



WDB Meeting Minutes (Hybrid)

March 22, 2024

7:30A.M. – 9:00A.M.

Members Present

Debra Antol (In Person)
Dayana Groff (MS Teams)
Auria Bradley (MS Teams)
Ryan Breisch (MS Teams)
Ashley Chambers (MS Teams)
John DeVere (via Phone)
Marianne Brown Egolf (MS Teams)
Michael Fischetti (MS Teams)
Kristi Gage-Linderman (MS Teams)
Robert Harrop (MS Teams)
Crystal Houser (MS Teams)
Peggy Kershner (In Person)
Debra Millman (In Person)
Alexia Pursley (MS Teams)
Patricia Shermot (In Person)
Karyn Troxell (MS Teams)
Barry Unger (MS Teams)

Members Absent

Kimberly Baskett
Jenny Batista
Dr. Karen Campbell
William Dorward
Kristina Houck
Mark Pinkasavage
David Turner

WDB Staff Present

Daniel Fogarty
Amber Columbo
Megan Noll
Rory Stevenson

Guests Present

Pamela Menet	County of Berks - Director of Economic Development
Derek Harris	County of Berks Economic Development Coordinator
Robert Kerecz	PA CareerLink® Berks County Employment Services Team Supervisor
David Dopkin	PA Department of Labor & Industry – Assistant Regional Director
David Genaro	Equus Workforce Solutions – Regional Director
Tristin Prostovich	PA CareerLink® Berks County Young Adult Program Supervisor
Larry Melf	PA CareerLink® Berks County Operator
MaryBeth Williams	PA Department of Labor & Industry – Regional Director
Amanda Wilson	PA CareerLink® Berks County Business Services Supervisor

This meeting was held in a hybrid format, with in-person attendance available at the County of Berks South Campus location and virtually through Microsoft Teams on March 22, 2024. Mr. Fogarty conducted a roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present. In the absence of our WDB Chairperson, Mr. David Turner and WDB Vice-Chairperson, Ms. Jenny Batista; he

invited Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman to chair the meeting. Ms. Gage-Linderman called the meeting to order at 7:36 a.m.

Ms. Gage-Linderman informed the members that in this hybrid environment, she has asked Mr. Fogarty to help her facilitate the meeting. Mr. Fogarty announced that the meeting was being recorded for minutes purposes only and would be deleted after their completion. Board members were asked to state their names when commenting or making or seconding any motion to assist staff in taking the minutes.

I. Consent Agenda

Mr. Fogarty referred to the consent agenda and asked if any items were to be moved for further discussion. There being no such requests, objections, or abstentions, the following items were adopted:

- Approval of the December 15, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Firewall & Conflict of Interest Policy as recommended by the Executive Committee.
- Renewal of WDB & CEO Partnership Agreement as recommended by the Executive Committee.

II. Executive Committee Report

Mr. Fogarty shared that due to a recent employment change impacting board eligibility, Rick Olmos has left the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB), but will remain on the Youth Committee as a non-board member. In addition, Mr. Fogarty reminded the committee that Ms. Dayana Groff, Human Resources Manager at Alpek Polyester USA, LLC and Ms. Kristina Houck, Director of HR & Strategic Planning at Peiffer Machine Services were appointed to the WDB by the Berks County Commissioners, effective January 1, 2024.

Ms. Columbo reviewed the PY 2023 2nd Quarter WIOA Title I Performance Outcomes, where the WDB failed to receive the desired “green check mark” signifying successful attainment of negotiated results for the quarter. Ms. Columbo continues to work with the contractors and PA Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) to resolve any discrepancies. Ms. Columbo expressed that we should be back on track for meeting performance goals by the next report.

Next, Mr. Fogarty informed the board that Kristi Gage-Linderman and Deb Antol have been WDB board members for (3) consecutive full three-year terms, resulting in an upcoming year off the board beginning July 1, 2024, in compliance with, our current WDB By-Laws.

