

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
**October 19, 2021**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on October 19, 2021, beginning at 10:06 a.m. The meeting was conducted in-person and remotely utilized Zoom and teleconference. Vice-Chair Scott Bull 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, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. George “Gan” Nunnally, Mr. Steve Sparks as proxy for Secretary Mike Preston, Ms. Julie Roberson, Mayor James Sanders, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Mr. Robert Thorne, and Dr. Diana Wright.

Mr. Tom Anderson, Mr. Charles Johnson, Mr. Johnny Key, Dr. Maria Markham, and Mr. Kelley Sharp were unable to attend.

Chairman’s Opening Comments: Vice-Chair Bull called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. upon seeing a quorum. Vice-Chair Bull stated for the record that, the One-Stop Certification Document was tabled previously in previous 2020 and 2021 meetings due to COVID-19 delays and will continue to be tabled with the hope to revisit this item in the January 2022 Full Board meeting. On September 27, 2021, Governor Asa Hutchinson’s extended State public health emergency declaration has expired. However, although the emergency has passed, we are still in a pandemic.

**Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the October 19, 2021, Full Board Meeting:** Vice-Chair Scott Bull 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 Mr. Robert Thorne, followed by a second motion by Ms. Rebecca Ives. 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: Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, 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 – Absent, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Approve, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Absent, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Absent, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Approve, Mr. Steve Sparks proxy for Secretary Mike Preston – Approve, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Absent, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Report of the Chairperson: Vice-Chair Bull informed the Board Members that Chairman Anderson could not attend the meeting; therefore, he would preside over the meeting. Updates will be given by Chairman Anderson in January at the next meeting.

Report of Board Director: Vice-Chair Scott Bull recognized, Board Director Chad Brown, and asked him to provide his report. Director Brown explained his goal with the Board is to figure out and align its roles based on the legislation provided. Firstly, with the assistance of Assistant Director Thomas, his staff, and Dr. Childers, Director Brown tried to create a place for all the information going over core partners, different



programs, apprenticeships, job skills, and employment opportunities, for Board Members to take it back to their communities to better assist the underserved population. This was done in hopes of creating an understanding of the basics for all the programs provided and made available through the state. Secondly, Director Brown created a Facebook and Twitter page for the Arkansas Workforce Development Board with the intention of the page to provide the resources accessible through the state. The account will promote events and information from core programs, such as Rehabilitation Services, to better spread the word of services available to the public. Thirdly, Director Brown discussed how he attended the 2021 Fall Workforce Symposium in Phoenix, Arizona, for three days with Assistant Director Thomas and Chairman Anderson. Director Brown explained the conference showed there are a lot of states with the same issues as Arkansas in terms of what they're board is trying to accomplish. Fourthly, the Fall 2021 Arkansas WIOA Partners Meeting convened, virtually, on September 21 – 23.

Director Brown turned it over to Board Member, Dr. Trenia Miles, to provide an overview of the Partners meeting and acknowledged the hard work she and the Executive Committee did in putting it together. Dr. Trenia Miles states the meeting was very successful and a great show of collaboration among the programs of the WIOA. Day 1 focused on an overview of the Title I core programs and TANF, the second day focused more on honing people skills with a motivational speaker present, and the last day mentioned Arkansas' participation in the National Governor's Association's for Workforce Learning, and they learned about the Governor's Ready for Life initiative. The last day ended with concurrent breakout sessions in which they focused on those with various employment transition so they can earn a living wage and engage in job skills. Three areas of focus were individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders re-entering the workforce, and those who are aging out of foster care. A result of the Partners Meeting was the decision to have a Communications Committee.

Director Brown addressed the upcoming State Plan update and the impending participation of members on an ad hoc committee as a design to analyze Arkansas' labor market information in effort to address workforce challenges. Secondly, Director Brown explained the question raised by Board Member Karen Breashears would be addressed at the next board meeting. Lastly, Director Brown and Chairman Anderson have been in discussion regarding future board meeting attendance potentially being in-person and for board members to be aware of these possible changes.

