

MINUTES
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
January 16, 2024

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened on January 16, 2024, beginning at 10:04 a.m. The meeting was conducted virtually. Chairman Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Thomas Anderson, Commissioner Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock, Ms. Karen Breshears, Dr. Charisse Childers, Mr. Miles Crawford, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. William French, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Ms. Holly Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George Nunnally, Mr. Justin Major, proxy for Clint O'Neal, Mr. Mike Rogers, proxy for Governor Sanders Huckabee, Ms. Latanyua Robinson, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Dr. Ken Warden, and Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes.

Mr. Randy Finegan, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Mr. Charles Johnson, and Mr. Robert Thorne were unable to attend.

A quorum was established.

Chairman's Opening Comments: Chairman Anderson yielded the floor to Dr. Jerome Green, President of Shorter College, to welcome the Arkansas Workforce Development Board.

Agenda Item 1-ACTION-Full Board Meeting Approval: Chairman Anderson asked if any revisions/corrections needed to be made to the November 7, 2023, minutes.

Hearing none, a motion was made by Judge Brandon Ellison to approve the minutes and seconded by Mr. Brian Marsh. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Agenda Item 2-INFORMATIONAL

Chairman's Report- Chairman Anderson reminded everyone of the dates that have been solidified for the upcoming board meetings. The next board meeting will be on May 21, 2024, instead of April 16, 2024. AWDB member, Ms. Rachel Mize, with Stark Manufacturing in Western Arkansas, submitted a resignation letter effective January 9, 2024. Ms. Mize expressed her appreciation for being able to serve on the board. Chairman Anderson thanked Ms. Mize for her service to the board and wished her and her company much success in the future. Chairman Anderson also gave special recognition to Mr. Miles Crawford and Ms. Candice Lawrence who presented at the 2023 WIOA Partners Conference in November 2023. The meeting was attended by over 300 WIOA stakeholders and included guest presenters from the DOL Dallas Regional Office, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Local Boards, Google.org, RIPL, Credential Engine, and many other state partners.

Director's Report: Dr. Childers provided an overview of A Stronger Workforce for America Act. A strong workforce development system is vital to strengthening our economy and providing economic opportunity for more Americans. When the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was enacted in 2014, it made critical improvements to streamline the maze of the federal workforce system's ability to provide high-quality services to workers and employers. A Stronger Workforce for America Act makes critical updates to WIOA that will increase the amount of skills development provided under the law, strengthen connections between employers and the workforce system, and put more Americans on

the pathway to a successful career. Lastly, this Act dedicates 50 percent of the adult and dislocated worker funding toward upskilling workers through “individual training accounts” (ITAs), on-the-job learning, and other employer-led and industry-relevant initiatives. It also raises the cap on “incumbent worker training” so local workforce boards, particularly in areas with low unemployment or high labor force participation, can help the currently employed workforce gain new skills to avoid displacement and advance their careers.

Staff Report- Mr. Eddie Thomas stated that he along with his team and other DWS staff are currently working on completing the State plan. Efforts are being made to provide more technical assistance training to our stakeholders. In November 2023, a training was held on performance and accountability. A grants management training was also held in December 2023 for local board members and ADWS staff. Mr. Eddie Thomas also stated that he is still working with DOL partners to resolve three outstanding monitoring reports. Mr. Eddie Thomas concluded his report by announcing Ms. Angela Cook as the new Assistant Director for Employment and Training. He yielded the remainder of his time for Ms. Cook to introduce herself to the board members.

Agenda Item 3-INFORMATIONAL-ACOM Realignment

Secretary McDonald provided information on the ACOM Realignment. This realignment is an effort focused on the entire Department of Commerce by a Boston Consultant Group. Some areas of focus of the realignment are procurement, employment performance, and the state compensation system. Despite progress that has been made by the Department of Commerce, some divisions are still operating as separate entities. Few divisions have clearly articulated their strategies, goals, aspirations, and KPIs. The ACOM Realignment seeks to: Refresh strategic priorities for departments, divisions, and leaders. Increase collaboration across Commerce divisions. Create new ways of working to link performance evaluation systems to KPI progress toward the vision. Streamline consistent systems and processes. Create a new organizational structure with greater shared services and workforce development aligned to customers/employers connecting the dots.

Agenda Item 4- INFORMATIONAL-Governor’s Workforce Strategy

Mr. Mike Rogers stated that the Governor’s Workforce Strategy is nearly complete. They are working on narrative summaries that will be easy for the public to understand. The narrative summaries will provide information on which agencies will be the lead and support agencies for carrying out specific strategies. A press release date will be coming soon pending the Governor’s approval.

Agenda Item 5-ACTION- AWDB Bylaws Amendment

The AWDB bylaws were revised and presented to the board at the last board meeting on November 7, 2023, with no suggested revisions. The bylaws have been forwarded and accepted by Governor Sanders. Chairman Anderson entertained a motion to approve the AWDB Bylaws Amendment.