III. Finance Committee Report

Mr. Fogarty invited Ms. Noll to comment on the Finance Committee’s report. Referring to the PY 2023 Budget vs. Expenditure Report through January 2024, Ms. Noll reported that expenditures for the year to date are at or within budget for all programs. As a result of the approved WDB cost allocation plan, additional WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs funds would be needed to cover anticipated WDB operational costs through year-end close. Ms. Noll also explained that the expired in-school youth contract(s) from 12/31/2023 were

not fully expended so these additional funds would also need to be repurposed to ensure full expenditure by year-end close.

Ms. Noll presented a proposed PY 2023 revised budget for consideration, which included an increase to the board operational costs, a reduction of the summer 2023 in-school youth contract(s), and an increase to the summer 2024 in-school youth contract due to the needs identified earlier.

Patricia Shermot moved to approve the PY 2023 revised budget as presented, and Deb Antol seconded the motion. All members approved the PY 2023 revised budget with no abstentions.

IV. One Stop Oversight Committee Report

Ms. Kershner referred the board to the PY 2023 2nd Quarter 'By the Numbers' Report and briefly reviewed the following results:

- Foot Traffic – 12,384 Total Visits
- Individual Businesses Served – 421 Total
- Virtual Services – 2,588 Total

Next, Ms. Columbo informed the board of the successful micro job fairs that were held at the PA CareerLink® Berks County in February 2024. The micro job fairs were industry specific in, manufacturing, healthcare, transportation/logistics and construction, bringing over six-hundred job seekers to the CareerLink.

V. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Report

Ms. Chambers updated the Board on the DEI Committee's 2023-2024 initiative to develop a Resource Guide for employers following the successful DEI Symposium in Spring 2023. There was great feedback from the committee, ensuring this was a simple guide to be utilized by the Employer Community. The goal is to have this guide completed by June 2024 and accessible in a PDF and printable version.

VI. Youth Committee Report

Ms. Columbo referred the board to the Youth Committee minutes to present the updates on the following:

- Great inaugural partnership with Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC) and Habitat for Humanity that is providing a hands-on opportunity for students to help rehabilitate a home in their own community, using the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they are acquiring at RMCTC.
- Young Adult Resource Fair for undecided Juniors and Seniors scheduled for April 11, 2024, at the Goggle Works. All eighteen school districts were invited to participate.
- Disconnected Young Adult Resource Fair scheduled for June 27, 2024, at the PA CareerLink® Berks County for ages 17-24.

Mr. Stevenson provided the update for our Business Education Partnership (BEP) Grantas follows:

- Both Career & Technology Centers are well into their planning phases, with Career Camps scheduled for the week of June 10, 2024.

- Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) continues to address the concerns expressed by local employers needing candidates with stronger applied math skills.
- Manufacturers Resource Center is hosting their annual “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing” middle school video contest awards presentations on April 15, 2024, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in downtown Reading. Sixteen Berks middle schools participated in this year’s contest.

VII. Planning Committee Report

Ms. Millman, Esq., informed the board that Dave Myers joined the committee in December, followed by Emily Wangolo – Executive Director, Berks County Department of Agriculture in January 2024.

Mr. Fogarty followed with a review of the proposed revisions to the WDB Industry Sector Priorities for 2024-2029 which includes valuable input from members of the Planning Committee and members of the Training & Industry Committee. Mr. Fogarty invited an open discussion from the board with no formal action required at this time. Instead, these sector priorities will serve as a backbone to the next four-year plan. Following a second review with the Planning Committee at its April meeting, Mr. Fogarty expects to bring a final proposed document to the board for approval at our next quarterly WDB meeting on June 21, 2024.

VIII. Training and Industry Partnership (T&IP) Report

Mr. DeVere reported on the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance’s (GRCA’s) fourth Greater Reading Healthcare Connections Industry Partnership (IP) meeting which took place on March 21st at Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC) - West Campus with IP members again engaging in dialogue focused on critical short and long-term healthcare employment and educational needs within Berks County. At Mr. DeVere’s invitation, Mr. Stevenson provided some brief comments on the IP meeting’s outcomes reflecting on the attendance, presentations, and some concern that, while educators and the region’s large critical-care providers have consistently been well represented, representation by smaller nursing and residential care employers in IP activity remains wanting. Mr. Fogarty added acknowledgement of Berks Heim administration as an active IP member.