Report of Director: Vice-Chairman Bull recognized Board Member and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) Director, Dr. Charisse Childers to address the Full Board. Dr. Childers recognized the new Deputy Director of Internal Operations, Courtney Traylor. Deputy Director Traylor began her new role with the Department of Workforce services on July 5<sup>th</sup>. Previously, she served as Assistant Deputy Commissioner for the Arkansas Insurance Department and as Chief Financial Officer for the Arkansas Department of Commerce. Before her work with the state, she spent 15 years in the healthcare software industry at GE.

Dr. Childers addressed since the economy's re-opening, DWS has been working to shift the focus from unemployment to employment. With the unemployment in August at 4.2%, DWS has shifted its efforts to partner with all agencies and divisions to assist employers in recruiting employers and hosting job fairs. The mobile workforce centers have travelled to over 66 job fairs and other events across the state. Unemployment claims have dropped significantly, compared to this time last year, DWS received close to 6,000 initial claims for regular unemployment weekly. Now DWS steadies 1,000 initial claims weekly. DWS Adult Education continues to provide services in all 75 counties, since 2018 students have earned over 1,147 credentials and certifications through the Adult Education programs, including the CNA, OSHA Serve Safe and pre-apprenticeships. Arkansas ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in nation with a GED pass rate of 87% compared to 76% at the national level. During the 2021 program year, out of 2,381 GED test completers 2,066 examinees earned their high school diploma. Last year, ADWS Rehabilitation Services had served over 10,000 Arkansans with disabilities. ARS helped increase their employment drastically from the previous year, up



to 62.9% in the fourth quarter from 38.6% in the fourth quarter previous year. ARS has helped 55.1% of these Arkansans with advancing employment through post-secondary training. ARS is strengthening recruiting efforts on apprenticeship strategies in healthcare fields and direct job placement strategies in healthcare manufacturing, forming partnerships in area businesses. The Division of Services for the Blind completed 301 vocational rehabilitation applications, closed 135 cases, rehabilitated and completed 212 applications for the older individuals, who are blind, during the pandemic. Median quarterly earnings for this period were \$7,116.69, DSB is currently serving 759 vocational rehabilitation consumers, 66 potentially eligible consumers, and 261 OIB consumers. DSB recently issued approximately 156,000 of federal relief restoration funds as part of the federal stimulus package for the Randolph Shephard Program to offset wages during the pandemic. Dr. Childers concludes by encouraging board members to visit with their local offices and local boards to truly appreciate and understand the hard work put in to better serve the community at large.

Report of Staff: Vice-Chairman Bull recognized Board Staff Mr. Eddie Thomas to address the Full Board. Mr. Thomas stated the Department of Labor with five local areas along with the state to assess the state's readiness in terms of COVID and how we are working to address re-employment issues. During these consultations, they asked questions on how the state would handle influx of additional funds, service delivery strategies, and other questions for re-employment. An assessment report from DOL will be provided in November. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program will be working with local are to set up consultations with their Chief Elected Officials and local Workforce Development Board chairpersons to understand any challenges being faced. Additionally, governance trainings are being put in place to better assist those areas in need. The Reimagine Arkansas Workforce Program, a Department of Education grant providing short workforce training to individuals effected by COVID, has currently enrolled 124 students through the grant. The goal of this program is to serve 3,000 individuals over three years, currently running on it's second year. Mr. Thomas states Arkansas was one of five states selected to participate in DOL's WIOA Peer Cohort Evaluation. During this cohort, members of a state led team, all the core partners, and Department of Information Services, will be looking at how the WIOA systems are evaluated. Speakers from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville will cover the WIOA systems and the One-Stop Systems during their presentation. A state team of evaluators will be Dr. Miles, Deputy Bassett, Dr. Stokes, Commissioner Baxter, Director Brown, Assistant Director Harris, Mr. Robert McGough from DIS, and Mr. Eddie Thomas. Mr. Thomas announced Arkansas is participating in ACT Work Ready Communities, 29 of Arkansas' 75 counties are currently participating in an initiative to make sure workforce skill gaps are being addressed and there are continued economic efforts for the state to prosper. Counties will sign on to participate and address these skill gaps in the National Career Readiness Certificate, where individuals can earn credentials in different areas to address employer needs. Two phases that are involved: A certificate certification phase, where counties must reach certain goals and then moving into a maintaining phase where they achieve the same goals with included criteria. Part of this maintaining phase is involvement in the Work Ready Community curriculum, where individuals have access to earn Career Readiness Certificates through a series of training making them more employable. ACT has agreed to offer .5 credit to those maintaining goals, putting counties one step closer to reaching their goals.

