

NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES
Center of Workforce Innovations
March 21, 2024

Present:

Jim Clarida, Kevin Comerford, Karen Kopka, Martina Tovar, Chris Bebee, Audra Peterson, Anne Taylor, Liz Negron-Haniford, Debi Baughman, Anna Ortega, Adrienne Carrol, Aco Sikoski

Absent/Proxy: Barb Sacha George Douglas, Justin Mount, Lori Tubbs

Staff:

Lisa Daugherty, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Kathy Neary, Jen Grabowski

Guests: Becky Fry

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 Chris Beebe to accept the consent agenda as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Mrs. Kopka formerly welcomed Adrienne Carrol and Aco Sikoski to the meeting

1. Board Business

Dashboard/Performance

Ms. Neary highlighted some noteworthy initiatives that are being worked on. The dashboard shown was built as a template to roll up the Strategic Pillars and the goals in the WIOA Region 1 plan. Within each goal, included was the year-to-date performances and client enrollment and placement opportunities. To be able to come up with ways that we could be very client centric in leveraging partners to meet people where they are at. Improving access to qualified workers and awareness of training resources.

Goal #1 A Business Advisory Committee has been developed to help form a plan of action on how to bridge the gap between the talent and employers responding to what their needs are. With this consortium, we received funding from the Commission of Higher Education that lets us be a true intermediary in career exploration with youth.

Goal #2 we have a Registered Farm Worker Apprenticeship that is in partnership with the NWI Food Council. Currently there are 5 farms that are included.

Goal #3 is about Youth in Northwest Indiana and their educational learning and Workforce success. Bridging the Gap is an important part of what we want to leverage in helping students without a plan. There are also 3 new JAG programs that will begin in the fall. We have applied for the Career Coaching and Navigation grants that will give more funding to support career experiences needed for students to graduate.

Goal #4- CWI hosted collaborative Hub meeting with different community stakeholders. We have applied for Readi 2.0. We have also joined the Educational Workforce Committee within the Crossroads Chamber to extend our reach within the communities and to show all the services that are offered.

Goal #5 this is about assuring compliance and operations of the Workforce development system. Reorganizing Adult Ed, extended hours at different WorkOne Centers to help reach a larger audience. A partnership with United Way on Charity Tracker.

Monitoring Report

Ms. Fry, Director of Policy gave an overview of the Monitoring Report. Overall, it was not the best report. Compliance findings:

1. Inadequate Assessment Practices- Guidance was unclear for the staff, not thoroughly assessing clients.
2. Youth Eligibility Determinations-Sampled clients' records did not prove that the clients enrolled were eligible for WIOA. The documentation in the case notes did not support that the youth were eligible.
3. EO Complaint Procedures lack required Elements that DWD (Department of Workforce Development) needed. We had all the elements needed, they were just separated and in different policies. DWD wants to see all the elements/information in one document. This has been completed and submitted

Areas of Concern:

1. Coffee Station Expense (for clients) We cannot pay for it using WIOA funds- We will find other funding sources.
2. Required Multiple Roles Agreement - If your organization serves more than one role, you must have this agreement with Indiana. This agreement has been taken care of and sent to DWD policy dept.
3. Updated Chief Elected Official agreement. This was more of a timing issue will have the signature at the next Board meeting.

We received this report from the state in January and had resolved all findings by mid-February. Among the Compliance findings and areas of Concern, corrective action has already been implemented. Training plans and timelines were scheduled and revised clear guidance has been developed. Ms. Fry is also completing internal monitoring.

Motion: A motion was made by Audra Peterson and seconded by Martina Tovar to accept the monitoring report as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Audit Report

Ms. Sizemore gave an overview of the Audit Report for the year ending June 30, 2023. It was a very standard report. Net assets increased from 1.2 million to 1.4 million over the last 2 years. On the statement of activities which shows revenue and expenses, we had 16.5 million in total revenue compared to the year before 14.6 million. Majority of that is due to the Read and Next Level Job funds. The audit showed that there were zero material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified. We are considered a low-risk entity. This was a clean audit.

Motion: A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Jim Clarida to accept the audit report as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Governor's One Stop to Start Campaign

The Governor has acknowledged the need for the state to promote WorkOne services. The Governor is investing in some navigators as well as marketing WorkOne. The navigators are receiving leads that the marketing is generating and referring them to WorkOne. Ms. Daugherty showed the dashboard, more of a reporting tool.

Governor's Workforce Cabinet

Ms. Neary talked about the Governor's Workforce Cabinet that will be in town April 25th. They will be at the Local Operating Engineers facility in Merrillville. The one item out of many that they were most interested in was the Civil Construction Project. Kathy Neary, Audra Peterson, and Kevin Commerford were there to share the great work that the Civil Construction Pathway and all the major projects that are going on.

2. Old Business

No old business to report on.

3. Reports

Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump talked about at the last meeting they reviewed their goals and objectives that were developed based off the Strategic Pillars. The main objective of the goals is to look at credentials that are valued by employers. The Council is dividing their initiatives into sub-committees. One of the sub-committees is to integrate work-based learning into career pathways with credentials as one of the graduation requirements, so all students are exposed to work based learning. Another goal is to keep with the work ethic initiatives to address the work readiness skills gap.

President's Report

Ms. Daugherty gave an update on the Community Hubs projects. We have come to realize that we cannot bring Workforce Development to the communities. The focus is on connecting with organizations that are doing some piece of workforce development in those communities. But what is becoming known is the lack of knowledge of what Workforce Development is and what it does.

Ms. Daugherty spoke about the 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 unique 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. These Communities recognize the need for these Hubs to be anchored by Workforce Development. Locations in the Hammond and East Chicago Hubs that have been identified are: The Hammond Career Center, it has an opportunity to expand their CTE programs. Not only serving youth but extending hours to accommodate Adults as well. In East Chicago, looking at the old Carrie Gosh building, even though vacant, it has been maintained. It will not require a huge investment; we can move in there immediately and start to provide assistance. There will be some renovations needed. Ms. Daugherty closed out the Presidents report by stating that there are 30,000 jobs in Northwest Indiana, Michigan City alone has almost 9,000 available jobs.

Save the Dates

NWIWB meeting May 16, 2024

ADJOURN

Mrs. Kopka adjourned the meeting.

Jen Grabowski, Recording Secretary