



Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council (BFWDC)

Adult & Employer Linkage (AEL) Committee

February 15, 2024, 4:00 p.m. – WorkSource Columbia Basin Room 9 | Zoom Hybrid.

Call to Order

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

Cyndelle Howell 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

Adolfo de Leon tabled the January 18, 2024, BFWDC Adult and Employer Linkage Committee Meeting minutes as a committee quorum was absent.

Program Funding and Budget Modification

The BFWDC staff recommendation for a motion to award the QUEST National Dislocated Worker Grant Subrecipient Contractor, Career Path Services, an additional \$202,393, bringing the total contract amount to \$546,036, effective February 08, 2024, was tabled and will be transitioned to an eVote as a quorum was not present.

Review of WorkSource Customer Demand

Crystal and Jessie have decided to intentionally lay a strong foundation and help the BFWDC board and committee members better understand WSCB's operations. As fewer people are at the table today, they have postponed this agenda item until April. Cynthia Garcia and Adolfo de Leon discussed the possibility of creating an electronic book for WorkSource customer demand, and Crystal Bright and Jessie Cardwell shared their thoughts on the matter. During the presentation in April, key systemic issues and their root causes will be covered, and it will also provide an opportunity to discuss ways to work toward solutions by utilizing existing resources and reducing costs.

Local Area Strategic Plan update – Cynthia Garcia

Cynthia Garcia expressed gratitude to the board members for their valuable feedback and attendance at the in-person meeting on January 30. She also provided an update on the strategic plan, highlighting the changes made based on the feedback received. The next step in the process is to send the second draft of the strategic plan to partners for review before it becomes publicly available.

WorkSource Columbia Basin (WSCB) Update – Crystal Bright

Crystal gave an overview of the services offered, including career and business services and community connections. She emphasized the significance of seasonal unemployment and the need for more time-intensive services, particularly for Spanish-speaking individuals. The organization has observed an increase in walk-in customers and is collaborating with the DSHS mobile unit to provide additional workshops and group services to support their community.

Additionally, participants in a reentry simulation experienced frustration and empathy for individuals reentering society after incarceration. One person even lost their fear of prison, while another appreciated the symbolic significance of wearing a hat in jail. The activity helped participants understand the obstacles and challenges faced by individuals with justice involvement, leading to increased empathy and understanding.

Crystal Bright and Adolfo de Leon discussed the importance of supporting each other in their work and establishing a foundation for customer demand.

Performance Pit Stop

Jessie highlighted that the performance summaries would be updated and disbursed as information becomes available, as invoices aren't received until February 20. She updated that there will be upcoming state EcSA contract modifications due to organizational changes at BFWDC and staffing changes at Career Path Services. The team met with the state today to discuss strategy moving forward to ensure this doesn't continue to happen over the remaining two quarters. Jessie Cardwell and Adolfo de Leon discuss modifying a program to track spending better to meet a 90% target, with a potential timeline of a month for completion. Cynthia Garcia and Jessie Cardwell discuss reallocating funds from a contract to prioritize customer service and cover oversight costs. Cynthia Garcia discusses challenges with submitting quarterly reports and the lack of guidance from the state on allowable expenses. The incentive program provides up to \$1,000/month in incentives to customers who meet specific criteria. This includes funding for job training and employment programs. Participants must make satisfactory progress to continue receiving benefits. Cynthia Garcia highlighted the importance of budget and dollars for service delivery. Jessie Cardwell and Cynthia Garcia discussed how state EcSA participants are automatically eligible for the Washington College grant and how this connection to community reinvestment funds can provide an additional \$1,000 incentive for long-term training and investment in schools. Heather Woodruff asked for clarification on how this will work, as the students are eligible if they're state X and eligible for the Washington College grant, and how this connection can supplement their family's income. Israel Delamora and Adolfo de Leon discuss the fears of undocumented parents applying for financial aid, with concerns about the public charge aspect and the potential impact on their immigration status. Adolfo de Leon clarified that food assistance does not affect immigration status, but the fear persists among some parents, particularly when dealing with DSHS. Cynthia Garcia shared experiences of undocumented immigrants facing barriers to accessing benefits due to fear and misinformation. Fear of being a public charge and uncertainty about how cash assistance programs are applied.

Round Table/Agency Updates

Jessie Cardwell shared her personal experience with Dial-A-Ride, a transportation service for people with disabilities, and expressed her concern about the service being eliminated by the Ben Franklin Transit.

Adolfo de Leon provided updates on changes within the Community Service Office (CSO), including the dissolution of the case management position and the redistribution of responsibilities between eligibility and case management. Adolfo de Leon mentioned the mobile outreach truck and its availability for smaller events, while the mobile CSO handles larger events and disaster response. The process of getting benefits after completing an application can take anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the lobby traffic. Adolfo de Leon explained the process of applying for benefits at the city's human services department, including an interactive interview process and electronic signatures. Cynthia Garcia asked about the process for new applications and changes in case management.

Kate McAteer shared concerns about the federal financial aid system delay, predicting a potential decline in enrollment and increased desire for students to work instead of attending college. Cynthia Garcia mentioned a family member's son at CBC who received only \$266 in financial aid, leading to questions about the accuracy of the system and the potential loss of students. Kate mentioned that students who don't have a Social Security number (SSN) can apply for benefits at the Social Security Administration (SSA) to receive support. Adolfo de Leon explained that the SSN is required to receive benefits, and the school provides a letter stating the student's need and reason for applying.

Israel Delamora praised local WorkSource staff for excellent job referrals, processes, and career path services.

Crystal Bright and Jessie Cardwell express concerns about moving forward with the committee due to a lack of information and resources. Cynthia Garcia and Adolfo de Leon suggest pushing the decision to next month.

Next Meeting

- Adult & Employer Linkage Committee: Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., WSCB Room 9 | Zoom
- Executive Committee: Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., WSCB Room 7 | Zoom
- Quarterly Board Meeting: Tuesday, April 30, at 4:00 p.m. WSCB Room 8 | Zoom

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Action Items

- Send updated strategic plan draft to partners for additional review and feedback by the end of next Tuesday.
- Clarify the process for automatically triggering Washington College Grant eligibility for state exit participants.
- Contact Adam Taylor or Stephanie Edmondson to coordinate DSHS mobile outreach truck attendance at WorkSource events.
- Connect with Israel to provide guidance on improving practices at another WorkSource office.
- Develop a plan to utilize community reinvestment funds for state EcSA participant incentives.
- Send electronic board vote for contract modification to increase funding for Career Path Services.
- Send details on state EcSA participant incentive payments to Adolfo to review the potential impact on benefits eligibility.
- Finalize contract modification for State Economic Security for All to adjust budget and increase funding to Career Path Services.

Board Present	Board Excused	Board Absent	BFWDC Staff	Guests
Adolfo de Leon	Jason Jansky		Jessie Cardwell	Crystal Bright
Andrew Cook	Michael Lee		Cynthia Garcia	Heather Woodruff
Geoff Arends	Karl Dye			Rebecca Williamson
Kate McAteer	Todd Samuel			

Respectfully submitted:

DocuSigned by:
Adolfo de Leon, Vice-Chair 3/25/2024
 732EA783AA4C483
 Adolfo de Leon, Committee Chair Date

DocuSigned by:
Cyndelle A. Howell, Administrative Assistant 3/25/2024
 60DDB958A0304C1
 Cyndelle Howell, Administrative Assistant Date