Report of Committees:

Since the first quarter of 2020, each of the Board's standing committees decided to discontinue Committee Meetings in support of the Governor's Executive Orders.

**Agenda Item 2 – Information – Camp Connect Kiosk Demo:** Vice-Chairman Bull recognized Judy Bergstrom to present to the Full Board. Ms. Bergstrom explains Camp Alliance has been around since 2010 and maintains the mission to connect all of Arkansas' military veterans with community resources to support readiness in the state. The Camp Alliance platforms target military families, service members, military veterans, and children in those families. The Camp Connect platform was put in place seven years ago to bring in job and career expos on drill weekends and health assistant periods to assist service members



and their families at home with services in their communities. Kiosks and mobile adaptations have been made to address the difference COVID has made in the community for the previously held events. This was made available through CARES Act funding and the Department of Health's Mental Health Initiative. There are over 200,000 military veteran dependents, so these kiosks are placed in these communities to best help them find resources. Resources are updated bi-monthly at each kiosk throughout the state. One goal was to get at least one kiosk in every county in the state, so agency partners have successfully collaborated to make this happen through Department of Motor Vehicles, Workforce Centers, Veteran Service offices, airports, courthouses, etc. Confronting the kiosk provides multiple options regarding careers, health wellness, family, and service assistance. The kiosk gauges the user's current mental status, their military status, their branch of service, and then their home zip code. The next step provides multiple avenues for career opportunities through already vetted resources, such as Arkansas Job Link. A feedback option has been provided to text the exact link to their phone so they may resume their progress if they must leave the kiosk. In the last 90 days, enough funding was received to put 65 units out in the community, over 7,000 users, 73% of the 7,000 are repeat users, and a ton of feedback has been giving to better the resource. Soon an explore tab for leisure and discounts will be added per popular request. Cards are provided at the front of the kiosk to write down the link for all around utilization and further information. Two counties, Garland and Hot Springs County, have been identified for the Governor's Challenge to address suicide and mental health among service members and will have these services provided to help the community.

Director Stokes from the Division of Services for the Blind asked Ms. Bergstrom if the kiosk is accessible to blind and/or visually impaired veterans. Ms. Bergstrom explained the next software feature will work to assisting those who are blind and/or visually impaired in an application format.

Board member Blaylock stated it is exciting to see these kiosks reach out to community members in rural areas that are typically left out in these efforts.

A member of the board participating online questioned if Camp Alliance is affiliated with the vocational rehabilitation through the Veterans Administration through the nonprofit group programs. Ms. Bergstrom states the program works closely with the state military department and they are influential with their state efforts in the program.

**Agenda Item 3 – Informational – WIOA Systems Evaluation:** Vice-Chairman Bull states federal WIOA regulations require states to conduct evaluations of their WIOA Title 1 core programs to promote continuous improvement, test innovative services and strategies, and enhance the achievement of high levels of performance and outcomes. ADWS contracted with the University of Arkansas to conduct these evaluations. Vice-Chairman Bull recognizes Dr. Brent Williams and Dr. Keith Vire with the University of Arkansas to update the board on where WIOA programs stand in achieving their goals.

Around 11am, technical difficulties were experienced during Dr. Williams and Dr. Keith's introduction.

