



## Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council (BFWDC)

Adult & Employer Linkage (AEL) Committee

November 30, 2023, 4:00 p.m. – WorkSource Columbia Basin Room 9/Zoom Hybrid.

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### Call to Order

Adolfo de Leon started the meeting by welcoming everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Cyndelle read the roll call while everyone responded. She asked guests and system partners joining virtually online to put their names and organizations in the chat and thanked everyone for joining the meeting.

A meeting quorum was not present.

### AEL Committee Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from October 19, 2023, Adult & Employer Linkage Committee meeting will be tabled and carried forward to the next convening in January as a quorum was not present.

### Program Performance Update – Jessie Cardwell

Jessie put forward a proposal to discuss the direction of information being presented regarding programs and services within their workforce system. She made it clear that the BFWDC would continue to compile their regular reports and ensure that they were included in the meeting materials and that they were open to addressing any questions that arose. The board staff is excited to make AEL meetings more valuable by using this time to discuss grant proposals, letters of support, projects, and challenges in their system. They want to create an environment of collaboration where all partners and attendees can openly discuss barriers, funding shortages, program and participant needs, and any other concerns that may arise. With a positive outlook, they believe this will help foster a more inclusive and supportive community within their workforce system.

When looking at the adult program performance summary and being over budget, a clarifying question was asked. Adolfo wondered if there was concern about why we were over the target, what we could be doing differently, and how to meet that target better.

Jessie expressed appreciation for Adolfo's engagement. The WIOA Adult program was their lowest funded program and had a quarter-1 cap on spending. With the additional EcSA funds being received, they are looking to leverage those. Additionally, the adult program is not usually one that doesn't get spent. They'll continue to keep track to ensure they're staying within their budget.

Heather Woodruff wanted to clarify that they haven't overspent on the contract as a whole. During the first quarter, they experience the spending cap and tend to have customers that they're enrolling and holding on to, to then spend money on once that first quarter cap is alleviated. So, there is a little more direct client spending than they anticipated, and the staffing costs also roll into that. When more staff work on that program, they might charge more time to that specific program. Heather is not concerned and is very diligent in managing that target. She is confident they will come in under either 100% or 99% spent and will continue to be ahead of target month over month.

Jessie asked if it would be helpful to indicate a percentage for the contract year—for example, the total contract amount vs. the quarter spent. So, members can have that as a visual?

Adolfo agreed it would be great to have a visual because, as Heather stated, they're 100% of target at this time, but it doesn't mean they will end at 100 at the end of the program year. Knowing the program year cumulative and quarterly end or a percentage of that would be helpful.

Heather shared that through 10/31/2023, the Adult program contract is 36% spent for the total program year.

Rebecca Williamson, ESD, shared that they don't have a lot of programs where they give funding directly to recipients. One of the programs that they do have is BFET, which helps folks with their job search. Last year, they enrolled twice as many people as they were funded for.

One of the critical conversations for this group is looking at what we have as a WorkSource Center holistically, both the contract that the BFWDC Board awards and what their partners bring to the table, ex, ESD & OIC. They do not have enough resources to meet demand.

Rebecca stated that she thinks that needs to be front and center of the conversations. She can speak for their BFET program; there are funds to serve five people a month, but they receive five referrals a week.

She expressed appreciation for the ability to work with the eight partners at WorkSource Columbia Basin because they work hard to leverage grant dollars together. They don't have enough resources to meet demand; what happens when this center does not have enough money in April?

Historically, if there were funds available, the customer would be served. Due to the high demand and decreased funding, they're starting to have tough conversations about customer prioritization. They've also benefited from program co-enrollment and trying to get the customer the most resources but are stepping back as that might not be the best approach in the future.

Rebecca feels it's essential for this subcommittee of the BFWDC Board to realize the demand for their services and resources is through the roof, not just those through Federal WIOA, and they're not going to meet the demand. There needs to be additional conversations to coordinate available services so that everyone gets served and meets the client's needs together.

