

Minutes
Twin Districts Workforce Development Area
Local Workforce Development Board

Thursday, April 27, 2023 11:00 AM
906 Sullivan Drive, Hattiesburg

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PRESENT:

Danny Box, Rebecca Brown, Wayne Buffington, Perry Duckworth, Sedgie Foxworth, Lillie Graves, Jennifer Griffith, Newt Ishee, Lucy Lamberth, Julia Lindsey, Calvin Newsom, Tiffany Parrish, John Poelma, David Stephens, Connie Valentine, Lucretia Williams, Valerie Wilson, and Marshall Wood, Sr.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ABSENT:

Donnie Bond, Ricky Harrison, Laura "Missy" Lewis, Tom Miles, and Phil Nichols.

STAFF:

Allison Hawkins, Patricia Morrison, Marilyn Minor, Natalia Diaz, Jameka Thigpen, Shari White, Shonta Duncan, Marvin Dickey, Kenny Jett, Elena Borel, and Grant Wesley.

CALL TO ORDER AND COMMENTS

Mr. David Stephens called the meeting to order and greeted everyone in attendance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the agenda.

ACTION: Mr. John Poelma motioned to approve the agenda; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the minutes from last meeting (January 18, 2023).

ACTION: Mr. Perry Duckworth motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Wayne Buffington seconded. Motion carried.

LEO BOARD UPDATE

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Calvin Newsom to present the LEO Board Update. Mr. Newsom had no report to give at this time, and that most of what that was discussed will be reflected in the following reports of this meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Allison Hawkins to present the Twin Districts Update. She began by thanking Ms. Rebecca Brown for finding a meeting space for the TDWDA Board on short notice, following a maintenance issue at the established location.

Ms. Hawkins stated that although WIOA funding was down 8 to 9%, it should not have too much effect on current and future programs, and that staff will stay diligent to ensure it's used efficiently.

The next TDWDA Board meeting will be in July, with the exact date to be determined. The TDWDA Annual Meeting will be on the Coast, sometime in October or November.

We now have 14 coaches hired through the AccelerateMS High School Career Coach Program, with positions available for 10 more. With additional funding approved by the State Legislature, there will be even more positions in the near future. Ms. Hawkins told the Workforce Board members that SMPDD will work with them closely to get a Career Coach placed in their school districts, and asked those present to reach out to their local superintendents about the program.

Ms. Hawkins asked for Ms. Natalia Diaz to come forward, and elaborate more on the High School Career Coaches. Ms. Diaz began by stating that the coaches hired have been great in their roles, with 1,500 one-on-one meetings with students since January. The primary goal has been making sure every student is enrolled, employed, or enlisted after completing high school. The coaches also work closely with the local community colleges and other work-based learning programs to connect them with willing students.

Ms. Diaz then introduced Ms. Jameka Thigpen, the High School Career Coach for the Stone County School District. Ms. Thigpen explained that she has worked in education for a while before taking this position. The most rewarding aspect has been being an advocate for the student, helping them navigate all their options following graduation and determining the correct path. Since the Coaches are not employed directly by the school, they can dedicate themselves full-time to this role.

Ms. Thigpen also shared a couple of her recent success stories. The first involved a student who was not succeeding academically, and was considering dropping out. However, the student also admitted to working on electronics as hobby, and enjoying the process. The individual was then later placed into a career path to take full advantage of those skills. Another story involved a set of students who were under Child Protective Services, and directing them to the Faith Scholarship Program to fund their university aspirations.

Ms. Thigpen took a moment to thank the other High School Career Coaches in this program for all of the work they have accomplished.

Ms. Valerie Wilson asked if the High School Career Coaches receive any specialized training for their roles. Ms. Thigpen confirmed that they do.

Ms. Thigpen then ceded the floor back to Ms. Hawkins.

Ms. Hawkins explained that the SMPDD staff was reaching out to all the schools that don't already have a High School Career Coach in the TDWDA, and again encouraged the Workforce Board members to do the same for their respective districts. Those schools that are interested must let us know by next Thursday (May 4, 2023).