Dr. Williams states 30 copies of the presentation were made to provide to members interested. Dr. Williams states the first thing done was a local integration study. Sample Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Comprehensive Centers for the 3 local areas were selected for sampling, interviewing of staff, and reported case studies on effectiveness of identifying closing Skill-Gaps. Sampled QIOA Title 1 and Title 3 participants for the local areas to determine if, based on the participants information in the Case File, the participant might have been eligible to receive services under the required partners. For each local area selected, leadership was interviewed to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers. Contractors reported on the existence of memorandums of Understanding between the programs/entities; Referral Procedures; training for partners regarding services provided or alternative print material to assist in collaboration; OR an alternative method to refer clients between the partners effectively. Resource mapping was utilized to see what resources exist to support local Workforce Boards. Dr. Williams



claims resource maps are vital to the local boards, with a rough estimate of 20-30% turnover just within six months as seen from their time performing the evaluations. The study conducted a report looking at referred to or co-enrolled participants in other programs and services, reviews of centers compared to the State's certification policy and applicable laws/regulations and conducted statewide customer service surveys for business customers of WIOA Title 1 and Title 3 receiving services over the most recent 12 months available. For all programs identified as (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service programs, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, the evaluators were asked to identify, from a sample participant list, whether customers were referred or co-enrolled in other programs. Completion of the asset mapping, contractors evaluated State Workforce Agencies, 10 Local Workforce Development Boards, and the centers that offer services across the states to determine best practices for utilizing these resources as a workforce development strategy. A Skills Gap Analysis was conducted of a broad swath of business leaders, industry associations, chambers of commerce, state agencies, working with the staff of the boards to identify gaps in occupations, levels of employment, and the skills themselves, done as a sample to see if there were regional differences and particular trend lines. The evaluators were charged with developing case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skill-Gaps. Evaluators interviewed workforce center staff for examples of skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, the demand level, or the skill-level. Employer interviews were completed to gauge interaction between employers and workforce center staff and to determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap. The ADWS WIOA Business Survey, conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the Walton College of Business explored how Arkansas businesses felt about their experiences with the WIOA program. This survey included 845 individual businesses and produced an overall response rate of 9.9%. Overall, 5 individual local workforce development areas had a response rate greater than 10% and 8 local workforce development areas had a response rate greater than 8%. The ADWS WIOA Customer Survey, also conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the Walton College of Business, explored how Arkansas job seekers feel about their experiences with the WIOA program. The Customer Survey contacted 60,668 individuals with valid emails as of October 9, 2020. The survey produced an overall response rate of 11.8%. All individual local workforce development areas had response rates of at least 10%. Dr. Williams explained the findings and state they can be found on page 159 of the full report and recommendations can be found on page 168. For levels of Co-Enrollment in partner programs: results of customer reviews in the three selected workforce areas confirmed a range of 2.5% co-enrollment to a high of 16.6% for these individual partner providers, with an overall average rate for all reporting providers of 7.34%. Dr. Williams stated this is not an optimum rate of co-enrollment. He stated the evaluators find that the rates of co-enrollment in partner programs during the most recent reporting period is not acceptable. Dr. Williams stated the number of partners listed by the three selected workforce areas were thirty-six in the Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, fifteen in the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Center, and ten in the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District. The discrepancy in these numbers is significant, and it is the opinion of the evaluators that other potential partner programs are available in at least two of the three workforce areas. Dr Williams explained referral procedures are in place for the three assigned workforce areas. All three managers reported that referrals are also received via email and telephone as an alternative when necessary. Referral procedures and customer support are well laid out and well documented at all three selected workforce areas. The evaluators find that the three selected workforce areas are in substantial compliance with this requirement. Dr. Williams stated regarding training services, the three selected areas provide training concerning available services as necessary. The evaluators find that the training opportunities are, in many cases, insufficient to meet the needs of the workforce customer base, and that, while the requirement to provide training is met at a minimal level in the three selected workforce areas, more should be done to ensure understanding by all the ADWS customers. Dr. Williams stated regarding Skills-Gap Identification and Amelioration, strategies for identifying skills gaps clearly demonstrated significant differences among the centers. The evaluators find that, while two of the three selected centers are heavily engaged in identifying and addressing skills gaps in their regions, more work is clearly needed. The tools for identifying skills gaps are available in equal measure to all 28 workforce centers in Arkansas; however, the quality of skills gap analysis is not equivalent



