

Minutes
Twin Districts Workforce Development Area
Local Workforce Development Board

Thursday, December 5, 2024 10:30 AM
Gulf Hills Hotel & Resort
13701 Paso Road, Ocean Springs

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PRESENT:

Millie Bordelon, Danny Box, Rebecca Brown, Wayne Buffington, Perry Duckworth, Wendy Evans, Sedgie Foxworth, Lillie Graves, Newt Ishee, Brian Johnson, Lucy Lamberth, Tiffany Parrish, Jermaine Simmons, David Stephens, Lucretia Williams, and Marshall Wood, Sr.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ABSENT:

Kammie Carpenter, Ricky Harrison, Laura “Missy” Lewis, Julia Lindsey (proxy), Calvin Newsom, Tom Miles, and Phil Nichols.

STAFF:

Allison Hawkins, Patricia Morrison, Marilyn Minor, Shari White, Shonta Duncan, Emlyn Jackson, Marvin Dickey, Elena Borel, Kenny Jett, 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: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the agenda; Ms. Millie Bordelon seconded. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the minutes from last meeting (June 25, 2024).

ACTION: Mr. Danny Box motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.

LEO BOARD UPDATE

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Joe Norwood to present the LEO Board Update, in Mr. Calvin Newsom's absence. Mr. Norwood gave a brief overview of the LEO meeting held earlier that morning. The LEO voted on and approved the new TDWDA Local Plan, PY22 and PY23 Layoff Aversion/Rapid Response transfer of funds, PY24 SMPDD Youth Subaward Modification, and the PY25 TDWDA Youth RFP Solicitation Schedule. These items will also be presented to the Workforce Board for their approval.

Mr. Norwood concluded his report. Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the LEO Update.

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

TWIN DISTRICTS UPDATE

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Allison Hawkins to present the Twin Districts Update. Ms. Hawkins greeted everyone in attendance, and thanked those that were present for the Re-Entry simulation the previous afternoon.

The WIOA monitoring was conducted by a third party for the TDWDA PY23 WIOA Subrecipients, including the SMPDD Youth Program. There were no findings or disallowed costs identified. MDES, Office of Grant Management (OGM) is in the process of monitoring SMPDD/TDWDA WIOA funded programs. All relevant documentation has been submitted for review. So far, there have been no issues.

Ms. Hawkins then called on Ms. Patricia Morrison to give the PY23 WIOA Performance Outcomes Report. Ms. Morrison explained that these performance measures are tracked every 2nd Quarter (six months) and 4th Quarter (12 months) after a participant successfully exits a WIOA program. The five measures are employment 2nd Quarter after exit, employment 4th Quarter after exit, median earnings, credential attainment, and measurable skill gains.

For WIOA Adult, 87.6% of participants were employed six months after exit; 86% were employed 12 months after exit, which is really high and exceeds the performance requested by the State.

With median earnings, the wages from six months of employment from the participant in the exact middle of the lowest earning and highest participant is used as a benchmark. For PY23, this was \$7,999, which far exceeds the \$6,945 set by the State.

Next is credential attainment, in which an industry-recognized certificate is obtained within four quarters (12 months) after exit. In PY23, 83.4% of exited Adult participants obtained one or more credentials. In PY22, this was only 62.5%, which means there was over a 20% increase. Ms. Morrison attributed this improvement to the cooperation

between MDES, the Community Colleges, and SMPDD and Subrecipient staff, as well as better follow-up data entry and communication.

Finally, there's measurable skill gains, which can be everything from grade level increase to demonstrated ability with a skill or technique. It can be very difficult to track and document, but our ability to do so has greatly improved. The goal set by the State is 58.3%, and TDWDA obtained 82.8% in measurable skill gains in PY23. In PY22, it was only 67.9%, so there was a marked improvement.

Overall, every performance goal was considered met or exceeded in PY23, with no failing marks. Ms. Morrison thanked the staff for their diligence in making this possible.

Ms. Hawkins then presented the 2024-2028 TDWDA Local Plan. This Plan outlines the workforce priorities and strategies of the Twin Districts area, and is rewritten every four years following the release of the Mississippi WIOA State Plan. Ms. Hawkins requested approval of the new Local Plan by the LEO. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Sedgie Foxworth motioned to approve the 2024-2028 TDWDA Local Plan; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Hawkins concluded her report.

TWIN DISTRICTS FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Shari White to present the Financial Report. She began by stating that the report will start with a review of the 4th and final Quarter of Program Year 2023 (PY23), and conclude with a review of 1st Quarter of PY24. Ms. White then explained the PY23 Overview of Current Funding. On May 15, 2024, TDWDA received NFA #7, in the amount of \$375,000 in Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion funds. A copy of this NFA is included in the meeting packet. From PY21 and PY22, there was a total of \$6,582,060.90 in carryover funds. Combined with \$7,012,336.00 in PY23 funds, this creates a Grand Total of \$13,594,396.90.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditure Summary. The expenditures reported are for the 4th Quarter costs - the period ending 06/30/24. Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion were all 100% obligated.