Dr. Lee shared that it is also essential in how they tell their story and the increased need for funding. As a workforce board, how do we elevate those stories of success and say, "We need more to do more" to those deciding budgets? When we, as a system, have a legislative ask, do Workforce development councils in the State have a similar voice that they're not using? He thought they recently exercised that voice, as that's one of the reasons we have the EcSA program statewide. But he feels there's some identified opportunity.

During the meeting, Jessie urged everyone to go through the Program Performance Summaries for EcSA, Adult and Dislocated Worker, and Quest Programs that are included in the meeting materials. It is important that we have these discussions to determine the direction we need to take, the areas that need improvement, and what we should prioritize.

#### **BFWDC Organizational Chart Updates – Cynthia N. Garcia**

As you know, we recently underwent significant layoffs, and our former CEO, Tiffany, resigned. To keep everyone informed, BFWDC has updated the organizational chart, which is available for viewing and feedback. This is an opportunity for the staff to assess current processes and utilize available resources. Cynthia expressed her gratitude for the support received from both centers (TC Futures & WSCB) and the WWA Conference, which was attended. This positive collaboration shows the strong partnerships that have been built. As we move forward during this transitional period, we are committed to keeping everyone updated on anything that affects our

organization or programs. We will have difficult conversations, when necessary, but we are committed to being transparent in real-time. Cynthia reiterated her commitment to transparency and communication and is happy to answer any questions.

### **WorkSource Columbia Basin (WSCB) Update** – Crystal Bright, WSO

Crystal expressed gratitude for the support of the Board members and staff to the board that are in attendance, as well as the vulnerability and willingness to speak up by our partners who are coming to the table and openly sharing today that we have resource needs that require a certain level of courage and bravery that maybe we haven't necessarily had in the past to have those group conversations. And so, a huge Thank you for your care and concern for the community and continued commitment to that Crystal shared that WorkSource operation details are included in the meeting materials. She reviewed October WorkSource site operations, including highlights and customer feedback. Crystal summarized service delivery, discussing career and business services and community connections. She provided an update on new team members joining; WSCB welcomed Nicole Duran, Customer Service Specialist with the Leave and Care Division, for a tour and introductions. WSCB will be the FIRST office across the state to pilot an onsite Paid Family and Medical Leave Specialist starting in November. They are excited to offer an additional resource for community members interested in starting their own business. An Entrepreneurship Workshop will kick off on 12/6/23. This class will be offered quarterly, focusing on supporting local Veterans and Military Spouses in business ownership. During October, there was an increase in calls received and handled, which was 10% over September (384 calls handled). The FES Team took 396 “general inquiry/option 7” calls: 348 in English and 48 in Spanish. Statewide, we shifted to a full registration model to ensure access to the full menu of WorkSource services and more complete data collection. This change requires that all customers receiving staff-assisted services are legally entitled to work in the United States. If they indicate that they are not, we are limited in our services. To ensure shared understanding across the team of which services they can provide, WSCB & BFWDC team members met and created a list of available supports. We recognize that community members who come to us are doing so because they need help, and we do not want to turn them away without some level of support/information. Crystal Bright, WorkSource System Coordinator, asked if there were any clarifying questions.

Heather Woodruff was grateful to Israel and his team for their exceptional services. The only way to access personalized training and case management services is through a meet and greet. However, due to high demand, the program has already served 115 participants out of the 138 they were funded for. To address this issue, Israel's team has gone above and beyond by providing Spanish meet and greet sessions and taking on most of the referrals of those customers who will hopefully qualify for migrant seasonal farm worker services. This partnership is an excellent example of how we can meet customer needs and ensure the program's success year-round. Heather once again conveyed her appreciation to Israel and his team for their contributions, leading to better performance outcomes and higher customer satisfaction for job seekers.

