

**Workforce Development Board, Inc. Meeting  
of Mahoning and Columbiana Counties – Area 17**

April 16, 2024

Best Western Plus Dutch Haus Inn & Suites

8:00am

**Workforce Development Board Members Present:**

Chuck Adkins, Courtney Amendola for Rachel Ketterman, Theresa Berkenyi for Joe Caruso, Kim Berry, Ralph Blanco, Deann Davis, Dominic Donofrio, Ed Emerick, Joe Fiumara, James Ford, Bryan Higgins, Cody Hilliard, Jim Jarvis for John Zehentbauer, Marty Loney, William Moore, Lori Murphy for Audrey Morales, Mark Nicastro, Meribeth Noble, Jason Schnabl, Puella Stoddard for LaMont English, Jennifer Strank for Brian Eskridge, Randy Swogger, and Susie Wickline.

**Workforce Development Board Members Absent:**

Art Daly, David Deibel, John Frankovitch, RJ Fryan, Matt Golladay, Melissa Maiorano, Marilyn Montes, Julie Needs, Marcy Patton, Mark Ragozine, Julie Rupert, and Arisha Williams.

**Board Staff Present:** Mary Ann Kochalko and Sharlene Senediak.

**MCTA Staff Present:** Cyndy Bresnahan, Barb Bush, Lynn Esposito, Jack Hile, Carol Ramsay-Loomis, and Leigh Samargia-Pflug.

Ms. Davis called the meeting to order at 8:00am after verification of a quorum, and introductions took place.

**Review and Approval of Consent Agenda Items**

Motion: To approve the consent agenda items as prepared.  
Motion made by: Mark Nicastro  
Seconded by: James Ford  
Discussion: None  
Motion approved.

**One-Stop Operator Contract Extension**

Mahoning and Columbiana Training Association (MCTA), as the One-Stop Operator, was recently monitored. The WDB staff completed the assessment, and the results were reviewed by the Executive Committee at its March meeting. The categories reviewed were program facilities, outreach, job seeker services, collaboration, customer data collection, and performance measures and continuous improvement. Based on the final score, the Executive Committee agreed to recommend the contract with MCTA be extended to the Board for another year through June 30, 2025. This will be the last time the contract can be extended; an RFP will be issued to competitively procure the One-Stop Operator for the contract beginning July 1, 2025.

Motion: To accept the recommendation from the WDB Executive Committee and extend the One-Stop Operator contract with MCTA through June 30, 2025.  
Motion made by: Ed Emerick  
Seconded by: Marty Loney  
Abstention: Susie Wickline  
Discussion: None  
Motion approved.

**SFY Aspire Grant Proposal Review**

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, the State Director for the Aspire Workforce and Adult Education program sent a letter to WDB Directors, informing them that they are in the process of selecting Aspire operators for local workforce areas. Based on WIOA legislation, WDBs must provide feedback to ensure the proposals from service providers align with the workforce areas’ local and regional plans. The applications for Area 17 were provided to the WDB Director, and they will need to be reviewed by April 30<sup>th</sup>. The application categories include a regional needs assessment, partnerships, alignment with partners, and coordination with other agencies. The request was made to allow the WDB Director to review the applications on behalf of the Board.

- Motion: To allow the WDB Director to review the Aspire proposals and report results to the Executive Committee.
- Motion made by: Lori Murphy
- Seconded by: Kim Berry
- Abstention: Jim Jarvis
- Discussion: None
- Motion approved.

**Fiscal Agent Report**

The PY23 Financial Report through March 31, 2024, was provided for review. For PY23, Area 17 has \$4.1 million available for customers, however, due to the uncertainty of funding levels, efforts are being made to minimize spending to allow for more carry-in funds going into PY24.

**Balanced Scorecard**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter PY23 (July 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024) Balanced Scorecard was reviewed. Four items not on target this quarter include: Line 7 – Total New One-Stop Visits, Line 9 – # of New PY23 OJT Participants, Line 13 – # of New PY23 CCMEP Youth IOPs (WIOA & TANF), and Line 15 – PY23 WIOA Funds Spent &/or Obligated. These measures were not met due to limited funding and the precautionary measures being taken with spending, given the uncertainty of future funding levels. The conservative spending approach will most likely remain the same for PY24. Line 16 – % of One-Stop Partners Contributing to Cost Sharing was also not met, however, follow-up was made, and payment is expected.

