



Workforce Alliance
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2025 – 11:30 AM

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Workforce Alliance (WA) Executive Committee met on March 12, 2025 in person at the Wichita Workforce Center and virtually via Zoom. Chair Jeff Longwell welcomed Committee members and called the meeting to order.

2. Federal Policy Update - Executive Orders, Funding Freezes and Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Reauthorization

There have been a number of actions by the federal government in 2025 that impact current operations and future planning for the WA. The new administration is conducting a review of federal spending at every level, which has impacted the WA. The funding freeze that occurred limited the ability to draw down federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, but this issue was ultimately resolved. There has also been a review of the WA's discretionary grants and there was uncertainty related to the \$500,000 EPA Brownfields grant that WA recently received. Staff have finally received word that the grant can proceed; it is projected to begin July 1, 2025.

There is full funding for programs for the current program year, but the proposed budget for the following year zeroes out WIOA Youth program funding and significantly cuts Adult program funding. If these funding levels are adopted, this could have a major negative impact on workforce boards nationwide. For local operations, the result will be fewer persons served, possible office closures and dramatic changes to how the WA works directly with employers to fund on-the-job training projects. It is also likely there will be fewer competitive grants released for skills training and employment projects. Staff estimated, that around \$1 million in state/local funding must be obtained in order to maintain current staffing levels if federal funding is cut.

Another issue is the pending WIOA reauthorization through the *A Stronger Workforce For America* (ASWA). The language in ASWA mandates that local workforce boards must spend 50% of funding on skills training. This limits options for employment services for job seekers and how services to local businesses are delivered.

Lawing emphasized the need to raise awareness with lawmakers about the economic impact and return on investment of workforce programs. A recent report shows that for every \$1 invested in WIOA, an estimated \$15 is returned in wages. Staff have been providing continuous workforce updates to Congressional office staff and Board Chair Longwell has invited Senators Moran and Marshall as well as Representative Estes to visit the Workforce Center. Staff, board and employer partners must demonstrate value to state and local officials and the community by highlighting its role in supporting initiatives, serving jobseekers, and helping employers hire and train workers. A report was reviewed showing the significant investments made in businesses and training providers over the past eight years, totaling over \$16 million. Staff are continuing to do research and compile data to present to policymakers. It is important to quantify the return on investment for these programs and the need to gather data on wage increases and retention rates from employers. The workforce system adds revenue for local, state and federal governments by expanding the tax base through job growth and business expansion.

Staff and board will continue to share information with elected officials to address funding issues.

3. Community Impact Project Updates

Youth Employment Project (YEP) -The program helps youth find work experiences, promote career awareness and interest, and shows them the process for achieving their goals. The summer internship



program's interview day is scheduled for April 5th, with six employers participating currently. The program is also supporting job fairs for high school seniors and planning the HYPE career awareness camps for the summer, including partnerships with Spirit, Textron, trade skills, health care, financial services, technology, crime commission as well as camps in other counties. The WA will be working with the City of Wichita's Way to Work program to hire a few interns. The YMCA's Job Prep program has enrolled 350 youth this year and are securing jobs for youth. There are far more youth seeking a job than available positions with employers. Staff are working diligently to secure more employer partners to meet the demand for employment opportunities.

EPA Grant - The WA received an EPA Brownfields jobs training grant for just under \$500,000 to support the training of 90 participants over 24 months. It is anticipated that participants who successfully complete this training will earn about \$22 an hour. The project will begin July 1st, iSi Environmental will be the primary training partner and participants will obtain an industry recognized credential.

Home Base Wichita - The WA is partnering with the Manufacturing Institute, Textron Aviation, and WSU Tech to provide affordable A&P mechanic training to transitioning military personnel. The program, which costs \$4,400 for six weeks, is funded by the One Workforce Grant with the goal to FAA certify active duty military members and separated airmen. The Manufacturing Institute hosted a kickoff meeting at the Workforce Center on March 7th. The program has been well-received expansion to a national level is under consideration. Staff have been asked by the Department of Labor to write this program up as a success story for the One Workforce Grant.

One Workforce Grant - The program has been very successful and provided training opportunities for many participants and employers. A list of employer partners for the grant was presented that included many regional businesses that provide a variety of services. Staff are looking at ways to make it a sustainable program after the grant term ends. A proposal was made for the Board Chair to send a follow up letter of thanks to employer partners.

4. **2026-2028 Workforce Alliance Board of Directors Strategic Planning**

One of the assignments for the WA Board 2025 is to update the strategic plan and identify goals for the organization. The committee agreed to schedule a series of planning sessions beginning in the summer with each session focusing on a key topic without engaging an outside facilitator. Board members, employers, partners, community partners and elected officials will be invited to participate and be facilitated by board members and staff. Staff will develop a plan and schedule for the sessions and review with the Executive Committee at its next meeting with a formal plan being presented to the full board at the end of April.

Take appropriate action.

5. **Consent Agenda**

Approval of meeting minutes for January 8, 2025, Program Year 2024 (PY24) budget update, Operations & One-Stop Operator report, Registered Apprenticeship and Communications reports, a new Time and Effort policy and updated WA Code of Business Conduct and Ethics, WIOA Youth Contract with Elite CDL and on-the-job training contracts for the Eligible Training Provider List for B&B Airparts, Creekstone Farms and Great Plains Industries were presented to the Committee for review and/or approval.

The budget was reviewed and Pettera highlighted concern in regard to carryover funding and the need for some adjustments. He also mentioned waiting for reimbursements from partners and monitoring spending. A finance committee meeting will need to be scheduled soon when the new budget for next program year is ready.

Lindsay McWilliams, Goodwill, One-Stop Operator provided an overview of the operations report,



noting a significant traffic downturn in January due to weather and closures. Traffic numbers will continue to be monitored to ensure that there are no other issues that need to be addressed. A new OSO staff position has been hired.

Kathy Jewett (Rod Blackburn) moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion adopted.

6. **Announcements**

- The WA was selected to be the recipient of the Workforce Champion Award by Child Start and will be honored at their 1st Annual Legacy Gala on June 24th.
- The 2024 Workforce Alliance Annual Report is available and can be accessed here: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/839ee957aa.html>. The link has been emailed to the Congressional delegation and will be distributed to all board members and stakeholders. The report will continue to be distributed to community partners and local elected officials to illustrate the achievements of the organization.
- The South Central Kansas Legislative Delegation will hold another Public Forum at the Wichita Workforce Center on Saturday, March 15th. Public sign-ups will begin at 9:15; event is from 10 to 11:30.
- Chair Jeff Longwell was named to Sedgwick County Commissioner Stephanie Wise’s Citizens Advisory Board.

7. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 PM.

Attendees:

LWDB Executive Committee Members

Rod Blackburn
Cheryl Childers
Kathy Jewett
Pat Jonas via Zoom
Jeff Longwell
Alana McNary
Tony Naylor

Staff/Guests

Marcy Aycock
Amanda Duncan
Denise Houston
Keith Lawing
Shirley Lindhorst
Mary Mann
Chad Pettera
Janet Sutton
Tyrone Baker, YMCA
Dr. Rachel Bates, Cowley College
Erica Ramos, KS Dept. of Commerce
Lindsay McWilliams, One-Stop Operator, Goodwill