Mr. Perry Duckworth asked if there has been pushback from any of the school districts. Ms. Hawkins said there was some for different reasons, but most are unfounded, or lack insight in how the program actually operates.

Ms. Hawkins also mentioned that the High School Career Coaches also help connect students with other TDWDA In-School Youth program. Ms. Diaz added that students that are at-risk of dropping out, or are otherwise struggling, are prioritized.

Ms. Hawkins concluded her report.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Shari White to present the Financial Report. Ms. White began her report with the PY22 Overview of Current Funding. On January 24, 2023, TDWDA received NFA #500-22-4. This allocated the PY22 Rapid Response funds in the amount of \$442,500. This increased the PY22 Allocation to \$7,872,259. A copy of the NFA is included in the meeting packet.

At the January 2023 TDWDA Board meeting, the LEO approved the transfer of \$500,000 from PY22 Dislocated Worker Fund to PY22 Adult funds. On February 13, 2023, MDES OGM approved that transfer request. The Funding Overview reflects that transfer. This brings the Total Funds Available to \$15,659,493.07.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditure Summary. The expenditures reported are for the Third Quarter costs - the period ending 3/31/23. The Obligations were as follows: Adult was 100% obligated, Dislocated Worker 80.5%, Youth 90.3%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 54.7%. The overall obligation for all funds was 87.1%.

As for Third Quarter (3/31/23) Expenditures: Adult was 56% expended at \$2,709,621.13; Dislocated Worker 40% at \$882,696.07; Youth 41% at \$2,270,251.70; and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 79% expended at \$841,835.40. Overall,

TDWDA has expended 49% of its PY22 Obligations. Please note that the PY22 Youth Work Experience Rate is at currently at 39.34%.

Next, Ms. White went over the Unobligated Remaining Funds: Dislocated Worker has \$528,372.66 unobligated, Youth \$600,389.51, and Rapid Response Layoff Aversion \$885,337.73. Please note, Unliquidated Obligations are funds that have been obligated, but not yet expended.

Ms. White continued with the Expenditure by Quarter Report. Expenditures for Third quarter were \$2,257,947.69, with total expenditures this year at \$6,704,404.30. In comparison to last year expenditures at this time (\$5,811,362.56) there is an increase of \$893,041.74, so our expenditures are continuing to trend upwards.

Ms. White then requested the following transfer of funds:

- \$360,708.00 from PY21 RR Layoff Aversion to PY21 RR Dislocated Worker
- \$43,044.00 from PY21 RR Data Collect & Tracking to PY21 RR Dislocated Worker
- \$50,000.00 from PY21 RR Economic Analysis to PY21 RR Dislocated Worker

This adds up to a total transfer of \$453,752.00.

The justification for this modification request is to better align the RR/LA funding with TDWDA current needs to support TDWDA job seekers as well as local business and industry. With the approval of this transfer request, TDWDA should be able to expend all funds within the specified time frame and should not need an extension. Currently, we have obligated all of our WIOA Formula Adult funds. This plan modification/transfer of funds will allow us to meet our current funding requests by freeing up Dislocated Worker funds that will ultimately serve more WIOA Adults. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to accept this request.

ACTION: Mr. Marshall Wood, Sr. motioned to accept the Rapid Response Transfer Request; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. White presented another Transfer of Funds request. The transfer of the previous request moved \$453,752 into PY21 Rapid Response Dislocated Worker funds, which can be expended for any Dislocated Worker activity. This will free up Formula Dislocated Worker funds. Expenditures for the Dislocated Worker Fund are only at 40%, while \$528,372.66 remain unobligated. Meanwhile, there is a projected *increase* in Adult Fund expenditures. Ms. White request that the LEO approve a transfer of \$500,000 from PY22 Dislocated Worker funds to the PY22 Adult funding stream to meet projected obligations and expenditures. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to accept this request.

ACTION: Mr. John Poelma motioned to accept the PY22 Dislocated Worker Fund to PY22 Adult Fund Transfer Request; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. White concluded her report. Mr. Newsom called for a motion to accept both Ms. Hawkins' and Ms. White's reports.