across all centers. Dr. Williams stated regarding assessing the effectiveness of Skills-Gaps Interventions, all three of the selected workforce centers reported using “repeat/continued business with employers’ as one measure of the effectiveness of services provided. Other measures are employed by each of the three workforce centers. It is the finding of the evaluators that standard protocols for measuring the effectiveness of ameliorating skills gaps should be developed and shared with all workforce centers. Dr. Williams stated regarding compliance review, the evaluators reviewed a sample of six Arkansas Workforce Centers approved by Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, against the State’s certification policy and applicable laws and regulations. All six centers reviewed meet or exceed minimum requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for physical accessibility. Additional information is provided in the expanded findings section of the full report, but no findings are reported. Dr. Williams stated the survey of business partners was conducted for this evaluation by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Arkansas’ Walton College of Business. Overall, the report finds that WIOA recipients display a moderate degree of satisfaction with the WIOA program and the ADWS. Some areas of concern were reported, however, and these findings are reported in the expanded findings section of the full report. The customer survey showed a 62% overall satisfaction rate with WIOA programs and a 68% satisfaction rate with Workforce Center staff. The survey found that, “many” respondents reported “poor customer service”, “a rude attitude”, “inattentive staff”, or “uninformed staff”. Despite the high overall satisfaction rating with the program, the fact that “many” respondents cited these issues, the evaluators found that a critical need exists for additional training in customer service for all local workforce center staff. In addition, the evaluators found that the current phone system does not appear suited to surge demand of ADWS or WIOA services. Dr. Williams stated the evaluators recommended that Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and area managers develop data collection methods to effectively track and monitor rates of co-enrollment. Dr. Williams stated the evaluators recommended that Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board work with all workforce areas to identify and engage additional community partners, and to provide training and assistance to those partners in data collection techniques. Dr. Williams stated it is recommended by the evaluators that ADWS address each of the concerns expressed in the survey, including: less than half of WIOA recipients (42%) reported receiving the majority of services needed to address workforce needs; Many respondents described Workforce Center staff as “unresponsive” or “inattentive;” Many comments brought up the difficulty of posting job openings through the ADWS or the employers’ website; Several comments noted a lack of interaction between workforce center staff and businesses. The evaluators recommended that additional training programs be established to improve staff/customer relationships. The customer survey showed a 62% overall satisfaction rate with WIOA programs and a 68% satisfaction rate with Workforce Center staff. Comments referring to “rude behavior” and “poor customer service” by staff, however, leads the evaluators to strongly recommend additional training in customer service for all local workforce center staff. In addition, the survey found that, “The current phone system does not appear suited to surge demand of ADWS or WIOA services.” The evaluators highly recommended the phone system be evaluated immediately and, if the problems continue post-COVID, the system be upgraded as soon as it is feasible. The evaluators made no recommendations for change regarding compliance review. Dr. Williams stated it is highly recommended that ADWS establish methods for high performing center and workforce areas to provide training for other centers.

Board Member Karen Breashears asked when the data was collected. Dr. Williams stated the process in 2019, however, was derailed because of COVID, so most of the data was collected during 2020 in the last three quarters. The survey data was cutoff mid-October of 2020.

Dr. Childers brought to the attention of all attendees that while required, the evaluation was not at an opportune time. COVID regulations hindered interactions and ability to service the public. Survey information is claimed to not be a surprise given the situation with COVID. Dr. Childers states during the pandemic, the highest week was 96,206 initial unemployment claims. The week prior to the pandemic,



there were 1,382 initial claims. She stated during the recession, it was gradual loss of employment and Arkansas had time to adjust for preparation, however, everything was done in the agency's power to be prepared. She claimed for the total year of 2020 there were 462, 896 claims, which was more claims in one year than in the previous 5 years combined.

Dr. Williams reiterated there is a lot to be proud of with the operation of ADWS especially given the circumstances, and Dr. Vire concurred.

Vice-Chairman Bull commented that training is a difficult endeavor to master, but it is worth the effort. He stated the communication between workforce centers and businesses has fault on both sides, however, the effort is always there to do better.

