

NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES
Center of Workforce Innovations
January 18, 2024

Present:

Jim Clarida, Kevin Comerford, Karen Kopka, Martina Tovar, George Douglas, Justin Mount, Chris Bebee, Audra Peterson, Anne Taylor, Liz Negron-Haniford, Lori Tubbs, Barb Sacha, Debi Baughman, Anna Ortega

Absent/Proxy:

Staff:

Lisa Daugherty, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Kathy Neary, Shaun Sahlhoff

Guests:

CALL TO ORDER

Karen Kopka called the meeting to order.

Consent Agenda

Mrs. Kopka asked the Board Members to review the items on the consent agenda.

Motion: A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Barb Sacha to accept the consent agenda as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

1. Board Business

Civil Construction Program

Ms. Peterson talked about The Porter County Career and Technical Education had a kickoff for the civil construction program in December and had about 35 students present they met at the Laborers Union training facility in Chesterton, the enrollment process is underway and currently 15 students are enrolled. They are hoping to get 30 students for the first year with a morning and afternoon session. They are currently working with Dylan School Corporation. They currently have about 35 civil construction entities that are on board, whether they are dealing with civil design, civil engineering, construction or the concrete industry. Also, many of the larger civil construction programs, Rieth Riley, Superior and several others are on board. The West side Equipment Company brought a piece of equipment out for demonstration purposes. Ms. Daugherty thanked Ms. Peterson for her leadership on this opportunity.

NWIBRT Business Outlook Workforce Presentation

Ms. Daugherty spoke about a key slide that was presented at the Business Outlook that was hosted by Ivy Tech. Employment and Talent and the need to fill those spots, really speaks to the challenges and the need for strategies that CWI is investing in and the dollars that are being pursued. To position CWI and WorkOne to be a critical part of the solution. Ms. Daugherty spoke about how unemployment spiked during Covid. Now, full employment is when it falls below 5%. Northwest Indiana is at full employment. This slide showed the thousands of employers that are competing for thousands of jobs. College enrollment and/or credential within the state is trending at around 53%, and within the Northwest Indiana 7 counties, as a region are under 34%.

Nomination and Vote of New Members Aco Sikoski and Adrienne Carrol

Motion: A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Anne Taylor to accept the nomination of Adrienne Carrol as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Motion: A motion was made by Chris Beebe and seconded by Barb Sacha to accept the nomination of Aco Sikoski as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Ms. Kopka welcomed Aco and Adrienne to the Board

Youth Policy Change- Youth Eligibility, Determination & Validation

Ms. Stump talked about DWD updating their youth eligibility policy. There were some changes made to that policy that required us to update ours. Youth are determined to be eligible to participate in activities. They're divided into two groups in school youth ages 14 to 21 or out of school, youth ages 16 to 24. Out-of-school youths that graduated from high school or are dropouts. The Department of Workforce Development added. Some assessments that could be used to determine if someone was if a youth was basic skills deficient or not, and that is it was mostly for the in-school youth and that included looking at ACT SAT scores, then we can use those assessments to determine their basic skills. If they fall below a certain level, then they would be considered basic skills deficient. This was needed to add to our eligibility policy. This is the wording for in school and out of school youth. For funding purposes, the way the legislation and regulations are written at least 75% of the formula for youth should be used for out of school youth, and 25% for in school youth, unless there is a waiver from the Department of Labor.

Currently we in the state of Indiana do have a waiver in place, so we can use up to 50% of our in-school funding. Validation defines who is eligible to work in the US, which must be data validated through documentation. Recently, DWD's policy has allowed for self-attestation for eligibility to work in the US. For youth, youth are either all in or all out, so they must be eligible before they can have any type of assistance for programming activities versus an adult who could receive some basic services like job search assistance or workshops. For youth, typically all documentation must be collected before they can receive services. DWD policy recently said they could self-attest for eligibility to work in the US if it was documented prior to their work experience or occupational skills training. The reason they looked at that is because sometimes they do not always have their documents, but if we allow them to be enrolled in some supportive services to help acquire their state ID or pay to get their birth certificate or replacement Social Security number.

Motion: A motion was made by Kevin Comerford and seconded by George Douglas to accept the Youth policy update as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Youth Policy Change- Occupational Skills Training & Providers Policy for Youth and Young Adults

Ms. Stump indicated that recently DWD updated their policy to change some of the occupations in demands they use, they have a system which the occupation needed to be rated 4 flames, they have moved it to 3 flames. DWD's policy also states that there is a cap on the amount of funding you can provide and a duration for use of those funds. Original policy had the CAP, which was \$5500. To be in line with their policy, we needed to also include \$5500 per year program year and a cap of \$11,000 which is in line with the adult and dislocated worker policy. Youth must have a separate provider list; it is separate from the WIOA adult and dislocated worker programs. Providers that have a skills training program leading to a credential could also be put on the youth provider list. We want to recognize both, and we will update the separate youth provider list on a quarterly basis as needed.

Motion: A motion was made by Barb Sacha and seconded by Debi Baughman to accept the Youth policy update as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

2. Old Business

No old business to report on.

3. Reports

Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump talked about working on some new goals. The work ethic initiative that was started many years ago. Aligning work-based learning with career pathways, looking at the credentials that are valued by employers. Ms. Stump also talked about partnerships. Expanding the Jag program. Currently there are 13 programs, Winamac High School just joined us and started this spring. The overall goal is to expand 10 more programs to get up to 23. Hobart High School and Whiting High School will start in the fall. Recently, CWI received funding from LaPorte Healthcare Foundation to assist youth transitioning from high school to after high school; CWI will work with seniors that do not have a plan. We're calling this pilot Bridging the Gap, to provide students with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to find employment after high school.

Legislative Report

Mr. Sahlhoff gave a recap of Governor Holcomb's state address and legislative session. On the Governor's agenda he is taking a strong focus on literacy. The state reading comprehension levels among elementary school students has been dropping. The I read exam is taken by 3rd graders, the Governor has now proposed that the I read test be administered to 2nd graders. The governor also has a strong focus on childcare and making it more accessible and more widely available around the state. For the education system, they are looking at changing some of the age restrictions that prevent younger students from engaging in work and learn opportunities around early childhood education. The other priority at the forefront of the Governor's agenda is Workforce. The state has launched a new campaign called "One Stop To Start" which is an online portal to access training, education, and financial aid resources.

President's Report

Ms. Neary gave an update on the Ready 1.0 grant dollars that have been invested with employers, summits and the emphasis on pathways identifying the barriers as well as the high school pathways and the employers need for upskilling and work based learning.

Ms. Daugherty gave a demonstration of our new website nwiworks.org. This website was built based on the needs of the communities we service and the Hubs that have been discussed. NWI Works approaches each market to understand their challenges and needs, identify their existing programs and services. To collaborate with partners determining how each market should be uniquely designed to serve its community in workforce development through a combination of Opportunity Hubs and mobile training services.

Each community has specific dynamics in its census tracts that lead to different needs for engaging customized workforce initiatives that will be successful in each community. Our goal is to coordinate local service providers, funding sources and community leaders to develop Workforce Opportunity Collaboratives designed to meet the specific needs of each community. Not all communities are the same and each may have different services they may need.

Save the Dates

NWIWB meeting March 21, 2024

ADJOURN

Mrs. Kopka adjourned the meeting.

Jen Grabowski, Recording Secretary