



Workforce Alliance (WA) Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2024

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The LWDB assembled in person 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. **Level Up Kansas**

John Rolfe, Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce introduced Lori Bower, BowerComm to present information on Level Up Kansas. The Chamber is leading the Level Up Kansas project to get more Kansans connected to the Kansas Promise scholarship and other education and training programs in order to connect under-employed individuals to training for high demand industries improving their education and employment opportunities mainly through technical and community colleges. The program was initiated due to a large amount of unused Kansas Promise funds and the need for high skilled workers in the state. Level Up is primarily a marketing program with a focus to attract interest and then to connect individuals to the appropriate community partners. The Kansas legislature appropriated \$2.5 million dollars for one year for this effort for which the Chamber is the fiscal agent. Bower requested information on how to better partner with organizations and asked for strong points of contact. She also asked that the WA educate staff about LevelUp and the scholarship and that if the WA has something they want to promote, Level Up can promote within its network. Board members expressed their views on the program. Some think that the program is duplicative of what the WA does and that the WA should have been a partner from its beginning. There was frustration that the workforce boards have little state support for outreach and marketing and hoped working with LevelUp could be an opportunity to market the workforce centers. Most feel that it is important to better align and share program resources with workforce boards and education institutions.

Laura Ritterbush commented that Level Up also needs to network with Adult Basic Education providers as well. Dr. Kim Krull pointed out the very strict process for Kansas Promise Scholarships and is concerned the issue of unused dollars is not so much about awareness but about the requirements and the complicated process for the scholarship. Erica Ramos related in her experience that once a customer is referred to a school there is a great deal of paperwork and the process is time consuming, which can be overwhelming. This could be an opportunity to change the process legislatively and clean up some of the statutory language. Schlickau asked about when the program ends in one year and if any feedback had been received about funds for next year. Bower responded that there are lobbyists working on changes to the Kansas Promise Act. She indicated that if lack of communication about the program is resulting in the unused funds proves to be true, extending the program is possible and money will help channel people to the WA and other community partners as well as educational institutions. Longwell stated that the goal for everyone is the same, which is to train people for better paying jobs. Amanda Duncan was assigned to be the primary contact for WA partnering with LevelUp.

Report was received and filed.

4. **One Workforce Grant and Talent Roadmap Project**

Amanda Duncan provided an update on the One Workforce Grant. The \$9.9 million One Workforce grant is the largest received by the WA and is entering its fourth year of operations. Grant funds provide advanced manufacturing and information technology training to unemployed or under employed individuals to obtain skills that fill local in-demand jobs so that employers do not have to recruit talent

from overseas. The program is employer-led training (on-the-job training and incumbent worker training) and classroom training tuition scholarships for short and long term training at educational institutions. A breakdown of training enrollments and performance outcomes were provided and staff are pleased with progress thus far. The program ends at the end January of 2025; there will likely be funds that can be used beyond that time and the WA is eligible to apply for a one year no cost extension this June so that all of the funds can be expended. Jennifer Baysinger with Senator Marshall's office indicated that a letter of support for the extension could be provided. One of the goals of the grant is to develop a plan to sustain and build on the outcomes of the program. The WA has worked with the Greater Wichita Partnership (GWP) on the Deloitte Future of Work study and the ongoing work of the Talent Roadmap Project toward achieving this goal. Tami Bradley with the GWP provided information on the Talent Roadmap and its community strategy outcomes were reviewed with one being the guidance on deployment of the WA's One Workforce grant funds. Also reviewed was the Roadmap's 13 point plan and goals and metrics, much of which is related to workforce issues. The presentation slides will be sent out to all board members with a meeting summary and will also be posted on the website with the meeting packet.

Report was received and filed.

5. **Community Impact Project Updates**

Updates on Home Base Wichita, Youth Employment (YEP) and Roadtrip Nation (RTN) were provided.