ACTION: Mr. Sedgie Foxworth motioned to accept Ms. Hawkin's Director's Report; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

ACTION: Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to accept Ms. White's Financial Report; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

WIN JOB CENTER UPDATE

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Connie Valentine to present the WIN Job Center update.

Ms. Valentine began by stating that there are now 29 On-the-Job training agreements, totaling \$1,029,443. In addition, 146 participants have been placed in OJT Agreements.

So far, 496 participants have been enrolled in ITAs during this program year, and \$1,676,824.48 in ITA funds have been obligated. In addition, 14 individuals were served under Supportive Services.

A total of 1,927 WIOA enrollments have been entered from July 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023. This is 77% of the goal.

There were no Rapid Response expenditures for the months of January, February, and March 2023.

As of March 1, 2023, the Hancock County WIN Job Center changed from operating 5 days a week to just 2 days; Tuesday and Thursday, 8am to 5pm.

The Gulfport WIN Job Center will have a new manager beginning on Monday, May 1.

A new manager has been selected for the Pascagoula WIN Job Center. Once the paperwork is processed and completed, he will begin on Thursday, June 1.

We have received resignation letters from the following staff: Phillip Seymour from the Forest WIN Job Center effective April 28, and Rosa Batiste, Division Manager of the Meridian, Forest, Carthage, Philadelphia, and Choctaw WIN Job Centers, effective May 31. We are in the process of filling these positions as soon as possible.

Ms. Valentine concluded her report.

YOUTH COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Lillie Graves to present the Youth Committee report. Ms. Graves began with the Youth Program update. Multi-County Community Service

Agency's contract began on March 1, and they are in the process of hiring staff. Once staff are in place, Ms. Duncan will provide training.

All three of the new providers have gotten their programs up and running, with the exception of Multi-County, which just started. East Central Community College's contract was for three locations: two have opened so far, and the third will open June 1.

Second Quarter benchmark reviews have been completed. This included discussing numbers served, fiscal goals, and work experience expenditure rate. Third Quarter reviews will be within the next couple of weeks. Contract negotiations for Program Year 2023 will start later this month (April).

Next, Ms. Graves presented the PY23 SMPDD Youth Contract. The Contract includes the services and expenditures necessary to provide workforce preparation, supportive services, incentives, and work experience to In and Out-of-School Youth. SMPDD's WIOA Youth Program will serve out of school youth ages 16-24 in Hancock, Jones, Marion, and Scott counties, and in-school youth ages 14-21 in any of the 24 counties within the Twin Districts Workforce Development Area. Ms. Graves motioned to approve this contract.

ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the PY23 SMPDD Youth Contract; Mr. Calvin Newsom seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Graves concluded her report.

ONE-STOP COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Rebecca Brown to present the One-Stop Committee report. Ms. Brown began with the One-Stop Certification update. The Committee met on April 4, 2023. She reminded the LEO that multiple WIN Job Centers were conditionally certified as One-Stop Operators through December 15, 2022, which was later extended to April 30, 2023, to allow them to address minor issues that barred them from full certification. All requested changes have been made to the One-Stop centers, with the exception of Columbia. Columbia has reported that the landlord has completed some of the work, and the remaining work is scheduled for completion, pending the contractor's schedule. The Committee voted to approve the certification for all the Centers through June 30, 2025. Ms. Brown requested that the Workforce Board also approve these certifications. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the One-Stop Certifications.

ACTION: Mr. Danny Box motioned to approve the One-Stop Certifications; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown took a moment to remind everyone of the relationship between the LEO Board and the Workforce Board. The LEO Board is tasked with the oversight of the Workforce Board, ensuring that latter is carrying out primary responsibilities related to

the operation of the One-Stop system. The voting actions today that are related to One-Stop operation were endorsed by the LEO in the previous meeting.

