Director Brown for presenting and stated that members of the audience didn't know the purpose of the AWDB. Mr. Marsh explained that Director Brown did an excellent job articulating the Board's purpose along with many services offered throughout the state.

Next Director Brown informed the Board that DOL will be coming to Arkansas next year to complete some monitoring and auditing visits. Director Brown explained that Dol will probably monitor that State Board as part of their visit and provided an overview of some of the things that the Board needs to be aware of for that visit, for example, understanding of the by-laws, sunshine provision, state plan, legislated roles of the board, administrative functions, and potential interviews with board membership. Director went on to explain various sanctions due to audit findings and how that report reflects upon the State of Arkansas.

Chairman Anderson reiterated what Director Brown was saying and encouraged the members to create an elevator pitch. He explained the purpose of an elevator pitch and how each member could use it to advocate for the Board. The Chairman told the Board to be ready at the next meeting because he will call on someone to provide their pitch.

**Agenda Item 3 – Informational – Committee Assignments Update:** Chairman Anderson

Chairman Anderson recognized Director Brown to present the new Board Committee Roster, in collaboration with Chairman Anderson. Director Brown presented the membership of the four committees and explained that each committee comes with legislation and specified by-laws for each committee. Director Brown also explained that the intent is to have each member of the Board on a committee.

Director Brown concluded his report and turned it over to the Chairman for questions.

**Agenda Item 4 – Action – Ratification of WIOA Title I Program Policies**

Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. Eddie Thomas to provide this update. Mr. Eddie Thomas started with an overview of what was presented during the September 15<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting regarding several policies pending approval. The policy presented was as follows:

- ADWS Policy No. WIOA I-B – 4.3, Change 1 – AD Thomas explained that this policy change was to the Local Grievance, Complaint, and Appeals procedures. He explained that this policy gives guidance to the local areas on the requirements that must be in place regarding grievance, appeals, or complaints that are handled on the local level. AD Thomas explained that there were no major concerns from the Executive Committee Meeting and will be happy to entertain any questions.

**Hearing none, a motion to accept the Ratification of the September 15, 2022, Executive Committee meeting regarding this policy with no corrections or revisions was made by Mr. Brian Marsh, followed by a second motion by Mr. Randy Henderson. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

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

**Agenda Item 5 – Informational – PY21 Programs Performance:** Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. AD Thomas to provide an introduction to this presentation. Mr. Thomas introduced the first presentation and its presenter Ms. Sandy Monaco.

- WIOA Title I & III: Ms. Monaco explained the performance measures and that they were recently submitted to the Department of Labor. Next Ms. Monaco provided a review and definition of performance measures in addition to the outcomes. Ms. Monaco concluded her report for questions.

Rachel Mize asked about some of the counter measures that were being reviewed to get back on target. She pointed out that the challenges seemed to be Dislocated workers and credential rates. Ms. Monaco stated that the State would be looking at some of the local outcomes and see if there is technical assistance that can be provided to bring those up for next year.

Director Brown stated that Board Member, Latanyua Robinson asked in the zoom chat about how employers are engaged in hiring participants to assist in meeting targets. AD Thomas explained the role of the Business Services teams in each local area and their responsibility to focus on this issue. AD Thomas explained that those numbers and contacts of employers are reported under the Employer Serving Effectiveness Measure in Arkansas Job Link (AJL).

- Adult Education: Next, Chairman Anderson recognized Ms. Bridget Criner to provide Adult Educations report. Ms. Criner provided an explanation of eligibility requirements and performance and participant numbers. Mr. Criner noted that Adult Education met all measures except for the Credential Attainment Rate. Mr. Criner concluded her report and was available for questions.

Chairman Anderson asked why the credential attainment rate is so hard to attain and what makes it so difficult. Ms. Criner stated that they are working hard across the state to make sure all participants have the opportunity to gain those credentials.

Rachel Mize followed up by stated that she serves on a local board and asked all the partners and their experiences if some of the difficulty in finishing those credentials is support services to people with barriers and the time and resources to get them across the finish line or are those credentials less desirable in today job market so participants are putting less emphasis on them. Ms. Criner stated that it ties back to those regional plans to make sure those credentials and pathways are in demand. Adult Education focuses on talking to those employers and make sure they are meeting those needed demands. Commissioner Baxter agreed with Ms. Criner and stated that Rehab Services is increasing the number counselor contacts with the clients to ensure follow up with participants is being done. Ms. Criner added that Adult Education has career coaches in place to help guide participants down the right path.

Charles Johnson asked if trainings and measurable skills gains being offered through online trainings and if so, does the grant provide any assistance for computers or internet for participants. Ms. Criner explained that some are online, and some are face-to-face so depending on the program and type of credential that they may be in one or both of those types of learning environments. Ms. Criner explained that they had a grant that assisted with helping participants with laptops and other needs that fell under the guidelines of the grant. AD Thomas spoke up for Title I and agreed with her efforts. He further explained that the Local Areas have the ability to provide support services which covers a multitude of needs.

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

- Division of Services for the Blind: Chairman Anderson recognized Ms. Megan Lamb to provide Services for the Blind report to the Board. Ms. Lamb provided an explanation of their performance measures, measurable skills gains, credential attainment, employment rate, and outcomes.

Ms. Lamb concluded her report and was open for questions.

Rachel Mize asked about the drop-off between the second and fourth quarter. Ms. Lamb explained that data collection at the beginning of 2021 impacted the second quarter. Ms. Lamb said they also see many repeats of short-term goals which affect the long term goals.

- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services: Chairman Anderson introduced Commissioner Joe Baxter to present. Commissioner Baxter turned the presentation over to Christy Lamas. Ms. Lamas provided an overview of the role of Rehabilitation Services for Arkansas. Ms. Lamb discussed measurable skills gains and negotiated rates. Ms. Lamb stated that Rehab Services far exceeded their rate and provided an explanation on how the goals were met. Ms. Lamb concluded and was open for questions.

#### **Agenda Item 6 – Action – ADWS Policy No. 4.5 - WIOA Title I-B Eligible Training Provider**

**Policy and Procedures**: Chairman Anderson recognized Ad Thomas to provide an update on the Eligible Training Policy and Procedures. Chairman Anderson explained that this policy was tabled due to some wording issues. Ad Thomas agreed with the Chairman and stated that changes were made, then yielded to Ms. Beverly Lovett for the presentation that covers the changes. Ms. Lovett concluded her report and opened the floor for questions.

Rachel Mize asked about the monitoring process in relation to this policy for the local areas. She asked if there was a template for this process or if the state was working on one for this process. Ms. Lovett stated that the state does have a monitoring process for WIOA and can be sent out if needed. Ms. Mize stated that that was one of the main concerns and that she understands it is difficult in making the language flexible for the workforce delivery system. Ms. Mize believes that will help resolve some concern. Ms. Lovett responded by providing info on links and other resources that help explain what is required.

Karen Breashears pointed out the minutes of the Executive Committee and stated that looking through this policy and what was discussed regarding duplication of services. Ms. Breashears asked if this was the final policy coming before the Board for approval. Julie Roberson agreed with Karen Breashears and noted that it changed from an informational item to an action item late yesterday and she explained that she did not have time to go through it to make sure those changes were addressed. Ms. Roberson also pointed out some discussions had during the Executive Committee Meeting and asked if any of that had taken place. Director Brown apologized and took blame for the administrative error or labeling it as an informational item and changing to an action item. Ms. Roberson stated that the administrative error was okay, but she normally takes a closer look at the action items to make sure she understands what she will be voting on during the board meetings. Ms. Roberson asked if it would be appropriate to re-table this item. Chairman Anderson stated he could entertain that motion.

Ad Thomas stated they will go with the pleasure of the Board; however, he wanted to clarify that they are in need of getting this policy moving and is required by DOL and any further delay may put us in noncompliance with DOL. Ad Thomas' recommendation from staff is to approve this policy with provisions to continue working on it and amend anything that does not make sense or still a concern of the Board. Chairman Anderson asked Ms. Breashears and Ms. Roberson if that would be acceptable. Karen Breashears disagreed and stated that she would be comfortable having another Executive Committee Meeting if needed rather than approving an incomplete policy. Ms. Breashears stated she did not want to be the holdup but would vote no if the Board decided to vote.

Mr. Miles Crawford asked if the vote could take place through email once the policy was completed. Chairman Anderson agreed with Mr. Crawford. Ms. Shana Chaplin asked if staff could possibly highlight those things that are very specific to the CFR so members know what can change and what cannot change

per DOL. AD Thomas agreed with Ms. Chaplin and stated this feedback is what was expected and will work to better layout the wording and keep it as close as possible to DOL regulations.

Director Brown pointed out that Mr. Miles Crawford was not an appropriate way to go forward with Board votes due to a lack of a public forum and that the best approach would be to have another Executive Committee Meeting. Chairman Anderson tabled the policy and stated that we will schedule another Executive Committee Meeting when the policy is ready.

AD Thomas stated that he received a message from Mr. Len Blaylock that he was having technical difficulties but is on the line and can hear everything being discussed.

**Agenda Item 7 – Informational – North Arkansas College Update:** Chairman Anderson recognized Mr. David Mason and explained that Director Brown wanted him to present to the Board on the schools' programs, but also how Mr. Mason has learned to navigate the system in regard to all the state programs.

Mr. Mason provided an overview of his role at North Arkansas College and how he has worked to serve their business community, employers, workers and work to build sustainable careers. Mr. Mason gave an overview of their turf management program and industrial maintenance program. He concluded his report and turned it over to the Chairman. Chairman Anderson congratulated Mr. Mason on the work he has done and state he was impressed with the programs.

**Board Open Discussion:** Chairman Anderson opened the floor for Board members. No comments or questions were raised; however, Director Brown reminded Chairman Anderson that the ETP policy was an action item and still needed attention.

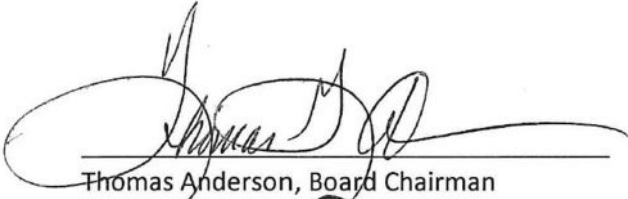
Chairman Anderson stated he would entertain a motion on the ETP policy. **A motion to table the ETP policy was made by Ms. Julie Roberson, followed by a second motion by Ms. Candice Lawrence. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

Chairman Anderson asked the members of the Board to bring forward any agenda topics for the Board. Chairman Anderson announced the Partners Meeting taking place over the following three days and he plans to attend.

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

**Announcements:** Chairman stated the next Board meeting has not been scheduled; however, he was looking forward to getting back to normal business.

**Adjourn:** As presented, Chairman Anderson adjourned the AWDB Full Board meeting at 11:41 a.m., on a motion made by Mr. Brian Marsh, followed by Candice Lawrence 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*