Home Base Wichita is a program currently funded with American Rescue Plan funds from the City of Wichita and assists military-connected individuals with employment opportunities. The program works to retain military members in South Central Kansas after retirement, recruit individuals that are leaving the service from military installations outside of Wichita as well as focusing on the spouses of military personnel. Funds for on-the-job training are available for those that qualify. An update was provided on program outcomes thus far. Staff are pleased with progress to date and hope to work with the City of Wichita to sustain the program past its original investment.

Staff have been working with the Youth Employment Committee to develop a plan for the 2024 Youth Employment Project (YEP). The draft plan including strategic goals, tactics and milestones was reviewed with Board members. Staff are working with Wichita Public Schools on a summer high school internship program. WA board members are encouraged to offer a work experience to a young person and/or other opportunities such as creating a high school internship, participating in summer career camps, offering job shadowing, providing workplace tours or other related activities.

The Roadtrip Nation (RTN) project includes a Build Your Future website. As part of the RTN project, participating students are required to create a recorded interview with individuals about their careers (how they got started, experiences, challenges, rewards, etc.) and upload them to the RTN website, so that others can view them. The WA is creating a list of employers that are willing be part of YEP in 2024 and or participate in RTN interviews, and asking Board members and stakeholders to participate in order to provide a quick connection between the student, schools and employers. A survey with additional information and directions on how to engage in 2024 will be sent out to the WA Board early next week.

Report was received and filed.

6. **Consent Agenda**

Approval of the meeting minutes from July 26, 2023 and meeting notes from October 25, 2023, WA Program Year 2023 budget update, SNAP Education and Training E&T project update, reports for Fair Chance, Registered Apprenticeship and Communications projects, review of WA Executive Committee actions taken since the last board meeting, WA Operations / One-Stop Operator report and the final Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program performance reports for Program Year 2022 were provided to board members for review and or approval

The WA is working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to be an intermediary in an operational model for SNAP (AKA food stamps) Education & Training (E&T). The goal is to use non-federal funding for allowable SNAP E&T services and supports, which are then eligible for a 50 percent reimbursement through the State's SNAP E&T program. A success story was shared regarding a participant referred to the WA by DCF that had been in training to obtain a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and had not yet achieved a license. She worked with WA's case managers and business services team who assisted the participant in gaining employment where she could use skills already learned and work toward the hours needs to achieve licensure and earn more than just a self-sufficient wage while doing so.

Michele Gifford (Gabe Schlickau) moved to approve the recommendations as presented in the consent agenda. Motion adopted.

7. Additional Topics/Announcements

- The current One-Stop Operator contract with Eckerd Connects was terminated for mutual convenience. No disruption in services is anticipated. There is currently a Request For Proposals released for a One-stop Operator for services beginning on July 1.

8. Meeting was adjourned at 11:32.

Present LWDB Members

- Rod Blackburn
- Cheryl Childers via Zoom
- Michele Gifford
- Robyn Heinz via Zoom
- Eric Hunt via Zoom
- Kathy Jewett via Zoom
- Pat Jonas
- Dr. Kim Krull via Zoom
- Jeff Longwell
- Alana McNary via Zoom
- Alex Munoz via Zoom
- Erica Ramos
- Laura Ritterbush via Zoom
- Luis Rodriguez
- John Rolfe
- Gabe Schlickau
- Sally Stang via Zoom
- Scott Stiles

Guests & Staff

- Marcy Aycock
- Crosby Branham
- Amanda Duncan
- Denise Houston
- Keith Lawing
- Shirley Lindhorst
- Mary Mann
- George Marko
- Chad Pettera
- Laura Barker, Wichita Public Schools
- Jennifer Baysinger, Senator Roger Marshall's Office
- Peter Bodyk, KS Dept. of Children & Families
- Lori Bower, BowerComm
- Tami Bradley, Greater Wichita Partnership
- Kathy Sexton, WSU and Kansas Business Roundtable
- Commissioner Greg Thompson, City of Winfield (CEOB)