

**Minutes  
Twin Districts Workforce Development Area  
Local Workforce Development Board**

**Thursday, November 30, 2023      10:00 AM**  
200 E. Beach Blvd., Gulfport

**LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PRESENT:**

Danny Box, Rebecca Brown, Wayne Buffington, Perry Duckworth, Wendy Evans, Sedgie Foxworth, Lillie Graves, Newt Ishee, Lucy Lamberth, Calvin Newsom, Tiffany Parrish, John Poelma, David Stephens, Connie Valentine, Lucretia Williams, and Valerie Wilson.

**LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ABSENT:**

Ricky Harrison, Laura “Missy” Lewis, Julia Lindsey (proxy), Tom Miles, Phil Nichols, Jermaine Simmons, and Marshall Wood, Sr.

**STAFF:**

Allison Hawkins, Patricia Morrison, Marilyn Minor, Shari White, Shonta Duncan, Marvin Dickey, Elena Borel, Natalia Diaz, B.R. Hawkins, Kenny Jett, Melvin Thompson, Kristy Fuller, Sandra Gallaspy, 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. Danny Box motioned to approve the agenda; Mr. Calvin Newsom seconded. Motion carried.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the minutes from last meeting (July 27, 2023).

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

## **LEO BOARD UPDATE**

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Calvin Newsom to present the LEO Board Update. Mr. Newsom announced that we have several LEO members that will be leaving the Board, with some retiring and others having lost their local election. Appointment letters will be sent out to all county boards in the TDWDA on January 2, 2024, to fill these vacancies, as well as re-appoint remaining members.

Mr. Perry Duckworth asked how many are leaving the TDWDA LEO. Mr. Newsom replied that we lost nine.

Mr. Newsom concluded his report.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Allison Hawkins to present the Twin Districts Update. She began by stating that several Workforce Board members' terms are almost up, and will need to be re-appointed in the coming year. Workforce Board terms are for two years, which are staggered among the full membership.

Ms. Hawkins also announced that Mr. David Stephens has retired from Van Zyverden, Inc., and will be soon starting his own consulting LLC.

Ms. Hawkins continued with an update on the WIOA subrecipient monitoring. She reminded the Board that we had procured an outside firm to conduct the PY22 fiscal and programmatic monitoring for our 12 subrecipients, which also included our SMPDD youth program. There were no findings identified during the monitoring, however, there were observations and a few areas of concern noted. One such area of concern that has already been addressed was the inclusion of firewalls and formalized separation of duties within SMPDD Youth Program management. Another area of concern identified material weakness related to WIOA subrecipient monitoring noted in MDES 2022 Audit report. Additionally, Climb CDC had an observation stating that there were issues with their 2020 audit and therefore subsequent audits have not been completed. SMPDD staff will follow-up with both subrecipients through the audit resolution process to ensure compliance and provide technical assistance. Meanwhile, SMPDD has started negotiations for the PY23 WIOA subrecipient monitoring.

The latest State Workforce Development Plan will be available soon, as well as the ATLAS Plan, which is compiled by AccelerateMS, as required by state legislation.

The High School Career Coach program is doing very well. SMPDD now has 33 coaches placed in 22 counties, with the overall goal to have one coach for every public school district that wants one. Ms. Hawkins asked the LEO members to speak to the State Legislators, and encourage them to expand the program.

Ms. Hawkins continued, and explained the new RESTORE funded Re-Entry Program. The goal of the program is to re-integrate formally incarcerated individuals back into the Workforce with gainful employment. This increases their standard of living and decreases the overall level of recidivism. Ms. Allison Hawkins then introduced Ms. B.R. Hawkins, who was hired to run this program and get it off the ground.

Ms. Hawkins then called on Ms. Patricia Morrison to give a Performance Update. Ms. Morrison stated that, overall, SMPDD Staff, subrecipients, and industry partners performed very well. WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs all have high performance goals, and most met or exceeded those expectations. From PY21 to PY22, WIOA Adult had a Measurable Skill Gain increase of 18.6%, while Dislocated Worker and Youth had a Credential Attainment rate increase of 19.9% and 17.2%, respectively. The majority of these improvements can be attributed to better data tracking, working closer with staff, and more efficient delivery of services.

Ms. Hawkins then announced that the next Board meeting will not be until February 2024, following the appointment, or re-appointment, of the LEO members in January.

Next, she introduced Mr. Ben Weldon from Ingalls Shipbuilding, who will be serving on the Industry Advisory Council, as well as Mr. Maury Hull from Hol-Mac who will be serving as its Chair. Ms. Hawkins then clarified the purpose of the Industry Advisory Council. Input from local industries and business is vital in the design and operation of our Workforce programs. However, recipients of Workforce funds cannot also vote on their distribution or use. Therefore, the Industry Advisory Council operates as its name implies, advising only with no actual voting authority.

