

**West Central Workforce Development Area
Governing Board Meeting**
Lawrence County Courthouse
New Castle, PA

July 11, 2023

Minutes

The regular meeting of the West Central Workforce Development Area Governing Board began at 1:36 p.m. on Tuesday, July 11, 2023.

Members in attendance were Commissioner Scott Boyd, Commissioner Brian Burick, Commissioner Matt McConnell, Commissioner Loretta Spielvogel, and Commissioner Dan Vogler

Others present were Ray Bogaty, Tammy Barbati, Gregg Dogan, Eric Karmecy and Rebecca Moder

Commissioner Dan Vogler made a motion to enter Executive Session seconded by Commissioner Matt McConnell and passed unanimously. Executive Session was entered at 1:38 p.m. and adjourned at 1:45 p.m. The regular meeting reconvened at 1:46 p.m.

Drafted minutes of the May 23, 2023 meeting were reviewed and spelling was corrected on Commissioner Brian Burick's last name and Ray Bogaty's attendance was noted as well. **A motion to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2023, meeting was made by Commissioner Matt McConnell, seconded by Commissioner Scott Boyd and passed unanimously.**

Public Comment Period – None in attendance

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION REPORT

◆**Finance Report** – Mr. Dogan referred to the green section of the meeting packet. This handout reflects the accrued expenditures of West Central Job Partnership from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. These amounts are not yet final as WCJP is still receiving invoices for Program Year 2022.

Page one of the report lists the grants that West Central currently administers. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grants are listed first, followed by other special grants including: Statewide Activity Funds, Rapid Response and Trade Act Assistance (TAA), Digital Literacy, Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC), Business Education Partnership (BEP), and some Department of Human Services (DHS formerly DPW) grants. Statewide Activity Grants, which were required to be expended by June 30th, were competitively awarded in the amounts of \$500,000, \$120,000, \$200,000 and \$10,000 and funded additional ITAs and OJTs, STEAM Camps with the United Way Mercer County, Internship and Paid Work Experiences, as well as updated Teleconferencing Equipment for the PA CareerLink® Mercer County.

Mr. Dogan noted the TANF Youth Program and EARN Programs shown in the handout. Unexpended EARN funding is recaptured by the state. Commissioner Loretta Spielvogel asked about the EARN referral process. Mr. Dogan and Ms. Barbati shared that we do not recruit for individuals as the participants must be referred from the County Assistance Offices.

Commissioner Brian Burick noted that the location and virtual staffing of the offices as well as the conditional waivers available also limited referrals. Mr. Dogan also shared that new work requirements for SNAP that have been discussed, but not yet implemented, may affect the number of referrals and expenditures in the future.

Commissioner Dan Vogler asked about the \$100,000 in funding for the Rapid Response for McKesson workers and when the funding expires. Mr. Dogan shared that it is not tied to the Program Year like other funding sources and that it had just been awarded in June. Approximately 150 employees are affected. Commissioner Brian Burick asked the total number of those affected if it was known how many individuals were offered employment at another McKesson location. Mr. Karmecy shared that around 100 affected individuals have attended the PA CareerLink® Rapid Response sessions and that many had completed initial surveys indicating their interest in the PA CareerLink® programs, including training.

Page two of handout shows WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker as well as Rapid Response grants, carryover and breakdown of ITAs, OJTs, and other expenditures through June 30, 2023. WCJP is on target to expend its awards. Mr. Dogan noted that due to the demand from Adult as opposed to Dislocated Workers, the Workforce Development Board had approved the transfer of \$600,000 from PY 22 WIOA Dislocated Worker to Adult at their June 22nd meeting.

Page three of the report is an itemized breakdown of the expenditures of the PA CareerLink® of Lawrence County and the PA CareerLink® of Mercer County. The report is not final, but amounts are close to the final projected expenditures. The bottom shows a \$13,000 deficit in Mercer County, but there are additional funds we are able to utilize to cover the excess expenses that had been incurred during the year. The Salaries listed on page three are only for the Site Administrator, the Greeter, and the Career Resource Center Aide in each center.

A motion to approve the Finance Report as presented was made by Commissioner Dan Vogler, seconded by Commissioner Matt McConnell and passed unanimously.

PROGRAMMATIC DIVISION REPORT

◆*Participant Enrollments, Training and Exits* – Ms. Barbati referred to the handout included in the meeting packet and advised the Board that the report is a breakdown of enrollments by funding stream from July 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023. Applications on 707 new individuals were done.

The following page details the training services. Cumulatively, over 166 ITAs took place during the program year. Following the prior years' trends, 309 On-the-Job Training contracts were written during this timeframe. Twenty Paid Work Experiences (PWE) for EARN Participants also were placed. The summer TANF Internship and Paid Work Experience program is also ongoing, which serves individuals during the year as well as summer placements. This program dovetails with the additional Statewide Activity Grant funds to support young adults as they transition into the workforce and has great support and success from our employers.

The next page shows total exits of 478, which is also the dataset that the WDB's performance is derived from. A four-year comparison chart included in the packet shows the relationship of WIOA programs throughout the last four program years, including pre-pandemic numbers.