A motion was made by Mr. Miles Crawford to approve the minutes and seconded by Ms. Rebecca Ives. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Agenda Item 6-ACTION-Stipend Payments CY 2024

Mr. Eddie Thomas read and reviewed the code on the Stipend Payment Declination Form Motion to the board members. He entertained a motion to approve the authorization of stipend payments, in the amount of \$110.00 per meeting for those who are eligible for and who choose to accept the payment for the calendar year.

A motion was made by Mr. Kelly Sharp to approve the stipend payments for CY 2024 and seconded by Mr. Randy Henderson. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Agenda Item 7-INFORMATIONAL-AWDB Member Required Forms & Disclosures

Ms. Victoria Hall reminded the board members that their annual paperwork is due by or before January 31, 2024. Clarification was also provided on the steps needed to submit their notarized financial statements.

Agenda Item 8- INFORMATIONAL-Reimagine Arkansas Workforce Grant

Dr. Tara Dryer from the University of Arkansas Global Campus presented briefly on the progress made with their enrollees of the Reimagine Grant. They are still enrolling people into the program. They currently have an enrollment of 3,338 students with 964 students have completing the program. Dr. Dryer concluded her presentation by providing highlights of the populations served; they have been able to reach very vulnerable populations throughout the state of Arkansas.

Ms. Angee Valentine from Shorter College provided updates on the progress made with their enrollees of the Reimagine Grant. 402 students have been enrolled with 113 students completing the program. 22 students have completed their internships. 1 student is currently in a cybersecurity internship, and another is waiting to start an internship in HR. Currently, students in 34 counties are fully taking advantage of the Reimagine Grant. Enrollment is ongoing through the use of marketing advertising via social media, TV, and radio.

Agenda Item 9-ACTION-WIOA Combined State Plan PY 2024-2027-Working Session & Review

Dr. Childers provided a detailed overview of the layout of the state plan and provided information on who is responsible for Titles I-IV. The seven sections of the state plan are as follows: WIOA State Plan Type & Executive Summary, Strategic Elements, Operational Planning Elements, Coordination with Combined State Plan Programs, Common Assurances, Program Specific State Plan Requirements for Core Programs, and Program Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs.

Dr. Trenia Miles stated that the Adult Education program will continue to focus on workforce development and increasing their certifications and credentials. They are currently looking throughout

the state of Arkansas in the lithium and steel industries for integrated education and training opportunities.

Commissioner Joe Baxter stated that Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is refocusing their attention on the primary indicators of their grant. They are working towards increasing the labor market participation rate for people with disabilities. They are also working on expanding their pre-transition services for students 14 and up. Commissioner Baxter believes that pre-transition services will help students see the benefits of working and gaining experience early in hopes of a steady transition to the workforce upon graduation from high school.

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes provided an overview of the needs assessment conducted by UALR to ensure that the School for the Blind is still in alignment with its goals and plans. The School for the Blind is focused on making sure that its consumers are skilled with the technology needed to be employed in the workforce.

A motion was made by Mr. Ken Warden to approve the WIOA Combined State Plan PY 2024-2027 and seconded by Mr. Kelly Sharp. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Agenda Item 10-ACTION-WIOA Regional & Local Plan PY 2024-2027

Dr. Claudia Griffin provided clarification on what constitutes a regional or local plan. If you're not a region that has multiple local areas in it, a regional plan is not needed just a local plan. You will have a region plan for two or more areas that have been declared a region. Regional and local plans must be submitted no later than April 15, 2024.

A motion was made by Mr. Miles Crawford to approve the WIOA Regional & Local Plan for PY 2024-2027 and seconded by Ms. Rebecca Ives. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

Agenda Item 11-INFORMATIONAL-Arkansas WIOA System Evaluation & Customer Service Surveys

In partnership with the ADWS, the University of Arkansas Counselor Education program will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the workforce systems directed and managed by the Division. Dr. Brent Williams with the UA Counselor Education Program will serve as the Principal Investigator for the project and Dr. Vire with the Counselor Education Program will act as Project Director. Dr. Xinya Liang will serve as project statistician and will analyze all data. Dr. Jule Hill will design and manage project surveys.

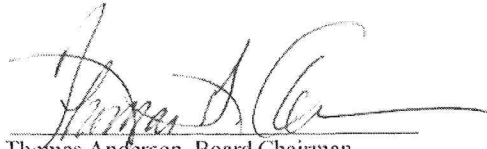
Dr. Williams and Dr. Vire identified a good cross-section of the state that captures the subtle nuances that exist across the states: Northeast, Southeast, Central Arkansas, City of Little Rock, Southwest, and Northwest. For each local area, leadership will be interviewed to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers. Contractors will report on the existence of MOUs between programs, and entities, referral procedures, and training.

Board Open Discussion: Mr. Len Blaylock inquired about an update on the hiring of the board director. Dr. Childers will be assuming the role of the state workforce director.

Public Opportunity to Address the Board: None

Announcements: Mr. Dennis Williams announced that 15 high schools will participate in an upcoming reverse job fair.

Adjournment: Chairman Anderson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Kelly Sharp and seconded by Mr. Randy Henderson. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas Anderson", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas Anderson, Board Chairman
Arkansas Workforce Development Board

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Charisse Childers", written over a horizontal line.

Charisse Childers, Director
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

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