

STARK TUSCARAWAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
February 27, 2024
Zoom format

PRESENT:

D. Cole
A. Kerns
S. Marzano

ABSENT:

S. Robinson
J. Sekely

STWDB STAFF

J. Breedlove
R. Harris

FISCAL AGENT

C. Byrd

BUSINESS MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair, S. Marzano called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES-(Attachment)

Marzano called for a motion to approve the June 23, 2023, meeting minutes.

**MOTION: KERNS MOVED FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 23, 2023; MINUTES AS PRESENTED.
COLE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DIRECTOR UPDATES – J. Breedlove, STWDB Executive Director

Breedlove shared the board’s existing policies for On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). These policies are not new policies, and both policies are reflective of the forms of training that are made available through the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity (WIOA) Act. Occasionally the state will make updates to the state policy for the locals to review and/or make updates to their local policies.

- **On-The-Job Training Policy Updates (Review)**

The On-The-Job Training Policy was shared prior to the meeting. Breedlove noted Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS) did not make any updates to the state On-The-Job-Training policy. The policy is **color-coded** which shows the suggested updates (**green** includes language that is adopted from state policy and **red** is suggested local area language to be included/updated). Breedlove reviewed all areas highlighted and focused on those in **red**. The changes to this policy will be taken to the board on March 6, 2024, after review with the Executive Committee.

Locally we wanted to add language to participant eligibility and employer eligibility. The green color code is language that came from the state policy that is added. The focus of our discussion is the “red” color-coded suggested updates.

Breedlove shared that the Comprehensive Case Management Employment Program (CCMEP) is Ohio’s youth program that blends the WIOA funds that the board receives as well as the TANF funds that the lead agency receives which is Workforce Initiative Association (WIA).

When it comes to training programs, WIOA funding can support youth through OJT. We have added that reference to this policy.

Also referenced is the board's Self Sufficiency Standard Policy" which has not been updated but is referenced in the policy; as service providers conduct eligibility on individuals, they will reference the self-sufficiency standard which is 225% of the federal poverty level for WIOA programs that require an income threshold. If someone is interested in receiving services for training, they have to meet that eligibility guideline of up to 225% of the federal poverty guideline.

The **purpose section**, which is in red, was added. The abbreviations of STWDB and CCMEP were added.

In the **background section**, "designated workforce providers" which is Workforce Initiative Association (WIA), was added as they are the career services and business services provider, designated through the board. As OJTs are developed and put into practice, WIA staff are the ones who fill this role. Employers are required to commit to hire and retain the participant at the end of a successful training period.

In the **participant eligibility section**, Breedlove highlighted the definition of Needs Related Payments (NRPs). The definition of NRP is regular, ongoing payments intended to provide financial assistance to participants while in training. She noted we do not have a policy on NRPs as we do not have the funding to support this allowance.

In the **employer eligibility section**, we have added language from the state policy. STWDB service providers are called out in red as they are the ones fulfilling this requirement and working with the employer and participant and creating these types of agreements. It also lists a hyperlink of ODJFS On-The-Job-Training Guidance Manual in this section.

In the **policy and procedure section**, it highlights WIOA and CCMEP eligible participants. It notes the *OJTs address skill gaps that participants need to be successful in a particular job and are not intended to be utilized for entry level positions*. There is a training component that is part of this work since the organization brings people in, but the company must show a progression of hiring & retaining, give individuals a chance for advancement and expand into those organizations. It is stated that employed workers may be eligible for OJTs when the *employee is not earning a self-sufficient wage as determined by the Program Policy & Procedure Letter 12 (Local Area Self-Sufficiency Policy)*.

An OJT Training Agreement is required per employer and covers a maximum of one year for all training plans approved. The maximum for an OJT is 6 months but we transitioned that timeframe into hours which now lists 1,040 hours. We suggested the minimum wage of \$17/ hour as the current policy is \$15/hour which was updated in 2021, and prior to that, was \$13/hour. Updating the maximum allowable reimbursement per OJT to be capped at \$10,000 from \$8,000.

Cole questioned how it would affect apprentices, and it was clarified that apprentices are funded through Individual Training Accounts (ITA) and not OJTs. Per Breedlove, OJT contracts are not being used as part of apprenticeship. Individuals who meet WIOA/CCMEP eligibility as first year apprentices receive supports that includes books, tools, uniform and other supportive services, which may include transportation assistance and Cole agreed.

Kerns mentioned a concern regarding reference to positions with entry level wages, the CCMEP Youth/Young Adult program and by nature of the youth served are going into entry level jobs. Some entry level jobs are \$17 per hour, and how to further define "entry level. There was discussion about entry level positions and OJT and employers planning on hiring individuals with no qualifications or special training needs. With the OJT, specific training needs are identified for a position and a gap in training exists with the candidate; the OJT serves the purpose of assisting the candidate to get from "point A to point B" during a specified timeframe and helps offset the costs to the employer as part of that training process. With an entry level position, the training needs are limited, and the employer will train for whatever they need at that point. The policy intends to clarify an understanding of and intent of the OJT training program and how it can be maximized for the trainee and employer's benefit.

Breedlove noted a **30-day retention policy** language was added to the OJT policy.

Participants taking part in an OJT contract must be contacted for follow-up at 30 day, 90 days, and at the conclusion of the contract to assess training progress. Employers must be contacted for an evaluation at both the midpoint and conclusion of the contract.

Additional language was included referencing "STWDB service providers" as well as a mechanism to assist in identifying employer participation for future OJTs once an initial employer OJT agreement is approved.