**Program Operator Report**

*Operator’s Report*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter PY23 (July 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024) Operator’s Report was reviewed. During this time, 230 individuals were enrolled in training services, which is down 40% compared to this time last year. Repeat customers and customers who were carried over from the previous year are only down 10%. Area 17 has 28 participants enrolled in OJTs compared to 87 last year, 169 participants in short-term training, compared to 224 last year, and 33 participants in long-term training, compared to 72 last year. The limited funding has impacted the number of individuals being provided with training, however, spending continues to be monitored to maintain operations.

*Mahoning County TANF Youth Summer Program*

MCTA is working with MCDJFS to conduct a TANF youth summer program. Summer staff have been selected and will be stationed at the Oak Hill satellite office. The program is county-wide, and MCDJFS will take applications May 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>. The program is scheduled to run 8 weeks and serve up to 300 youth, ages 14-18, working 24 hours/week. Orientation sessions are scheduled for the week of June 10<sup>th</sup>. OSU Extension will be at the sessions to talk about soft skills and financial literacy.

*Special Grant Update*

MCTA is still participating in the Fresh Start grant, and information for Quarter 9 reports will be submitted next week. The grant can serve individuals who have been directly involved with opioids or know someone involved with opioids. The grant was approved for a no-cost extension and will be available through March 31, 2025.

The \$184,5000 Justice Involved Individuals (JII) grant that MCTA received from the State in March has also been very successful. The grant can fund ITAs, OJTs, supportive services, and individualized career services for individuals who are involved with the justice system and re-entering the workforce. Since the grant began in October, \$108,105 has been spent, and MCTA is on target to spend the remaining funds by June 30<sup>th</sup>, which is when the grant ends. The State project supervisor has been in regular contact with MCTA and is very pleased with the results. JII success stories were shared, and members were encouraged to email any positive experiences they may have working with justice involved individuals.

**Director's Report***Status of Funding*

The State recently issued preliminary budgets for PY24 to local areas. Currently, Area 17 is expected to remain flat-funded, however, final figures are expected at the end of May. In addition to WIOA funds, Area 17 will receive CCMEP TANF funds in October and is expected to receive \$3 million as it has in previous years. Four years ago, Area 17 received \$5.5 million in WIOA funding; the proposed budget for next year is just over \$3.2 million. Considering inflation, over \$6.3 million is needed today to equal \$5.5 million from four years ago. Further budget adjustments will be considered, as needed moving forward, to optimize available services for customers.

*WIOA Reauthorization*

HR6655 – A Stronger Workforce for America Act was recently passed by the House of Representatives, it and has been forwarded to the Senate for approval. The Senate is drafting its own bill for WIOA reauthorization.

A concern regarding HR6655 is the option for states to retain up to 25% of funds from local areas to use for state-related initiatives; currently, states can retain up to 15%.

*WDB Recertification*

The application for the Area 17 WDB subsequent certification with supporting documentation was submitted to the State at the end of January. In February, the State approved Area 17 WDB's recertification which is valid through February 2026.

*Single Audit*

The Single Audit for MCTA was recently completed. Notification was received last week that the audit was accepted by the State, and there were no findings.

*Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations (OUIO)*

Many areas have expressed the need for on-site assistance with unemployment claims. Systems were put in place to prevent fraud, however, after doing so, it is difficult for legitimate claims to be submitted and approved. In response to the local areas, ODJFS placed adjudicators at OMJ centers that chose to participate in a pilot program. The OMJ center in Mahoning County has been participating in the pilot and feedback has been positive.

Since the pilot started in Mahoning County, 60 customers have been seen by the adjudicator, and most of the claim issues have been resolved. Participating areas hope the pilot becomes permanent at the OMJ centers – having the opportunity to discuss questions and concerns in-person with someone can make a significant

difference, which has been the experience at MCDJFS with its clients and benefits system. Discussion was held regarding the unemployment issues construction workers experience since their jobs are seasonal. A letter will be sent on behalf of the Board to support making the on-site adjudicator a permanent service at the OMJ center.

**Partner and Business Member Updates/Good of the Order**

No updates were reported.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50am.