

**North Central Arkansas
Workforce Development Board
September 11, 2024
Minutes**

The North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened at White River Planning and Development District on September 11, 2024 beginning at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was conducted in person, with a zoom option, and there was a quorum. Chairman Gayle Cooper presided with the following members present:

Michael Arnold (zoom)	Dr. Holly Smith
Gayle Cooper	Christel Taylor
Janet Hearyman	
Garry Lawrence	
Trish Miller	
Marcus Orf	
Wiley Osborn	
Jennifer Pike	

Others Present:

Staff included; Janet Smith, Bree DeShazo, Jamie Hill, Chase Shonk, Calvin Wright and Elizabeth Smith. Guests included; Tom Pittman (ADWS), Eddie Thomas (ADWS), Charles Walker (ASUN), Stephen Partridge (DSB), Todd Hunter (AEDC), Dr. Erin McCarley (Reach University), Dr. Johnathan Wang (Reach University), Matt Cleveland (Arkansas Sherrif's Youth Ranch), Scott Phillips (UACCB), Dr. Zach Perrine (UACCB).

Members not present:

Brittany Baker
Stacy Gunderman
Renee' Martin
Amie McBride
Amber Neal
Karen Palmer
Chad Vincent
Jada Washington
Gina Wells

Since there was a quorum, Chairman Cooper asked the Board for approval of the previous minutes from September of 2024. Chairman Cooper asked if there were any discussion that needed to take place before the voting and there was none.

1st Mr. Wiley Osborn 2nd Mr. Garry Lawrence All members voted yes for approval of the minutes.

Chairman Cooper invited Ms. Elizabeth Smith to introduce the guest speaker, Ms. Lori Strumpf of Strumpf and Associates, who joined the meeting via Zoom. Ms. Strumpf provided an overview of key upcoming legislative changes relevant to the Board. She highlighted several significant amendments under consideration and explained their potential impact on the Board's operations and strategic goals. Ms. Strumpf encouraged the Board members to engage proactively with North Central legislators, particularly if there are concerns or disagreements regarding these proposed

changes. Her presentation underscored the importance of Board advocacy in shaping policies that align with local workforce needs.

Chairman Cooper then called upon Dr. Erin McCarley and Dr. Johnathan Wang from Reach University to discuss apprenticeships. Dr. McCarley and Dr. Wang from Reach University provided an insightful presentation on the development and implementation of apprenticeship programs within the institution. They discussed the strategic importance of apprenticeships as a pathway to workforce readiness, emphasizing their role in bridging the gap between academic learning and practical, on-the-job experience. Dr. McCarley outlined the initial steps being taken to launch these programs, including partnership building with local industries and aligning the curriculum with workforce needs. Dr. Wang elaborated on the potential long-term benefits for both students and employers, noting that apprenticeships not only equip students with hands-on skills but also foster professional connections that can lead to sustainable employment opportunities post-graduation. They invited feedback from the board and expressed enthusiasm for collaboration opportunities to support workforce development goals.

Chairman Cooper invited Mr. Calvin Wright and Mr. Chase Shonk to present the financial report. Mr. Wright provided an overview of the current financial status, summarizing the expenditure of allocated funds to date. He highlighted the organization's progress toward meeting spending targets and remaining within budget parameters. Mr. Shonk then presented detailed charts illustrating the allocation of funds across various categories, drawing attention to areas with the highest expenditures. Following their presentation, Chairman Cooper requested the Board's approval of the budget.

1st Wiley Osborn 2nd Dr. Holly Smith All members voted yes for approval of the financial report.

Chairman Cooper invited Mrs. Jamie Hill to provide an update on the Searcy Workforce Center. Mrs. Hill presented the monthly activity report, detailing recent job orders, referrals, and ongoing initiatives aimed at meeting workforce demands in the ten-county region. She highlighted the Center's expanded outreach efforts to engage more local employers and job seekers effectively. Additionally, Mrs. Hill shared a list of upcoming activities designed to further support the Center's mission and address the evolving needs of the community.

Chairman Cooper invited representatives of the Partner Programs to share their updates. Mrs. Trish Miller from Adult Education provided an overview of recent initiatives and highlighted several promising developments within the program. Following her update, Mr. Stephen Partridge discussed the Division of Services for the Blind's ongoing efforts and activities within the ten-county region.

Chairman Cooper invited Ms. Elizabeth Smith to provide an update on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, as well as a monitoring report. Ms. Smith reported that the North Central region currently serves 171 participants across the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. She noted that these participants are engaged in a variety of services, including occupational skills training and work experience opportunities. Ms. Smith also shared that the recent monitoring report from the State had been successfully closed with no disallowed costs.

Having no further business Chairman Cooper asked for a motion to adjourn.

1st Garry Lawrence 2nd Mr. Wiley Osborn All members were in favor of adjournment.



Gayle Cooper – Board Chair

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