Board Member Blaylock asked if they are willing to steps forward to be a data driven organization. He further asked if there is a plan to maintain the data that was collected, so a pulse can be kept on how effective the centers are, and for Board Members to have visualization on progress.

Dr. Vire stated they setup the analysis so it may be longitudinal.

Board Member Henderson reiterated Mr. Blaylock's comment on an annual analysis of these centers.

Dr. Williamson responded to Mr. Henderson by stating it is possible for continued analysis.

Vice-Chairman Bull addressed the Board by stating if members needed to leave at the set 12pm end time for the meeting that they should follow-up with Director Brown for a record.

**Agenda Item 4 – Informational – PY20 WIOA Program Performance Updates:** Vice-Chairman Bull recognized Mr. Elroy Willoughby to address the Board with the WIOA Title 1 and Title 3 information.

Mr. Willoughby stated Title 1 met the actual goal and/or met the 90% threshold for their measures. The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) considers performance success of states as meeting the goal outright or meeting the 90% threshold. Dislocated Workers and Adult Programs met these requirements as shown in the provided handout. WIOA Title 1 Youth Programs had a 71.57% of the 90% measure, so the threshold was missed, and other measures were not met outright. The Wagner-Peyser Title 3 program met the 90% threshold. Mr. Willoughby explained there was a decrease in their numerical services to their employers due to COVID. He stated there was a 64.34% retention with the same employer in the second four quarters after exit, however, there was a decline from last year. The second rate was employer penetration rate dropped to 3.63% from the past program year. Mr. Willoughby stated they have been monitoring their Youth performance and collaborating with their local workforce areas to develop Youth Academies to focus on performance issues, service delivery issues, and the collaboration will involve local workforce area staff to conduct the training with support from ADWS. This is scheduled to have its first session in November of 2021 and is currently scheduled out into March of 2022.

Dr. Miles stated during the 2021 program year, Title 2 Adult Education served 10,499 individuals. She stated there was an enrollment decline of 34% compared to previous years, with about 18,408 individuals to come through the program. The program exceeded their measurable skill gains, with a proposed target of 48% and an actual of 56%. In some areas, measurable skill gains increased as much as 23% and as low as 3%. She stated for the follow-up measures of 2020-2021, their target for employment second quarter exit was 44%, and the program made 40.92%, however, the 90% threshold was met. Employment fourth quarter after exit was the only benchmark not met with a target of 46% and only 20.82% was made. The target for median income earnings, based on second quarter exit, was \$4,200, exceeding the threshold. Those attaining any credential had a goal of 48%, but the benchmark was 45.32%, which was in the 90% threshold. Males



had a 44% employment rate for employment second quarter after exit, while females were at 38.79%. Second quarter median earnings were stated to be \$4,512 for females and \$5,118.32 for males, both exceeding expectations. Employment rate for second quarter employment rate cohort was higher compared to the fourth quarter employment rate cohort, which did not meet expectations. Dr. Miles stated the median earnings cohort for 25-44, 44-54, 55-59, and 60+ met their goals, however, the <16, 16-18, and 19-24 credential rate cohort reported higher than the formerly mentioned. In terms of ethnicity, Dr. Miles explained everyone was within the 44% target range for the second quarter employment rate, but nothing alarming for the fourth quarter employment rate with the individuals falling within a 46% range. Ethnicity median earnings cohort were much higher, with three groups meeting the \$4,200 earnings target. Employment rate for ex-offenders was the only group to exceed the 44% employment rate as compared to the other assessed groups. Every group, except displaced homemakers, exceed the \$4,200 median earnings cohort by employment barrier. Single parents exceed the 44% with 48.12% for total participants exited. Dr. Miles stated GED pass rates for the past two years showed a 15% decline in passers comparing 2020-21 and 2019-20, but the pass rate increased by 87%. She stated even during the pandemic the numbers were still increased for certifications and credentials compared to 2018-29 year, however, still slightly declined from as compared to the 2020-21 year.