As for 4th Quarter Expenditures: Adult was 73% expended; Dislocated Worker 61%; Youth 71%; and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 36%. Overall, TDWDA has expended 66% of its PY23 Obligations, equaling \$9,286,322.23.

Next, Ms. White went over the Unobligated Remaining Funds. Unliquidated Obligations are funds that were obligated, but not expended. Closeouts will be due from the providers around mid-August, and all funds that have not been expended by the providers will roll forward into PY24.

Ms. White continued with the Expenditure by Quarter Report. Expenditures for each Quarter of PY23 are as follows: 1st Quarter was 22% of total expenditures, 2nd Quarter 20%, 3rd Quarter 25%, and 4th Quarter 33%.

Next, Ms. White moved into the report on PY24 with the Overview of Current Funding. On June 21, 2024, TDWDA received PY24 NFA #1 which provided TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY24 WIOA Youth Funds in the amount of \$2,115,188. On July 15, 2024, TDWDA received PY24 NFA #2 which provided TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY24 WIOA Adult (States) funds in the amount of \$394,136. On July 23, 2024, TDWDA received PY24 NFA #3 which provided TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY24 WIOA Dislocated Worker (States) funds in the amount of \$449,792. On October 24, 2024, TDWDA received PY24 NFA #4 which provided TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY24 WIOA Adult (Advance) funds in the amount of \$1,610,714. Finally, on November 6, 2024, TDWDA received PY24 NFA #5 which provided TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY24 WIOA DW (Advance) funds in the amount of \$1,636,763. A copy of each of these NFAs are included in the meeting packet.

For PY22 and PY23 Carryover funds, a total of \$4,683,074.67 was not expended. When combined with the total PY24 Allocation outlined in the NFAs above, there is a grand total of \$10,889,667.67 for Program Year 2024 activities.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditures summary. The expenditures reported are for the 1st Quarter costs - the period ending 09/30//24. The Obligations were as follows: Adult was 93.9% obligated, Dislocated Worker 92.4%, Youth 100%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 23.6%. The overall obligation for all funds was 90.7%.

As for 1st Quarter Expenditures: Adult was 12% expended, Dislocated Worker 11%, Youth 22%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 9% expended. Overall, TDWDA has expended 15% of its PY24 Obligations, equaling \$1,495,095.40. Please note that the PY24 Youth Work Experience Rate is at currently at 43.13%.

Next, Ms. White went over the Unobligated Remaining Funds. Unliquidated Obligations are funds that were obligated, but not expended. These currently total \$1,017,123. Staff are working diligently to obligate these funds.

Ms. White then explained the PY22 Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion Plan Modification #2. We are requesting the board ratify the modification to the PY22 Layoff Aversion Plan and extension request. The funds expired on 06/30/24; however, the NFA TDWDA received had a 06/30/25 expiration date. SMPDD Staff had discussions with the State, and they approved the extension request and plan modification, tentative upon Board approval. Ms. Patricia Morrison explained that this request was to better align the RR/LA funding with current needs to support TDWDA job seekers as well as local business and industry. \$50,000 was moved from RR Economic Analysis to the RR Strategic Planning, Business Outreach, Outreach Specialist, Incumbent Worker

Training, and Linkages category. The Linkages line item was added to the budget as shown on page 25 in your packet; and \$115,311 was moved down from the RR/LA line item into the linkages line item to total of \$165,311. These funds are being leveraged with other funds to assist with technology needs to provide services remotely and securely to underserved populations in the TDWDA. Ms. White and Ms. Morrison requested approval of Modification #2 to transfer \$50,000 from RR Economic Analysis to RR Linkages, and to transfer \$115,311 from RR Layoff Aversion to RR Linkages; and extend the ending date to March 31, 2025. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Perry Duckworth motioned to approve the PY22 Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion Plan Modification #2 and Transfer of Funds; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. White requested a modification to the PY23 Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion Plan. This includes \$50,000 to be transferred from RR Economic Analysis to RR Linkages, and \$100,000 to be transferred from RR Layoff Aversion to RR Linkages to align with the PY22 Modification. Additionally, these funds are being leveraged with other funds to assist with technology needs to provide services remotely and securely to underserved populations in the TDWDA. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to approve the PY23 Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion Plan Modification #1 and Transfer of Funds; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. White concluded her report.

WIN JOB CENTER REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Brian Johnson to present the WIN Job Center Report. Referencing Ms. Morrison's performance report, Mr. Johnson explained some of the factors that led to such an improvement over previous years. By the end of PY23, there were multiple retirements among higher level management and staff within the WIN Centers and MDES. As of today (12/5/24), every WIN Center management position within the TDWDA has been filled with the exception of the one in Meridian, and that position will be filled soon. However, even without a manager, the Meridian WIN Center remains one of the highest performing centers in the region.

