

North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 12, 2025

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: White River Planning and Development District, Batesville, AR

Members Present:

Gayle Cooper (Chair), Stacy Gunderman, Janet Hearyman, Garry Lawrence, Renee Martin, Trish Miller, Amber Neal (via Zoom), Wiley Osborn, Jennifer Pike, Christel Taylor

Members Absent:

Amie McBride, Marcus Orf, Karen Palmer, Dr. Holly Smith, Chad Vincent, Jada Washington, Gina Wells

Guests:

- Dr. Zach Perrine, Provost, University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville
- Mr. Todd Hunter, Business Manager, Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- Mrs. Kari Jones, Employment Services Director, Myers-Davis Life Coaching
- Mr. Brian Rogers, Assistant Director of Workforce Policy and Innovation, Department of Commerce

Call to Order:

Chairman Gayle Cooper called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Garry Lawrence made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wiley Osborn. Motion carried unanimously.

Guest Presentation:

Mr. Brian Rogers provided an update on ongoing efforts by the Department of Commerce, focusing on workforce policy and innovation. He highlighted several key initiatives aimed at addressing workforce challenges across the state, including efforts to expand access to training opportunities, enhance employer engagement, and support innovative pilot programs targeting under-served populations. Mr. Rogers also discussed upcoming grant opportunities and shared insights into the Department's priorities for the upcoming year, emphasizing collaboration between state and local workforce partners. Board members were encouraged to stay informed and involved as these initiatives progress.

Financial Report:

Mr. Calvin Wright and Mr. Chase Shonk presented the financial report. They noted that while the region is currently sustaining active participants, no additional individuals can be enrolled at this time due to recent funding reductions. The report outlined the status of expenditures across all program areas, highlighting that administrative costs remain within allowable limits and program spending is being closely monitored to maximize available resources.

Mr. Wright emphasized the importance of continuing to prioritize participant support services and direct training costs despite the constraints. Mr. Shonk added that the team is exploring options for potential funding reallocation or supplemental grants to help stabilize participant intake in the coming months.

Mrs. Stacy Gunderman made a motion to approve the financial report. Mr. Wiley Osborn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

One-Stop Update:

Mrs. Jamie Hill provided an update on One-Stop operations, which initiated a discussion among board members regarding WorkKeys assessments. Members expressed interest in increasing promotion of the assessments among job seekers and employers, particularly as a tool for identifying skill gaps and improving workforce readiness. Several members noted the value of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and discussed ways to encourage local businesses to recognize and utilize WorkKeys results in their hiring processes. The board agreed that further collaboration with educational partners and employers would be beneficial in expanding awareness and use of the assessment system.

Partner Program Updates:

- **Adult Education:** Mrs. Trish Miller provided an update discussing the efforts that the Adult Education system is trying to achieve.
 - **Arkansas Workforce Connections:** Mrs. Jennifer Pike delivered an update on behalf of the program. Mrs. Pike explained that there were going to be major changes in the structure of the Arkansas Workforce Centers which would include no longer having a center manager. The manager will now be an Outreach Coordinator.
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WIOA Title I-B Update:

Mrs. Bree DeShazo reported that the North Central region currently serves 135 participants under WIOA Title I-B. She recommended adding two new providers to the North Central Eligible Training Provider List:

- Heavy Equipment Operating Academy

- Arkansas Elite Welding Academy

Mr. Wiley Osborn made a motion to approve the addition of the two training providers. Mrs. Renee Martin seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Policy Updates:

Ms. Elizabeth Smith presented several policy revisions based on recent monitoring feedback from Arkansas Workforce Connections:

1. Designation of New Equal Opportunity Officer:

Update all policy documents to reflect Mrs. Brittany Shipley as the new E.O. Officer.

- Motion by Mrs. Renee Martin; seconded by Mrs. Janet Hearyman. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Bylaws Revisions:

Added that the Vice Chair shall be selected from representatives of Business.

- Motion by Mrs. Trish Miller; seconded by Mr. Wiley Osborn. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Follow-Up Policy Update:

Added the correct reference of the law.

- Motion by Mr. Wiley Osborn; seconded by Mrs. Trish Miller. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Grievance Policy Update:

Added the correct reference to law. Changed the E.O. officer's name. Changed the WRPDD physical address.

- Motion by Mrs. Stacy Gunderman; seconded by Mr. Wiley Osborn. Motion carried unanimously.
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Adjournment:

With no further business, Mr. Wiley Osborn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 p.m. Mrs. Trish Miller seconded. Motion carried unanimously.



Mr. Gayle Cooper, Chairman