Ms. Brown continued, and explained that the Committee voted to adjust the Carthage WIN Job Center from being open full-time to part-time two days per week. Ms. Brown cited staff resignations/retirements creating a staff shortage, as well as a decrease in the volume of customers. As of April 1, the Center is being operated by staff from other WIN Centers near the area. These Centers also have a shortage of staff. Ms. Brown requested that the Workforce Board approve this adjustment. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Perry Duckworth motioned to approve the Cartage WIN Job Center adjustment to part-time operation; Mr. John Poelma seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown mentioned that the Committee decided to move from a one-year certification cycle for the One-Stop Centers to an alternating two-year cycle, with half the centers being certified in one year, and the other half in the next year.

Next, Ms. Brown reported the Committee's One-Stop RFP Proposal Recommendations. They had completed the evaluation of the MDES proposal, which was the only proposal received. Ms. Brown stated that the committee selected MDES as the next One-Stop Operator/Career Services Provider pending the following:

- MDES must agree to serve residents from all TDWDA counties, including those without comprehensive or affiliate locations.
- MDES must agree to provide publicly accessible Wi-Fi at all comprehensive and affiliate centers during hours of operation, effective July 1, 2023.

Ms. Brown also encouraged the LEO members to visit the One-Stop Centers in their area to make sure they comply with the accessible Wi-Fi stipulation.

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the Committee's One-Stop RFP Proposal Recommendation.

ACTION: Ms. Connie Valentine recused herself from the vote. Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to approve MDES as the One-Stop Operator/Career Services Provider; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown then explained that the One-Stop Committee is authorized by the Workforce Board to examine operational and procurement processes and to make recommendations to the full Board, requesting any changes that are needed for approval. Between full meetings of the Board, however, the One-Stop operates to ensure continuity of services, efficient use of resources, and to make decisions regarding time-sensitive policy and operational issues. These revisions will then be

reported to the full Board for permanent approval. Ms. Brown then asked the Board for re-approval of the One-Stop Committee's authority to make these decisions.

ACTION: Mr. Sedige Foxworth motioned to approve the One-Stop Committee's inter-meeting authority; Mr. Calvin Newsom seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown concluded her report.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Patricia Morrison to present multiple policy revisions. The first is the Duty to Report Policy, which had its wording updated from WIA to WIOA language. No further changes were made. Ms. Morrison requested a motion to approve.

ACTION: Mr. Marshall Wood, Sr. motioned to approve the Duty to Report Policy update; Mr. Calvin Newsom seconded. Motion carried.

Next is the Oversight and Monitoring Policy update. One minor change involved changing the Scope to include TDWDA staff **and/or** a Monitoring Services Contractor to conduct on-site monitoring. SMPDD has actually procured an outside monitor to do fiscal and programmatic monitoring following the Board's approval from last meeting, and the policy needed to be updated to reflect this. This is the only change; Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the updated Oversight and Monitoring Policy.

ACTION: Mr. Danny Box motioned to approve the Oversight and Monitoring Policy update; Ms. Lille Graves seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Morrison added that the monitor chosen during the procurement process was CCC Tax Services, LLC. SMPDD staff is actually meeting with them today to discuss monitoring progress.

Lastly, Ms. Morrison presented the Property Policy update. Similar to the Duty to Report Policy, the language was updated to WIOA standards. No other changes were made. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the update.

ACTION: Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to approve the Property Policy update; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Stephens then announced that the meeting packet includes copies of the TDWDA Workforce By-Laws and the TDWDA Conflict of Interest policy. In order to maintain WIOA compliance, every Workforce Board member must read these items and sign the corresponding Acknowledgement forms. Signed forms must be returned to SMPDD staff as soon as possible.

Mr. Stephens then presented a brief update from the Spring SETA Conference. One of the workshops there focused on prisoner population, and re-integrating them back into

the workforce. Classes and training are provided for them to earn a certificate or license while they are still incarcerated, so that once they are released they can start work right away in well-paying field.

Ms. Tracy Yanez added to that, stating MS Department of Corrections is receiving AccelerateMS funding through ARPA for similar programs. The programs are active in George County, but are expanding to Stone County. She also mentioned that without some form of employment training, recidivism for inmates is as high as 72%. However, with proper workforce training, the recidivism rate drops below 20%.

Mr. Stephens thanked Ms. Yanez for providing further information on those programs.

ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss, Mr. Stephens adjourned the meeting.