Another factor is the relationship between the WIN Centers and the community colleges. Frequent communication and open-door interaction allowed both to best serve the workforce populations in our area.

Mr. Johnson also noted the contribution of SMPDD staff, and of Ms. Marilyn Minor in particular. Her knowledge and experience was invaluable in getting the WIN Centers back on track and training the new staff, and there has been a marked improvement in reporting and participant documentation.

Mr. Johnson then remarked on the Re-Entry Simulation that was held yesterday, and how it really opened his eyes to the difficulties and barriers that inmates face upon release, and that providing them the support to successfully navigate between the agencies and resources available is critical to prevent them from going back to jail.

Mr. Johnson also announced that the WIN Centers will commit more to community outreach. Years ago, there were regular meetings at the WIN Centers to discuss the workforce programs with local business and community leaders. Starting this year, these meetings will be held again, and on a regular basis.

Mr. Johnson concluded his 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 via Zoom on November 20, 2024, and Ms. Shonta Duncan provided the Youth Program update. Program Year 2023 finished with 402 Youth enrollments. Since July 1, 2024, the Youth providers have served 193 participants in PY24; 153 Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and 40 In-School (ISY). Enrollments have increased significantly over past Program Years, and because of this increase, all providers have met enrollment benchmarks for the 1st Quarter of PY24.

The Youth Committee also approved two action items, which also need to be approved by the LEO. The first is the PY24 SMPDD Youth Subaward Modification. Due to low Out-of-School enrollment, budget cuts, and problems retaining staff, the decision was made to close the Laurel SMPDD Youth Site. The remaining staff will be moved the SMPDD Hattiesburg office, and will continue to serve In-School Youth remotely in the TDWDA. Ms. Graves motioned to approve the modification. Mr. Stephens called for a vote.

ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the PY24 SMPDD Youth Subaward Modification #1; Mr. Wayne Buffington seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Graves also presented the PY25 Youth RFP Solicitation Schedule, which outlines the procurement process for the SMPDD Youth Program in the upcoming program year. Ms. Graves motioned to approve this schedule, and to grant SMPDD the authority to make changes to schedule as needed. Mr. Stephens called for a vote.

ACTION: Ms. Lillie Graves motioned to approve the PY25 Youth RFP Solicitation Schedule; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Graves concluded her report.

INDUSTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Maury Hull to preset the Industry Advisory Council report. Mr. Hull began with a brief overview of the council, explaining that it is intended to provide feedback to the Board on the implementation of workforce programs and their effectiveness, while offering suggestions on how they can be improved. The Council met last month, and one of the suggestions was very similar to what Mr. Johnson described in his report, and restarting the regular meetings between MDES/WIN Centers and local business leaders.

Another suggestion was finding ways to get people to the WIN Centers, and implement mini-job fairs at the Centers. Unemployment is very low, but many businesses continue to struggle to find qualified applicants to fill multiple open positions, and the low workforce participation rate continues to be an issue.

Finally, On-the-Job Training (OJT) wages are currently capped at \$15 an hour. The Council recommended raising that rate to \$16 or higher. The old rate has not changed in many years, and is no longer in line with current industry wages, and raising it would better incentivize more people to participate. Mr. Hull concluded his report.

With all reports concluded, Mr. Stephens called for a motion for their approval.

ACTION: Ms. Rebecca Brown motioned to approve the meeting reports; Mr. Danny Box seconded. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Patricia Morrison to present the new and updated policies. Ms. Morrison began with the TDWDA Procurement Policy, which was updated to align with the modified threshold increases within Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 that went into effect October 1, 2024: Micro-purchases went up from \$10,000 to \$50,000 and the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (small purchases) from \$250,000 to \$500,000. The language and definitions throughout the policy were also updated to reflect the new thresholds. Also, "Veteran Owned Businesses" was added to the priority solicitation list, and the considerations for that list are further defined. Ms. Morrison asked for the Board to approve the Procurement Policy update. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Marshall Wood motioned to approve the TDWDA Procurement Policy Update; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Morrison presented the TDWDA Oversight and Monitoring Policy, which was also updated to align with newer regulation within Uniform Guidance. The Single Audit requirement was raised from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 and the policy wording was updated to reflect this, and the Monitoring Report deadline was changed from six weeks to 60 days. Ms. Morrison asked the Board to approve the updated policy. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Wayne Buffington motioned to approve the TDWDA Oversight and Monitoring Policy Update; Ms. Lillie Graves seconded. Motion carried.

Lastly, Ms. Morrison presented the new TDWDA Audit and Audit Resolution Policy. This policy outlines the requirements for audit submission, review, and resolution of findings of all subrecipients receiving WIOA funds. These requirements were already established and being practiced by SMPDD Staff, and this policy formalizes them in writing. Ms. Morrison asked the Board to approve the new policy. Mr. Stephens called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Perry Duckworth motioned to approve the TDWDA Audit and Audit Resolution Policy; Mr. Wayne Buffington seconded. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

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