



Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council (BFWDC)

Adult & Employer Linkage (AEL) Committee

September 16, 2021, at 8:30 a.m.

Zoom

<u>Present</u>	<u>Excused</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>BFWDC Staff Present</u>
Jennie Weber	Adolfo de León	Lori Mattson	Tiffany Scott
Todd Samuel		Michael Lee	David Chavey-Reynaud
Melanie Olson, Co-Chair			Diana Hamilton
Jamie Rasmussen			Jamilet Nerell
Karl Dye			Cynthia Garcia
			Jessie Cardwell
			<u>Presenters</u>
			Crystal Bright

Call to Order

Melanie started the meeting by welcoming everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. Jamilet read through the roll call while everyone responded. She asked guests to put their names and organization in the chat and thanked everyone for joining the meeting.

Approval of Committee Minutes

The Minutes of August 19th, 2021, Adult & Employer Linkage Committee Meeting were provided for members to review.

Todd Samuel moved to approve August 2021, Adult & Employer Linkage Committee Meeting Minutes as presented, seconded by Jennie Weber. Motion carried.

Program Highlights

PY21 State Monitoring Schedule Updates-Diana

Diana announced that the state monitoring visit scheduled for next month during the week of October 4, 2021 has been rescheduled for May 23 -27, 2022. Rescheduling gives the BFWDC and subrecipient staff more time to ensure participant files are compliant with the federal, state, and local policies and data element validation requirements. We still don't know if it's going to be an in-person or virtual visit.

Washington Integrated Technology (WIT) Replacement Updates – Diana

Diana provided an update on the Washington Integrated Technology (WIT) replacement sessions that BFWDC staff have attended. Last month, we talked about how all 12 WDC's are working with the Athena group to develop an operating framework to acquire a new case management system to replace Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) and the WorkSourceWA. The first session was last week, and the group identified and agreed upon the factors needed to support a constructive and productive meeting, and then we reviewed the working agreements. During the second session, which was yesterday, the group brainstormed the challenges that might come up during the decision-making process. It was encouraging to hear everyone agree that we need to have the right people at the table when final decisions are made. That was a key piece that was missing when ETO was implemented. Diana will continue to provide you with updates as we progress with this project.

Crystal Bright thanked the BFWDC for ensuring that when the conversation around the new MIS happens, we support having the right people at the table.

PY21 WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker/Rapid Response Contract Updates - Diana

Diana provided an update on the status of the PY21 Adult and Dislocated Worker contracts. They have been thoroughly reviewed and were approved by the Benton County Deputy prosecuting attorney this last Tuesday. We continue with the required signature process and hope to have fully executed contracts sometime in October.

PY21 Subrecipient Strategic Plan – Diana

Diana spoke about the strategy that our subrecipient is working on to increase training and employment opportunities for our program participants. They are working to coordinate training cohorts around pre-planned Business Services hiring events. This strategy entails that every participant who goes through cohort training will be given access to guaranteed job interviews after completing training. The plan is to schedule core training sessions that are completed before the pre-planned hiring events. Then the employment specialists ensure each participant has a resume and cover letter in hand and provides mock interviews before scheduling interviews with the employer. The industries that staff is targeting are healthcare, construction, Commercial Drivers License (CDL), transportation, and welding. We will report out on the outcomes of this strategy once it has been implemented.

Diana encouraged members to review the Performance Summaries in the meeting packets to find more programmatic details for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Rapid Response, Disaster and Employment Recovery programs.

Economic Security for All - Jamilet

In terms of monitoring: scheduled for May 2022, the EcSA program may or may not be monitored. As of the last program monitoring, the State Monitoring team concluded all programmatic, administrative, and fiscal monitoring. However, EcSA is not a formula grant but a discretionary grant, monitoring (inclusive of programmatic, administrative, and fiscal elements) happens once in the life of a discretionary grant. As you know, EcSA has been awarded the second round of funding starting in April 2022. Depending on how long the new contract funding takes to process and execute, we may or may not be monitored. We will be starting a new grant cycle in April of next year, therefore should EcSA not be monitored in May 2022, we will be in 2023.