Ms. Lamas stated Title 4 Rehabilitation Services worked just over 10,000 individuals last year. Most of these individuals received career services with assessments on vocational barriers and job placements for 7,631 people, about 70% served. 5,345 people received training services through vocational rehab in program year 2020. Ms. Lamas stated their highest in-demand field is nursing along with the trucking industry. Compared to last year, 64% were successfully employed after second quarter after exit, with about 3,438 left and 2,205 were successful. In the fourth quarter, 62.9% of the individuals still had their jobs with about 2,066 people. Median earnings were up in second quarter after exit at \$5,648 as a total. They had 315 people complete degree or credentials in program year 20, at about 26% of the total. College rates were up at 55%.

Commissioner Baxter added the effects of the pandemic saw a difference in those helped through the program.

Dr. Lamb stated Title 4 Division of Services for the Blind served 882 participants of that 207 exited the program, and 139 of those participants were rehabilitated closures. They assisted 792 individuals with career services and 173 individuals with training services. Second quarter after exit they had 22.9% with 3.9% in fourth quarter after exit still employer. Retention with employer fourth quarter exit showed to be 46.2%. Median wages went up at exit at \$13.27 per hour, and second quarter after exit also went up to \$7,116.69 for the quarter. They reported a total of 57 skill gains with a target of 24% and a total of 38.3%, exceeding their goal target.

Board Open Discussion: Vice-Chair Bull asked board members for any additional items for discussion. Vice-Chairman Bull stated he was to discuss how the Board Members would like to carry out meetings moving forward. He followed-up by stating today's meeting was intended to be held both virtual and in-person, however, was almost entirely virtual with few in attendance at the ADWS building.

Board Members requested the Board offer both options. Vice-Chairman Bull deferred to the staff for a response in lieu of Chairman Anderson's absence.

Board Director Brown stated he finds it critical the January meeting be in-person, however, watch how things go moving forward.

Board Member Marsh stated for the foreseeable future that the meeting be offered with both options.



Board Member Dr. Stokes agreed the presence of both options being best for addressing Board Member concerns.

Board Member Roberson states she would like to see both options for the time being.

Vice-Chairman Bull stated he is in favor of having both options available given individual's comfortability in large groups. He raised to the Board the overall feelings of starting the committee meetings back up, whether virtual or not.

Board Member Blaylock asked the committee meetings to be reconsidered at the January meetings.

Board Member Breashears stated the committees play a vital role and should resume.

Board Member Houseworth agreed to virtual committee meetings.

Vice-Chairman Bull addressed the Board to inform them that Board Member Sharp has gone through two rounds of cancer treatments, and for the Board to keep him in their thoughts.

Public Speaking Opportunity: Vice-Chair Bull addressed members of the public attending the meeting through electronic means and extended the opportunity to speak before the Full Board. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties the telephone line cut out and so no attending members of the public were able to ask a question. A recording of the meeting was made available to anyone who requested access.

Mr. William Dennison, who attended the meeting in-person, announced to the Board that for Apprenticeship Awareness Month coming up, Western Arkansas will do a social media blitz. He stated they would like to invite any companies who would like to participate and highlight that on their social media for their weeklong campaign. He can be reached at [westernarkansasworks.com](http://westernarkansasworks.com).

Assistant Director Thomas reiterated Mr. Dennison's comment and that there will be several events across the state for those interested.

Announcements: Vice-Chair Bull announced the committee meetings of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board will convene "as needed" due to the COVID-19 pandemic and out of respect for Board Member's schedules. He added the next Full Board meeting is set for January 25, 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, Vice-Chair Scot Bull adjourned the AWDB Full Board meeting at 12:43 p.m., on a motion made by Ms. Karen Breashears, followed by Mr. Len Blaylock III 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: 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 – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Approve, Mr. Charles Johnson – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – Absent, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Approve, Dr. Maria Markham – Absent, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Approve, Secretary Mike Preston – Absent, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Absent, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.





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Scott Bull, Board Vice-Chair  
Arkansas Workforce Development Board



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Chad Brown, Director Workforce Development  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

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