Ms. Hawkins concluded her report.

## **TWIN DISTRICTS FINANCIAL REPORT**

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Shari White to present the Financial Report. Ms. White began by stating that we are now in Program Year 2023 (PY23), which began July 1, 2023, and ends June 30, 2024. Then, she continued with the PY23 Overview of Current Funding. After all PY22 closeouts were received from subrecipients, TDWDA's PY21 and PY22 Carryover funds were \$1,776,605.04 for Adult, \$1,254,761.51 for Dislocated Worker, \$2,954,504.75 for Youth, and \$596,189.60 for Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion. Total carryover for all funds is \$6,582,060.90.

On July 26, 2023, TDWDA received NFA #1. This NFA gave TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY23 Youth funds in the amount of \$2,348,990. A copy of the NFA notification letter is attached to the meeting packet.

On July 31, 2023, TDWDA received NFA #3 and #4. These NFAs gave TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY23 WIOA Adult in the amount of \$437,931 and Dislocated Worker funds in the amount of \$482,350. These were the first of two

allocations for the Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. A copy of the NFA notification letter is also attached to the meeting packet.

TDWDA received NFA #5 on November 22, 2023. This NFA was the second allocation for PY23 Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. NFA #5 gave TDWDA the additional Adult funds in the amount of \$1,788,752 and Dislocated Worker Funds in the amount of \$1,754,313. That brings our PY23 total allocation to \$6,812,336.00. Combined with Carryover funds, the Total Funds Available for PY23 equals \$13,394,396.90.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditure Summary. The expenditures reported are for the First Quarter, period ending 9/30/23. The Obligations were as follows: Adult was 98.4% obligated, Dislocated Worker 84.1%, Youth 92%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 59.4%. The overall obligation for all funds was 90.4%.

As for First Quarter (9/30/23) Expenditures: Adult was 16% expended at \$647,868.72; Dislocated Worker 17% at \$496,921.20; Youth 17% at \$829,610.90; and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 34% expended at \$119,814.80. Overall, TDWDA has expended 17% of its PY23 Obligations, totaling \$2,094,215.62, which is very similar to this same period last program year. Please note that the PY23 Youth Work Experience Rate is at currently at 47.35%.

Next, Ms. White presented the PY21 Rapid Response Transfer of Funds Request. The Office of Grant Management approved TDWDA request to extend the ending date for the PY21 RR Layoff Aversion funds and PY21 Youth funds that were not expended at 06/30/23. The extension was granted through 12/31/23. In order to ensure all PY21 funds are expended at 12/31/23, we are requesting another transfer within the Rapid Response (RR) Categories: \$1,011.03 from RR Layoff Aversion (LA) to RR Dislocated Worker Funds, \$10,354.54 from RR Data Collection & Tracking to RR DW funds, and \$22,803.47 from RR Economic Analysis to RR Dislocated Worker (DW). The total transfer amount is \$34,169.04. Once these funds are in the RR DW category, they will be 100% expended. The transfer of these RR funds requires the RR LA Plan to be modified.

The justification for this Modification #2 request is to better align the RR/LA funding with current needs to support TDWDA job seekers as well as local business and industry. With the approval of this transfer request, TDWDA will definitely expend all funds by our current extension date of December 31, 2023. Therefore, we are requesting approval for (1) Modification #2 to the RR LA Plan and (2) the transfer of the funds to RR DW cost category as previously discussed. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to accept this request.

**ACTION: Mr. John Poelma motioned to accept the Modification #2 Request and PY21 Rapid Response Transfer of Funds Request; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.**

Then, Ms. White presented the PY23 Dislocated Worker Transfer of Funds Request. We currently have \$554,013 Unobligated Dislocated Worker Funds, and there is a need for additional funds in the Adult funding stream. We are requesting approval to Transfer \$500,000 from PY23 DW funds to PY23 Adult funds to meet the projected needs. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to accept the request.

**ACTION: Mr. Perry Duckworth motioned to accept the PY23 Dislocated Worker Transfer of Funds Request; Mr. Wayne Buffington seconded. Motion carried.**

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

**ACTION: Mr. Calvin Newsom motioned to accept the reports given by Ms. Allison Hawkins and Ms. Shari White; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth 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 7 On-the-Job training agreements, totaling \$887,054. In addition, 76 participants have been placed in OJT Agreements during PY23.

To date, 277 participants have been enrolled in ITAs, and \$1,240,428.58 in ITA funds have been obligated. In addition, 30 individuals were served under Supportive Services for a total of \$20,067.05.

A total of 610 WIOA enrollments were entered from July 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023. This is 24% of the goal for program year.

