



Workforce Alliance
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2024 – 11:30 AM

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Workforce Alliance (WA) Executive Committee met on November 13, 2024 virtually via Zoom. Vice Chair Alana McNary welcomed Committee members and called the meeting to order.

2. Workforce Alliance (WA) Projects Update and Funding Requests

Proposals are being developed for local and state funding support to leverage WA resources and align with current community impact projects. Keith Lawing expressed that there is a need for the organization to seek funding beyond the annual federal allocation, as these funds have decreased and are likely to decrease further. He proposed refining existing strategies to leverage Federal, State, and local funding. Two programs were discussed in regard to taking advantage of this strategy - the Fair Chance program that assists with employment and training for Justice Involved Individuals (JIIs) and Home Base Wichita (HBW) that recruits military connected talent to the region. He emphasized the importance of gaining visible board support and business community support for these funding requests, as they benefit the region's economy and growth.

The WA has worked successfully with Sedgwick County and the State Department of Corrections on the Fair Chance program; funds were also received through the Pathways Home Grant to assist these individuals with employment. There is a lack of funding for employment and training programs for JII's in the Department of Commerce's budget. Staff have created a proposal to take directly to the legislature for funding, as the State agency had not made a request. If the legislature allocates funds, local workforce boards could apply for funding to institute education and training programs to provide employment opportunities for individuals with criminal backgrounds. Funds could potentially be available in the summer of 2025 Addressing the issue is urgent as Sedgwick County has the largest number of JIIs in the region. The proposed request to the State would be for \$1.5 to \$2 million, which could impact 300 to 400 people in the State, with half of that number potentially in Sedgwick County. Committee member Gabe Schlickau is the Chair of the Wichita Chamber's Government Relations Committee (GRC) and confirmed that the GRC approved their legislative agenda for 2025, which included supportive language for this initiative. Schlickau asked about the current partnership with the Department of Corrections and if the funds being requested would be used to support that partnership. Lawing confirmed this and explained that the new funding is related to employment opportunities, which should be available from the Department of Commerce, not the Department of Corrections. Assistant Secretary Mike Beene, Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC) and Assistant Secretary Dr. Chris Fanning, Kansas Department of Corrections have been contacted and it is felt they could support the initiative. Michele Gifford asked about the current employment status of the 943 individuals released from prison in Sedgwick County; Lawing estimated around 50% are likely unemployed. However, with additional funding, the goal is to increase the employment rate to 70% for this population. This initiative has long-term benefits of reducing recidivism rates and the associated costs to the community.

The current status of the WA's HBW project was also discussed. The City of Wichita funding ended September 30th and staff have been looking at ways to sustain the program. Staff have developed a proposal to secure at least \$100,000 in funding from Sedgwick County and have secured \$75,000 in funding from the KDC and have budgeted \$25,000 from the WA budget. The proposal lists goals including having 100 businesses as HBW partners, placing 150 military connected individuals in jobs and creating investment level activity where businesses can help support the program by financially sponsoring specific events that would directly connect them to this applicant pool such as tours, site visits, reverse job fairs,



etc. Committee members were asked to contact Sedgwick County commissioners, discuss the benefits of the program and demonstrate a return on investment for funding the program.

Scott Stiles (Kathy Jewett) moved to approve and support funding requests for Home Base Wichita to Sedgwick County and Fair Chance program to the state of Kansas. Motion adopted.

3. Consent Agenda

Approval of meeting minutes for August 14, 2024 and September 14, 2024, Program Year 2024 budget update, U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Key Provisions Review, WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program Performance for Program Year 2023 final reports and an On-the-Job Training (OJT) contract for Youngers and Sons Manufacturing were presented to the Committee for review and approval.

Scott Stiles (Michele Gifford) moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion adopted.

4. Announcements

The WA has staffed the Regional Economic Area Partnerships (REAP) for many years. REAP members are currently reviewing the organization's objectives and structure. They are meeting on November 14, 2024 to review a proposed work plan for 2025. This may impact how REAP is staffed in the future. More information will be provided at the next Executive Committee meeting.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Attendees:

LWDB Executive Committee Members

Rod Blackburn
Michele Gifford
Kathy Jewett
Jeff Longwell
Alana McNary
Gabe Schlickau

Staff/Guests

Marcy Aycock
Denise Houston
Keith Lawing
Shirley Lindhorst
Mary Mann
Chad Pettera

Lindsay McWilliams, One-Stop Operator, Goodwill