



Workforce Alliance (WA) Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2025

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Workforce Alliance Board met in person at the Wichita Workforce Center and via Zoom; Chair Jeff Longwell called the meeting to order and asked for self-introductions.

2. Public Comment

No requests for public comment were received.

3. Wichita Public Schools (WPS) Bond Proposal

The WA is a long-time partner of Wichita Public Schools (USD 259). District staff were present to discuss the upcoming bond election, the focus on the district's aging infrastructure and the importance of community investment in the future of students. They emphasized the importance of community feedback and the use of hard facts in creating the district's master plan. The potential economic benefits of the bond, including the creation of jobs and the strengthening of local communities was noted. The ultimate goal is to provide the best possible learning environment for students. The school district is holding nine open houses between now and February 1st to showcase the conditions of buildings that are being considered for rebuilds, remodels, or closure. USD 259 is also seeking community input and encourages people to vote in the bond election.

Report was received and filed.

4. Youth Employment Project (YEP) 2025 Planning

This month staff are making a final push to identify all of the employers who will be hiring high school interns. Staff will be holding a webinar for municipal and public sector partners about hiring youth early next month. Interest from students is great and the activities being held in the schools are very popular including the use of the career exploration virtual reality Transfr headsets. There is a challenge of finding sufficient additional employer partners for work experience opportunities to meet student demand. It was noted that Spirit will not be hiring summer interns this year due to the planned acquisition by Boeing. Staff are being very intentional in the process of actively recruiting employers where students have a career interest; the importance of early recruitment is important to increase the number of job placements.

Report was received and filed.

5. 2025 Workforce Alliance Work Plan and Goals / Community Impact Projects Updates

Board members reviewed current operations and identified action items and goals to address in 2025. Lawing discussed the organization's focus on economic mobility and the need for alignment with other community-based organizations. He emphasized the importance of leveraging non-federal resources and building on the organization's existing structure.

The proposed 2025 Work Plan was discussed. The focus of the plan is to enhance economic opportunity for at-risk youth, justice involved individuals (Fair Chance, returning citizens), military veterans, transitioning workers (layoffs, sector growth, etc.) and grow employer partnerships. The plan also proposes strategies to increase WA Board member engagement. Examples include elected officials to visit the workforce center annually to meet with Board members, increasing industry partner engagement by conducting lunch-and-learn sessions at workforce centers for a fee with valuable content such as labor market information and youth employment that is targeted to hiring managers and human resource professionals. Board members are also encouraged to participate in strategic planning to develop goals for 2026 through 2028 and developing a plan for raising \$50,000 from the annual Jobs

FORE Youth golf tournament. Blackburn and Munoz suggested that proposed lunch and learn sessions not only be planned for the Wichita Workforce Center but for centers in other counties as well. Lawing pointed out that staff are in the process of meeting with Butler and Cowley counties regarding continuing the series of community impact meetings that was started last year.

Related to the importance of Board members using WA services and supporting the WA as an organization, the creation of two broad categories for board members was proposed: employer partner (job postings, job fairs, pre-screenings, on-the-job training, registered apprenticeship and youth employment) and strategic funders (Jobs FORE Youth golf tournament, Camp HYPE, matching funds for grants and special projects). Board members can be ambassadors about WA programs and services and use social media and other platforms to increase awareness and promote activities and events.

Rod Blackburn (Kathy Jewett) moved to adopt the 2025 Work Plan and Goals with a change to "Workforce Centers" rather than the "Wichita Workforce Center" in reference to establishing sessions with partners in the region to expand employer partnerships. Motion adopted.

6. Workforce Alliance (WA) Board and Committee Membership

The WA Committee assignments are being reviewed and updated for appointments in 2025 by the WA Board Chair. Board members should notify Lawing or Chair Longwell if interested in joining any committees by February 1st so that committee rosters can be finalized for the year. The transition of board members and committee assignments was discussed.

For the Board, Dr. Krull's retirement from Butler Community College was acknowledged. Dr. Jackie Vietti will be the interim president and will be asked to serve on the Board. Dr. Rachel Bates from Cowley College will replace Kami Moore, and Jeimeson Saudino from IBEW will replace Russ Kennedy.

For Committees, Gabe Schlickau will transition off the Executive Committee in 2025 and will remain on the board. Cheryl Childers from Cox Machine was asked to join the Executive Committee. For the Program Operations and Performance (POP) Committee John Clark will be retiring soon and Board Members Marcus Curran and Luis Rodriguez have agreed to serve on that Committee. For the Finance Committee, Dr. Krull and Russ Kennedy will no longer be serving on that committee and Board Members Scott Stiles and Kathy Jewett will be new members. A co-chair is needed for the Youth Employment Committee. It is important for board members to serve on committees and staff will work with the board chair to reach out to board members.

Report was received and filed.

7. Consent Agenda

An update on the merger of Local Areas I and II was discussed. The WA submitted public comments that expressed concern about the geographical and population disbalance. No response from the state has been received. Lawing will be meeting with Kansas Department of Commerce to discuss the issue further regarding the boundary changes and lack of response to submitted public comments.

Scott Stiles (Cheryl Childers) moved to approve the action items recommended in the Consent agenda. Motion adopted.

8. Additional Topics/Announcements

- Chair Longwell recognized WA Board member, Kathy Jewett, who has served on the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) for the past eight years. She has recently resigned from that board and attended her last meeting last week. Jewett will continue to serve on the WA Board and the Executive Committee. She provided an update on discussions regarding WIOA reauthorization to the board. As reported earlier, the proposed bill attached to a continuing resolution did not pass. The new administration is reviewing possible cuts of any programs that were not reauthorized. The uncertainty surrounding the reauthorization and funding of workforce programs includes possibilities such as funding being cut, distributed as block grants to governors, or continuing with normal appropriations. NAWB is emphasizing the need to educate new

congresspeople on workforce systems and programs particularly stories about strong, high performing workforce boards.

- The next board meeting on April 23rd is scheduled to be a working lunch meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10.

Present LWDB Members

- Rod Blackburn
- Cheryl Childers
- Marcus Curran
- Michele Gifford via Zoom
- Robyn Heinz via Zoom
- Jessica Istas
- Kathy Jewett
- Pat Jonas via Zoom
- Jeff Longwell
- Alana McNary
- Alex Munoz via Zoom
- Tony Naylor
- Luis Rodriguez via Zoom
- John Rolfe via Zoom
- Sally Stang via Zoom
- Scott Stiles
- Dr. Sheree Utash via Zoom
- Bruce Witt via Zoom

Guests & Staff

- Marcy Aycock via Zoom
- Amanda Duncan
- Keith Lawing
- Shirley Lindhorst
- Chad Pettera
- Peter Bodyk, KS Dept. of Children & Families
- Lindsay McWilliams, Goodwill / One-Stop Operator
- Gil Alvarez, Deputy Superintendent, Wichita Public Schools
- Luke Newman, Division Director, Plan Facilities, Wichita Public Schools
- Sean Hudspeth, Chief Human Resources Officer, Wichita Public Schools

The Workforce Alliance is the Local Workforce Development Board for Local Area IV