A Rapid Response was held July 28, 2023, for Roseburg Forest Products in Taylorsville, MS.

The Gulfport WIN Job Center has a new office manager: Ms. Pamela Moye, who started August 1. She brings with her 13 years of workforce experience from the state of Kentucky, and we are happy to have her in attendance today.

Ms. Valentine also announced her retirement as Area Director at MDES, with her last day on December 31, 2023. She stated that she appreciates her time here, as well as the friendships she made. Ms. Valentine wished everyone the best of success in the future.

Mr. Stephens took a moment to congratulate Ms. Valentine on her retirement.

Ms. Valentine concluded her report.

## YOUTH COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Lillie Graves to present the Youth Committee report. Ms. Graves began by stating that the Youth Committee met yesterday, November 29, 2023.

The First Quarter benchmark reviews are complete, which now includes a performance review from Ms. Shonta Duncan. During this review, Ms. Duncan offers technical assistance and discussion meetings with the providers to increase performance. Overall, the providers are doing very well, with increased enrollment this program year. Current enrollment is 230 Youth, with 178 Out-of-School Youth and 52 In-School.

Monitoring is complete, and all monitoring reports have been reviewed with all providers. Technical assistance has been provided as needed.

The Youth Committee approved two Action Items. The first is a change to the Youth Eligibility and Data Validation Policy. All Youth are required to have a basic skills assessment prior to enrollment. Previously, Youth Programs could accept participant basic skills assessments that were no more than six (6) months old that were conducted by another agency. The Department of Labor now allows programs to accept assessments that are up to 18 months old. The updated policy and Self-Attestation form reflect this change. Ms. Graves motioned to approve this policy change. Mr. Stephens called for a vote.

**ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the updated Youth Eligibility and Data Validation Policy; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.**

Next, Ms. Graves presented the updated TDWDA Youth Work Experience policy. The purpose of this policy is to give guidance on how to administer work-based learning/work experience opportunities to eligible WIOA Youth. Changes to the policy include more specific and detailed work experience definitions, virtual work experience is now allowed (but still requires worksite pre-approval), work experience hours increased from 400 to 600, maximum allowable wages raised to \$12 an hour, Youth providers may contract with payroll services agencies, and the allowable expenditures for work experience have been expanded. Ms. Graves then motioned to approve the updated policy. Mr. Stephens called for a vote.

**ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the updated TDWDA Youth Work Experience Policy; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.**

The next Action Item is the SMPDD PY23 Youth Contract Modification. The contract was modified to include the newly created position of Youth Workforce Training Program Coordinator with job description, the addition of a part-time position, and changes to the work experience and supportive services categories to reflect recent policy changes. These changes increased the budget by \$33,131.00. Ms. Graves motioned to approve the modification. Mr. Stephens called for a vote.

**ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the SMPDD PY23 Youth Contract Modification; Mr. Wayne Buffington 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. She began by stating the Committee met yesterday, November 29, 2023, at the SMPDD Gulfport Office. Among the items that were discussed was the completion of site improvements to the Columbia WIN Job Center. A select group of Committee members, along with Mr. Calvin Newsom and Ms. Marilyn Minor visited the Center on September 1<sup>st</sup> as a follow-up to the One-Stop Certification visit.

Wi-Fi is now available at all full-time WIN Job Centers in the TDWDA. Hancock County and Carthage WIN Job Centers are the only two that do not have it at this time.

The PY22 Monitoring Report for all TDWDA subrecipients and providers with Adult/DW-funded contracts were reviewed. There are no significant concerns at this time.

A discussion was held considering supportive services to some of the provider contracts for services, such as background checks. This will prevent participants from paying out-of-pocket for these services.

Next, Ms. Brown presented the updated ITA Policy. The only change is the allowance for online training programs to be added to the MS Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). These online programs must rise to the level of occupational skills training that leads to a credential or certification, follow the same approval process as other courses, and be instructor-led. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the updated ITA Policy.

**NOTE: Lucy Lamberth, John Poelma, Wendy Evans, Rebecca Brown, and Lucretia Williams abstained from the vote.**

**ACTION: Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to approve the updated ITA Policy; Mr. Danny Box seconded. Motion carried.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Kenny Jett gave a brief update on the Southeast Employment and Training Association (SETA). For future conferences, they are trying to focus the training sessions based on attendees' specific Workforce role, and set up "tracks" that would be most useful and beneficial based on that role. Finance specialists would be on the fiscal track, LEO would be on the Board track, etc. Mr. Jett brought everyone's attention to surveys placed at the meeting tables, which will help SETA improve the following

conferences based on input. He also mentioned that the next SETA Conference in Mississippi will be in September 2025 in Biloxi.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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