Mr. DeVere then asked Mr. Stevenson to report on the Nursing Apprenticeship program development. Mr. Stevenson advised that he and Dr. Stacia Visgarda, RACC Dean of Health Professions, met with representatives from the Healthcare Careers Advancement Program (H-CAP) Inc. on 2/15/2024 to discuss possible collaboration in the development of the CNA→LPN Apprenticeship Program and assistance in completing the required Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Council (PATC) application documents to acquire registered status. H-CAP serves as an industry intermediary contractor with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in a national collaboration, funded under a DOL grant, to build targeted workforce solutions through Registered Apprenticeship (RA). Mr. Stevenson commented that, while the initial meeting showed very promising results, there continue to be onboarding issues with RACC’s ability to staff a RA coordinator position. Mr. Stevenson will work to reconnect RACC and H-CAP to accelerate the program development and re-engage our ATO special projects representative’s assistance in the PATC application construction.

Both aforementioned initiatives are funded by a WDB secured PA Nursing Pathway Industry Partnership Grant.

Lastly, Mr. DeVere and Mr. Stevenson provided a brief status report on Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Matching Funds obligations and expenditures to date. They advised the board of the T&IP Committee's discussion of the WDB staff's proposed revisions to the WDB Employment Retention/Layoff Aversion Strategy. These recommendations align with support of the WDB Planning Committee's adoption of the Industry Sector Priorities Strategy (2024-2029) updates/revisions, that will include training activity targeted to specific healthcare-related occupations as deemed eligible for consideration of IWT matching funds reimbursement starting in PY2024.

IX. COO Report

Mr. Fogarty, WDB COO, presented his COO report to the board with specific emphasis on the following topics:

- Local Unemployment Rate: The Berks County seasonally adjusted (SA) unemployment rate in January 2024 stood at a very low 3.5%. Our Local Labor Force has continued its steady recovery to 215,100.
- Thank you to the twenty-two of twenty-four current Board Members who have completed and returned the required 2023 Statements of Financial Interest (SOFI) forms. Our goal is to have the two outstanding SOFIs to Assistant Director Amber Columbo no later than next Friday March 29 – well ahead of the Commonwealth's statutory deadline of May 1, 2024.

X. Market Intelligence Discussion

Following the COO Report, Mr. Fogarty opened the market intelligence discussion.

Ms. Gage-Linderman noted that Gage Personnel is seeing an uptick in job seekers, continuing to connect them to employment opportunities.

Mr. Fogarty followed by asking members to comment on how recruiting and retaining employees in today's market compares to conditions a year ago.

Ms. Antol stated not much has changed from a year ago, the market remains the same.

Ms. Brown Egolf indicated their labor force is a bit more stable than a year ago.

Ms. Gage-Linderman made a call to action for any employment opportunities for Haitian-Creole speaking individuals. She has been working with Alex Civil from *Bring the Change* who is seeking resources for documented individuals. Mr. Breisch commented they are seeing an influx of individuals looking for English as a Second Language (ESL) adult education classes.

Ms. Houser indicated that the Commonwealth is seeing an influx of Haitian-Creole individuals and seeking additional resources.

XI. Public Comment – Mr. Fogarty then asked for any comment from the public. There was no public comment presented.

XII. CY2024 Meetings - The 2024 Berks Workforce Development Board Meetings will be held as follows:

Friday, June 21, 2024
(MS Teams)

7:30A.M. – 9:00A.M.

Friday, September 20, 2024
(Hybrid at Berks County South Campus)

7:30A.M. – 9:00A.M.

Friday, December 13, 2024
(MS Teams)

7:30A.M. – 9:00A.M.