Crystal Bright expressed thanks to Heather for leading out on those efforts. Engaging partners, making sure that there's involvement, and Scott, a special thanks to you and Peyton, as well as how we build out what those specialized sessions might look like and how we connect people interested in education.

### **Washington Workforce Association 2023 Conference Highlights** – Cynthia/Jessie

Cynthia and Jessie provided a brief synopsis of the 2023 WWA Conference, where 540+ Leaders, Industry Experts, Workforce Professionals, Economic Development Professionals, and Elected Officials attended. The conference showcased best practices, innovative programs, and projects with proven results. Topics included Partnerships and Coalition Building, Building a More Inclusive Workforce, Performance and Operations, Fiscal operations, and

Industry Engagement – Demand. Congratulations to our local Leaders for being selected to present during two different sessions: Washington’s World of Agriculture: The Intersection of Agriculture, Workforce Development and Farmworkers- to highlight the importance of the agricultural economy throughout Washington State and the important role that Workforce Professionals play in serving both growers and farmworkers. Making Education and Training Accessible for All Through Partnership- to provide an overview of creative ways to partner that increase access to education/training resources and meet mutual customer needs. Congratulations to Cynthia N. Garcia for being the recipient of the 2023 WWA Workforce Professional of the Year.

### Celebrate Champions – All

Adolfo stated that he applauds everybody at the table because he sees active collaboration and partnership and everyone working together to meet those needs.

### Round Table/Agency Updates

Jessie shared that Crystal and David had worked to put together a proposal for the Three Rivers Community Foundation to request funds for laptops to serve customers, not necessarily in a way where they can check them out and take them. But if there's a class, if there's an ESL, GED, etc., and the customer doesn't have a laptop, WSCB will be able to provide them for use and was awarded \$2,000 from Three Rivers Community Foundation. The 3 Rivers Foundation awarded 68 nonprofit agencies funds.

Rebecca Williamson, ESD, shared that WSCB will be leading out piloting Saturday hours and have WSCB open every Saturday in January, February, and March. Crystal mentioned their “peak season” and the mandatory DOL RESEA program for individuals who are receiving unemployment. It's been proven to get people off unemployment and back to work sooner. Eastern and Central Washington struggle with the huge increase of customers during peak season and began this endeavor 9 months ago to get approval to have access to overtime funds so that they could expand access for customers and utilize very trained staff to provide those services.

They are waiting for a computer programmer to make a change to a piece of software. Once that's done, they'll be good to go. The project has been fortunate to receive support from ESD. They're providing the funds needed to hire staff to man the front desk, help customers, provide support for RESEA, and always have a supervisor on-site. This means that if there's anything (workshop, class, etc.) you want to offer on a Saturday within the next three months, now is the time to start thinking about it. We've already secured the funding to keep the infrastructure open. This is different from previous pilots where we expanded hours at work source that may or may not have worked out. This project is built on the backbone of a mandatory program - RESEA.

### Next Meeting

- Adult & Employer Linkage Committee: Thursday, January 18, 2023, at 4:00 p.m., WSCB Room 8/Zoom
- Quarterly Board Meeting: Tuesday, January 30, at 4:00 p.m. WSCB Room 8/Zoom

### Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Board Present	Board Excused	Board Absent	BFWDC Staff	Guests
Adolfo de Leon	Andrew Cook	Geoff Arends	Jessie Cardwell	Crystal Bright
Todd Samuel		Karl Dye	Cyndelle Howell	Heather Woodruff
Michael Lee		Kate McAteer	Cynthia Garcia	Israel Delamora
Jason Jansky				Kayci Loftus
				Kelly Harnish
				Scott Koopman
				Selma Velagic

Respectfully submitted:

DocuSigned by:  
*Adolfo de Leon, Vice-Chair*  
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Adolfo de Leon, Committee Chair      Date

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*Cyndelle A. Howell, Administrative Assistant*  
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Cyndelle Howell, Administrative Assistant      Date