

West AlabamaWorks! Regional Workforce Council
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2023
West Alabama Workforce and Community Development Center

Attending: Donny Jones (WAW), Peggy Sease (DCH), Will Patton (Hunt Refining), Alisa Robertson (Westervelt), Rolf Wrona (MBUSI), Heath Hendrix proxy for Russell DuBose (Phifer), Andre Hollings proxy for Bregitte Braddock (ARD Logistics), Charlie Willie via zoom

Commerce WDD: Edward Nall, Elizabeth Walden, Sabrina Thomas

WAW: Brittani Colburn, Cindi Bradley, Tonya Mills, Morgan Keel, Kyle South

CALL TO ORDER: 9:02am by Rolf Wrona and quorum was established.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Rolf Wrona, Chair, asked attendees to review the previous meeting minutes and requested approval. **Motion** to approve minutes by Will Patton, second by Alisa Robertson and approved by all.

REVIEW OF FINANCIALS

Donny Jones shared information on the financials presented. The revenue for the year is \$1,043,914.30 and expenses have been \$949,020.13. This leaves a balance of \$559,455.98 in cash moving forward. Each of the expense and income line items are broken out by project and grant.

Tracy is working on the last Power grant reimbursement of about \$100,000.

WOW fundraising went exceptionally well with \$172,500 in contributions.

Going into the end of the year spending we are getting some promotional items and focusing on not leaving any money on the table. We have a monthly staff meeting where we go over spending, program outcomes and making sure we are making progress each month.

The Coca-Cola grant will finish out this year with WOW and WOW Varsity.

North Alabama is our new contract to support them with Career Connect. We currently have 28-30 positions on the site now.

Rolf Wrona commented that he appreciates the transparency in sharing the financials with the board.

Rolf Wrona asked for a **motion** to approve financials, motion by Heath Hendrix proxy for Russell DuBose, second by Will Patton and approved by all.

WAW REGION 3 STEERING COMMITTEE

WOW

Brittani Colburn shared information on WOW which will be held October 5th and 6th at Shelton State Community College. We have over 4,200 9th grade students registered to attend, 303 of these students are outside of our region at five schools. We are excited to have new businesses who are signed up to participate that have never been involved before. Due to our generous sponsors, we have been able to go up a size on the tents we provide each world from a 30x60 to a 30x90. We will have four communities coming to WOW to learn how to replicate this in their community. Donny Jones shared we have had some issues with scheduling and lots of schools having homecoming that week.

Peggy Sease (DCH) shared that being a part of the state WIOA board it has been very visible how region 3 really is the best out there. She suggested that we get employer and student testimonials at WOW. Rolf Wrona stated he wants to talk to students working at MBUSI and if any of them had WOW lead them to Mercedes.

There was a suggestion by Will Patton to have a combined superintendent and steering committee meeting to talk about the importance of WOW. Heath Hendrix also suggested having your business Adopt A School partners share with their school the importance and what it means to them.

Donny invited all those present to come talk about the importance of WOW at the educator prep meeting tomorrow at 10am at Shelton State.

Brittani Colburn invited everyone to the WOW VIP breakfast and asked them to register. This year we are partnering with the DCH Foundation to bring highlight Breast Cancer Awareness Month. We will be highlighting what donations to the foundation can provide and accepting donations at the breakfast.

Strategic Plan/CPI's

Sabrina Thomas shared that it is time to review our WAW strategic plan and ensure that it still represents the needs of business and industry partners and where we would like to go from here. The only updates were changing the ready to work terminology to Alabama Career Essentials.

She also went over the Core Performance Indicators (CPI's) to share what information and data we are required to report to the Alabama Department of Commerce. Based on the CPI's West Alabama was one of only two of the seven regions who could show a return on investment (ROI) for 2021-2022. WAW also had the biggest ROI for all seven councils.

November Quarterly

Brittani Colburn shared we are looking for a host location for the November 8th quarterly workforce summit and cluster meetings. Charlie Willie volunteered to host the meeting at WestRock.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Donny Jones shared that the Alabama STEM Council will be placing a liaison in each of the RWC regions. West Alabama will be the first region to get to receive this new staff member.

West AlabamaWorks! in partnership with the Alabama Department of Commerce applied for a PROWD grant with the DOL and BOP to support workforce development and training in the Aliceville Federal Prison. We should know about this \$6.5 million dollar grant by the end of September.

Donny announced that Karen Burklew from Alabama Power was approved to join the West AlabamaWorks! WIOA and RWC board to represent Bibb County. Peggy Sease was named the WIOA state board chair and held her first meeting recently where she presided. Morgan Keel is the new WAW Marketing and Communications Coordinator and doing a great job so far.

IGNITE is our student employment program where we are building a coalition of businesses to put students to work. Over 2,000 applications have been placed by the 926 students in the portal. We need additional businesses who are willing to hire students and post their jobs on the site. We need help reaching the non-traditional employers who are not in Career Connect.

Building Hope has been going well and the Tuscaloosa County Commission is working to place \$175,000 in their annual budget yearly for this program and looking at additional ARPA funds for WAW.

The Modern Manufacturing Program has been delivering hands-on equipment to the participating schools including a time clock to support a simulated workplace in the classroom. We had a session at the statewide AlabamaWorks! conference on MMP with a standing room audience.

The WORC grant is gaining momentum as we launch our first EMT class in partnership with Warrior Academy to train new hires as EMT and place those individuals into employment.

At the AlabamaWorks! conference last week the Tuscaloosa County District Attorney's Office Second Chance Program was awarded the Innovator Award. This is now a nationwide model and is self-sustaining through fees and restitution.

We will be hosting visiting communities for WOW from Lynchburg, VA; Valdosta, Dawson, & Griffin, GA. WOW Programs implemented already include Chesapeake, VA; Tallahassee, FL; Great Falls, MT; & Lynchburg, VA.

Donny will be sharing the WAW story and process with many new groups and states in the coming months. Upcoming Speaking Engagements Include:

- September 14th – AAMA Supplier Diversity Conference: Workforce Challenges & Solutions Panel
- September 18th – SETA Conference
- September 21st – Tombigbee RC&D Annual Board Meeting
- October 19th & 20th – Lynchburg, VA – 2023 Workforce Summit & Staff Training Session with Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
- October 24th – Olympia, WA; Thurston County Chamber: Keynote speaker & Breakout workshop
- October 30th – November 1st – Springfield, OH – Workshops with community & education leaders, elected officials, & board members to discuss engagement, partnerships, & Career Pathways events (WOW & EWA)
- December 5th – 2023 Southeast ACT Conference – Keynote and panel discussion with local leaders

The zone and world layouts for each cluster at WOW were shared with the group.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:33am