An update on the Participant survey from evaluation team Social Policy Research Associates: as discussed last month, the Second Phase of EcSA Evaluation includes the execution and dissemination of Participant Exit Survey (only for participants completing the program) to all the 4 EcSA pilot program participants (these are active participants). The SPS team has let us know that we should be receiving the final survey draft by the end of Sept. They then will have the EcSA pilot sites use the survey for 1 quarter (October – December). In January, they will analyze the feedback gathered, convene with the EcSA pilot sites, and modify the survey based on feedback to later launch this to all the EcSA programs across the state and then all the other WDCs will be joining Phase 2 of the evaluations. The other WDC are currently in Phase 1, which includes site interviews, and other one-on-one check in with the SPR team.

Community Development Block Grant - Jamilet

We submitted our first A-19 (invoice) to the Department of Commerce. Jamilet mentioned this because, with this grant, the BFWDC has been exposed to a new online platform where programmatic and fiscal activities are recorded and submitted for review and approval.

Jamilet pointed out that CDGB is collaborating with Disaster Recovery to ensure we are not duplicating services at the same food distribution sites. The next step is to continue exploring additional "food site distributions" that meet the program eligibility. For the next months, the BFWDC will focus on creating new partnerships in our community, strategic outreach while continuing working with the Disaster Recovery program to assist when they no longer have the resources to pay participant wages.

Jamilet encouraged members to review the attachments in this meeting packet to find more programmatic details for EcSA and CDBG.

Liaison Report – David

David explained that the August liaison report had a new element; a month-over-month change represented red for decline and green for incline. These changes are largely seasonal and year-over-year; you can see patterns for our area. There is still a strong showing in Benton and Franklin in terms of recovery; the percentage change from this year compared to last year is 135% to 219%.

In total, staff assistance to jobseekers and staff assisted services to job seekers; there is a small decline compared to 2019 or pre-pandemic levels. It's down 9%, or down 2% in total staff-assisted services. We are still significantly up in our business services. In 2020, we served 48 unique businesses, and in 2021, we have served 201. That's an increase of 319%, and in 2019, we only served 56, so it's an increase of 259% from there.

The WIOA numbers have dropped back down as we've restarted the program year. The total participants served and total employed exits are now significantly lower than where they were in June as we have restarted the program year. Families Forward Washington was replaced with the Community Development Block Grant.

The unemployment rate has dropped significantly compared to last year, even last month. Even pre-pandemic levels were at 4.5% unemployment in Benton County, 4.9 and Franklin compared to 2019, that was at 5.2 and five or by 5.2 and 5.8 respectively, we are doing well with jobs right now, even if you compare it to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 job recovery charts there at the bottom; we have dropped a little bit there. If you remember from our July liaison report, we had that number at 108%. I've been using the most up-to-date ESD numbers, which ESD always releases kind of a preliminary estimate for the month, and then they solidify or adjust those figures the following month. So the previous month wasn't sitting at 108. It was sitting at 98%. So the swing I just wanted to assure everybody is not a full 16 percentage points; it is just six. Starting next month, we really should start seeing much more stable numbers.

WorkSource Update – Crystal

Crystal highlighted that the business services team continues to knock it out of the park in terms of working with businesses, engaging them, and increasing engagement over the year. At the top of the Worksource operator report, you will see some statistics around the August virtual job fair, which had an attendance rate of 75%. Anything over 50% is generally considered excellent. There was a slight decrease in numbers of job seeker customers in August. We are not entirely sure at this point exactly why that occurred. But there is an increase in walk-in traffic. The word is getting out as we are continuing to do outreach into the community and attend some of the events like the Hapo back-to-school bash in early September. It's been a long time that our doors were closed, and even though we were available virtually, being able to reintroduce ourselves and remind the community of the resource that they have right here is important.