- **Incumbent Worker Training Policy Proposed Updates (Review)**

The Incumbent Worker Policy was shared prior to the meeting. Breedlove noted Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS) made updates to the state Incumbent Worker Training policy last year and some of that language is incorporated. The policy is **color-coded** which shows the suggested updates (**green** includes language that is adopted from state policy and **red** is suggested local area language to be included/updated). Breedlove reviewed all areas highlighted and focused on those in **red** with the committee. The changes to this policy will be taken to the board on March 6, 2024, after review with the Executive Committee.

Incumbent Worker Training is another program available through the board. Typically, the service provider which is Workforce Initiative Association (WIA), provides this program/service to the employer on behalf of the board. Funds are budgeted by the board for training activities including Incumbent Worker Training.

Byrd stated the board has historically annually budgeted \$750,000 for all training, with the largest amount spent on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). If there are additional opportunities made available by ODJFS for funding, we may access additional funds to increase our budgeted amount.

Breedlove stated IWT is not a new policy as the state made some updates to the state policy that we wanted to incorporate.

Under **purpose section**, added *the purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) activities in accordance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation. This policy applies to providers of WIOA funded services in WIOA Area 6.*

Under the **definition section**, added *Cohort: a group of trainees to be trained by an employer as part of a single application for IWT. Added, Non-federal share: the portion of training costs the employer is required to pay for its participation in federally subsidized IWT. The minimum non-federal share is determined by the size of the employer.* The board supports 50% of the training cost of eligible employers if the training is eligible. If training is eligible, the employer is responsible for the other 50% of training costs. Each training

program is on a reimbursement basis; the company pays for the training, submits invoices and if everything is approved, will receive a reimbursement of 50% of the eligible costs. The reimbursement to the employer is in cash since it is what the company has paid out and we are reimbursing them.

Under the **policy and procedure section**, the only update to this policy is we have primarily focused on manufacturing and healthcare and defined those as in demand sectors. We have limited funds for programs, so we have defined those in-demand sectors.

Under the **training providers section**, Breedlove referenced green color coding of additions which further defines training providers. This section is not listed in existing policy and further explains who a training provider is and who could be a training provider.

Under **eligibility for participating businesses section**, it was added in red that credentials and skills gained as a result of training and advancement as desired goals for eligible and participating employers. The goal is to advance and move up the pipeline. Additional language was added regarding entities that may not participate in the local program due to limited funding availability. Healthcare systems operating as nonprofits are eligible for Incumbent Worker Training.

Under **procurement of training section**, it was added in green that IWT funds may be used to train employees in management skills such as Six Sigma and LEAN if promotional opportunities or increased wages can be identified post training. IWT funds may be used for LEAN or Six Sigma training for the purpose of layoff aversion. IWT funds may not be used to reimburse training costs that are also being reimbursed by another State or Federal training program.

Marzano asked if IWT is made available on a "first come/first serve basis"? Breedlove indicated IWT is a budgeted expense and available "first come/first serve". Matt Falter, WIA staff member, assists employers with IWT through the Business Resource Network (BRN).

Breedlove noted, all documents discussed today will be sent to the board prior to the board meeting. Marzano recommended letting board members know to review them prior to the board meeting at the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

- **STWDB Committees (Review/Discussion)**

Our **Youth Committee** is in place, and Alison Kerns chairs this committee which meets regularly. A small subcommittee, called the Youth Working Group, which is composed of all youth vendors, also meets regularly.

The **Dislocated Worker (DLW) Committee** is a committee that reviews company closing/downsizing and impacts on local affected workers, as well as funding to support efforts to assist those workers. Sue Marzano chairs this committee. Given the economic conditions over the last several years, locally, we have not experienced a considerable number of events. There was a considerable amount of funding for the Rapid Response (state program) to help those individuals as they were being downsized. The board has the ability to transfer their WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds and utilize them where needed most. For example, we are serving more low-income adults that need assistance rather than individuals

that have been downsized from employment through no fault of their own and have been for several years now.

The **One Stop Committee** is a regularly attended committee of all partners that make up the OhioMeansJobs center system. Currently we have 16-17 partners that make up this system and we have a formal committee of the partner's leadership that meets every quarter. This committee reviews center activities, metrics, customer feedback and also is involved with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that partners agree to every two years and their respective budget.

The request is to change the name from One Stop to **Job Center Committee** as. The reason for the name change is that "One Stop" is language attached to the Workforce Investment Act federal legislation prior to WIOA legislation. Job center is more widely used as the job centers are branded nationally as "American Job Centers".

We are also suggesting a change of the name for the **Public Relations Committee** to **Marketing/Outreach/Engagement Committee**. This committee has not met for some time. This committee has been called out in the Strategic Plan (referenced & shown on screen-the section on the Strategic Plan "Branding & Marketing"). Breedlove met with Joe Sekely who is the chair of this committee to alert him of a suggested name change and committee refocus. We will need to outreach to board members and community for participation. The board's strategic plan specifically calls out engagement of partners, industry, and job seekers. We are poised at revamping this committee and also would like to rename it to Marketing/Outreach/Engagement Committee.

- **By-Laws Proposed Updates**

Breedlove shared the By-Laws on the screen, she noted we are suggesting changes to the word "Chairman" to "Chairperson" and also, would like to change the names of some of our committees of the board. We suggest changing its name from Public Relations to Marketing/Outreach/Engagement Committee and also suggesting changing name of One Stop committee to Job Center Committee. Breedlove noted the language of the By-Laws is fairly flexible.

MOTION: COLE MOVED ACCEPT THE PROPOSED UPDATES TO THE BY-LAWS. KERNS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:02 p.m.