Commissioner Loretta Spielvogel inquired about the Internship program's relationship with the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Moder reported that the Interns hosted by the Chamber were participants in WCJP's Internship Program and that we had also partnered with the Hoyt and the Chamber to provide a Professional Development Internship Day for individuals who were interested in or already participating in Internships. Commissioner Brian Burick asked if the Internship Program requirements included income eligibility and Ms. Barbati shared that depending on requirements of the funding stream supporting internships, family size and income is either assessed collectively or individually. This includes serving students in college who are unable to find a paid internship on their own whom we work to match with local employers. Over 270 individuals have completed the Internship/Paid Work Experience Initial Survey this Program Year which WCJP uses to follow up to place them in the appropriate funding stream and experience. This includes assisting young adults who could obtain basic employment but are seeking a connection to their field of study, which they do not yet have.

Mr. Karmecy added that in speaking about youth with barriers, the Lawrence County Corrections department had reached out to us based upon some presentations and conversations they had had with staff. They are looking at a new program to house minors who are involved in the justice system and are interested in connecting with the PA CareerLink[®] to make referrals to programs and resources to serve the individuals.

◆*WIOA Performance thru 3rd Quarter of PY 2022* – Ms. Barbati referred to the handout included in the meeting packet and reminded the Board that these numbers are furnished by the Center for Workforce Information & Analysis. These reports show that all Performance Goals for WIOA Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth were either met or exceeded for the program year including for the Measurable Skills Gains (MSG). As the Program Year has just ended as of June 30th, the 4th Quarter report is not yet released and the information provided is the same as at the May 23rd meeting.

Mr. Dogan also noted that we have applied for additional competitive funding to serve individuals and have been awarded another Business Education Partnership (BEP) Grant to work with School-to-Work and the United Way of Mercer County. WCJP was also one on nine areas statewide to be awarded a \$250,000 Youth Reentry Grant to serve justice-involved 18-24 year olds in the two counties. We will continue to work with our partners to recruit justice-involved youth as well as screening self-referred individuals and other 18-24 year old participants for eligibility. We also are hopeful to receive a second round of Digital Literacy funding, based upon the success of the prior round, to work with Adult Literacy in Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

OPERATIONS & SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION REPORT

◆*One-Stop Operations* – Mr. Karmecy reviewed the foot traffic report for Program Year 2022. This report includes only individuals that are physically walking into the PA CareerLink[®] centers. The numbers are final through the full fiscal year with the exception of the job-placement information which is logged manually by staff and does not include the month of June. During July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023, 17,617 individuals walked into the local PA CareerLink[®] centers. Types of Center activities and verified Job Placement information are also shown.; This does not include the vast majority of hires that are not reported back to us. Collectively, just under 709 verified Job Placements have been recorded. Mr. Karmecy reviewed the five-year foot traffic for comparison purposes. Pre-pandemic, we were close to 31,000 and since the closures and re-openings we are steadily climbing back and have increased year-over-year. Commissioner Brian

Burick shared that he was at a meeting of the Downtown Business Association and a small businessman reported that he had just hired his first person since COVID and that they were through the PA CareerLink®. He also asked if the PA CareerLink® has seen an increase in individuals who do not speak English very well and what the process is for serving these individuals. Mr. Karmecy reported that yes, we have seen an uptick in English as a Second Language speakers, more so in Lawrence County than in Mercer. We do have materials and Proprio language services as well as in New Castle there is a fulltime staff member and Paid Work Experience individual who speak Spanish as their first language. Ms. Barbati noted that many individuals in the EARN program are ESL learners and have difficulty in gaining employment. Mr. Karmecy shared that Flowline had hired an individual who was bilingual through the On-the-Job Training program and then promoted them to a Supervisory position so that they could assist translating for other hires with limited English proficiency.

♦**Special Grants and Projects** – Mr. Karmecy reviewed the WORC Report through June 30, 2023. This grant ends September 30, 2023 due to a one-year no-cost extension that was granted due to the Pandemic. This flyer shows the current outcomes for the main aspects of the grant. These include apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship, Employer engagement, and Work Advance. We have served 405 of the goal of 325 individuals, surpassing the original goal. Mr. Karmecy also noted that WCJP did apply for a \$950,000 Round 5 WORC grant as part of a collaboration to support Manufacturing efforts as well as provide \$25,000 in seed funding to start the initiative. The Ellwood Group is leading a core group of employers in Lawrence and Mercer counties to address common needs and opportunities.

Mr. Karmecy also shared the Recompete Funding Announcement that numerous local and regional entities have approached WCJP with an interest in applying. Discussion around the Prime Age Labor force and clarifying that definition took place.

Commissioner Loretta Spielvogel asked if there was an update on the State Budget. Mr. Dogan reported that until recently it looked like the state budget would be passed on time, but the latest information is that discussions have fallen apart and that the legislatures are set to recess and not return until September. WCJP would not be able to spend new PY 2023 monies until a budget is passed. This could be an issue depending upon how long the impasse lasts.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

Next Meeting – The next meeting will take place on October 10, 2023 at the Mercer County Courthouse.

Adjournment – A motion to adjourn the regular meeting was made at 2:48 p.m. by Commissioner Matt McConnell, seconded by Commissioner Scott Boyd and passed unanimously.