Crystal also highlighted the new scheduler that was procured by the state, called Qtrac. WorkSource Columbia Basin (WSCB) has been learning how to use it. It was implemented at WSCB in early August. Right now, the staff is making the appointments for customers as they're reaching out to us and tracking our in-person appointments through that. Other functions of Qtrac include tracking wait time, attendance rates serving of customers, and other unique features. will be a feature for the public to be able to book their own appointments online.

Todd asked if Crystal could give some feedback around what businesses are saying about the cost versus the benefit of participating in these job fairs. Are businesses communicating if they think it's worth the time and effort to participate in these job fairs? And it's working, or it's not working?

Crystal responded by stating the feedback that they have received has been mostly positive. There is a need to start looking at what a hybrid job fair might look like to create accessibility for businesses and job seekers. In terms of Brazen and usability, most of that feedback has been positive. The business service team makes the practice of following up with business customers, as they're holding these events and post events, to gather more information and make changes in real-time.

Kayci Loftus added to Crystal's response by stating, the virtual job fairs have been successful as the only means available to customers. There is an interest in employers gaining access to our brick and mortar by coming into WSCB, or TC futures, where they can engage with customers face to face. One positive outcome in the last two weeks is a business services representative brought a healthcare employer to TC Futures. While the customer draw was low, they hired two individuals after meeting with them in person.

Crystal added that since the reopen, one local business didn't have an onsite hiring space or interviewing space. WSCB accommodated that business with a space safely.

Childcare Aware - Jamilet

At the next AEL meeting, we will have a guest speaker, her name is Suzanne Suymaya, and she represents Childcare Aware. She has worked with WSCB and the EcSA program to provide services for parents seeking childcare opportunities as they continue their journey to employment. She will provide a quick overview of her agency, the resources they provide, and a summary of a study that her agency conducted recently to identify the impacts of COVID on childcare services in our area.

Other Business

Melanie Olson- At the outpatient or the Counseling Center, the inpatient psychiatric unit, the crisis triage facility, and all the outpatient services, we are at about a 26% vacancy rate for employees. The positions posted are entry-level, and our challenge is competing with places like McDonald's for entry-level jobs that could lead into careers and even with a sign-on bonus, or raising some of those wages. They offer benefits even with part-time employment, all the way up through health insurance. Health care across the board, not just nursing but all the support positions, is becoming critical. She wanted to make everybody aware that that's what's happening in health care. She is hoping to partner and bring some of those workers looking for new careers and meaningful jobs.

Tiffany asked to clarify what entry-level meant for Melanie's positions. Are there any prerequisites or certifications that are required? A certain level of education like a GED or high school diploma? Can you speak a little bit about that?

Melanie responded with, the entry-level positions there are background checks, because we work for a hospital system, and so no sex offenders, no Class B. and above felonies, GED preferences, high school diploma or bachelor's degree in some point. These jobs are the jumping-off points for long-term work in mental health. Most people who come to Lourdes end up staying there, getting their clinical skills at places like Cullum House or Transitions, and then moving on. However, they have had positions open for several weeks now, and are not getting applicants.

Tiffany said that was helpful and lets us think on potentially what target audience within our job seeker pool of candidates we can maybe encourage to apply or explore the application process.

Melanie added if there is anybody interested in the field of mental health and wants to talk about the field of mental health to gain a better understanding, she is happy to come out and talk with people. She would rather people be informed before starting work.

Diana added that our programs have staff who set up meetings with employers to understand their hiring requirements better and suggested setting up a time to discuss partnering.

Next Meeting: The next Adult & Employer Linkage Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 21, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. on Zoom.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

DocuSigned by:
Adolfo de Leon 11/18/2021
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Meeting Co-Chair Date

DocuSigned by:
Jessie Cardwell 11/18/2021
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Jessie Cardwell, Programs Coordinator Date