

**Program Oversight Committee Meeting
Friday, August 16, 2019
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center, 160 Rochester Drive, Louisville KY

Members Present: Rebel Baker-Chreste, Patricia Williams, Deana Karem, Christy Ralston, Lisa Thompson (proxy for Sadiqa Reynolds)

Staff: Cindy Read, Tobin Williamson, Patrick Garvey, Renee Walters, Regan Wann, Huston Monarch, Mary Rosenthal, Melinda Breslin, Zakiyyah Raymore, Angella Wilson, Sarah Ehresman, Laura Paulen

Guests/Observers: Philip Donahue, Natalie Reteneller, Marsha Berry, Kimberly Boyd-Lane

Welcome and Introductions - *Deana Karem*

The meeting formally began at 8:33 A.M. Ms. Karem thanked everyone for their attendance. She said it has been a pleasure to serve as POC Chair and she has 1 or 2 meetings left until Ms. Ralston takes over. She is not going away, however, and emphasized this is important work to both her and to GLI. Everyone around the table and then around the room introduced themselves.

Greetings from the Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center - *Zakiyyah Raymore*

Ms. Raymore said she has been at KMCC since the beginning, when it was “nothing here but a dream, a hope, and a prayer” in 2013. She said it has come a long way since then, with many stats to impress. For example, more than 1,500 people have gone into career pathways. 2,417 MSSC certificates have been issued. 339 five-year certifications in productions and assembly have been issued, as well as 703 national career readiness certificates. However, as she pointed out, KMCC is much bigger than numbers; the main purpose is working with people who have barriers. She shared a note from a graduate named Terry, who recovering addict with no support system. She talked about another graduate who was a referral from a substance recovery program who is getting his life back on track thanks to the job they got after going to KMCC. She shared a third story of a person who was previously homeless but is now making \$17/hour and has their own apartment. Our success, Ms. Raymore said, is measured by watching customers succeed.

Ms. Karem asked about average class size. Ms. Raymore said that when KMCC started, there was just one class (CPT). Then GE endorsed us, and more people started coming. From that came the MTECH program, a three-week course with skills employers were looking for. Last year, word-of-mouth gave us enough clients that we did not have to do any formal recruitment. The average class now has 20-25 customers. 250 were placed into jobs last year, an average of 13 per class. Still, barriers – addictions, transportation, homelessness, etc. – prevented some people from placing into jobs. The future is bright, as KMCC is in talks with a very high-paying employer and has developed a new training class (forklift certification for ESL customers).

Ms. Karem asked how many classes per year, to which Ms. Raymore said there were fourteen this year. Ms. Read said there were classes almost every month (Ms. Raymore clarified there were simultaneous classes in March and October).

Finally, Ms. Raymore mentioned the “table talks” program they recently started to offer. Participants talk about barriers and everyone teaches each other. The KMCC is partnering with community agencies like Stay Clean, leaving the drug counseling to the professionals. A job, a career, is important, but people have to have their basic needs met first.

Ms. Read expressed “total awe” for Ms. Raymore and her team, and alluded to their constant improvement. KMCC’s funding is a little bit different from the other career centers. We received a ~\$300,000 grant from the Louisville Redevelopment Authority, a quasi-governmental agency that gets a percentage of income from the industrial park. The KMCC’s goal for job placements per year is 250, which has never been missed throughout the program; this despite the fact that KentuckianaWorks has never used a dime of federal funding for the actual training. WIOA pays the staff, but other funding streams pay for the actual training. Mr. Monarch echoed Ms. Read’s comment, saying Ms. Raymore and her team are doing a great job and doing exactly what WIOA asks (i.e., working with populations who are facing barriers).

Review & Approve Minutes from June 21, 2019 meeting - Deana Karem

Ms. Ralston mentioned “the minimum wage thing,” and was concerned the minutes did not accurately reflect what happened at the last meeting. She said they did not really come to an agreement, though she said they approved the list of targeted occupations. Ms. Read thought it *had* been approved, admitting it was quite a “thorny conversation.” Ms. Ralston asked for the minutes to be amended to correct the self-sufficiency conversation. Ms. Read said we would be happy to go back and re-listen to the discussion; perhaps there was some confusion because Mr. Williamson wrote the minutes just by listening to the audio, he was not actually at the meeting.

The amount in ITA policy (\$4,100) was questioned by Ms. Ralston, and then clarified by Ms. Rosenthal. Ms. Read mentioned that the POC provided recommendations for the Board, and that we only bring policies to the POC if they affect a) funding or b) access. The Board got very skittish about the self-sufficiency discussion for various reasons, they very much reacted to the amount. Setting the self-sufficiency amount higher than some of their own entry-level wages was upsetting to some of them. Ms. Ehresmann will be using the same recommendation for the next Board meeting next Tuesday, but with some additional research and greater context. As a reminder, Ms. Read clarified, nothing approved by the POC at the last meeting was approved because the Board was not at quorum at their last meeting.

Ms. Ralston made a motion to NOT accept the previous meeting’s minutes as provided, but rather go back and made edits to them. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baker-Chreste.

Staff Update: Self-Sufficiency Wage - Sarah Ehresman

The Board did not approve the self-sufficiency wage during their last meeting, but we are taking it back to them next week following additional research and revisions. Basically, we need the Board to decide the wage threshold where workers can currently be earning while still being eligible to access our training dollars. WIOA defines that threshold as the “self-sufficient wage.” Workers who earn below it are eligible for ITAs, whereas those above it are not. It is only applicable for adults who a) are employed and b) still want to receive our services. We currently have \$200,000 for technology services and are waiting to hear back from the state for \$1,000,000 for healthcare services.

Ms. Ehresman talked about what other WIBs are doing, thought generally it is difficult to say. The wage thresholds vary tremendously, going from \$32 to Albuquerque to \$12 in Athens, Ohio, for example. We asked a national consultant about what they think we should do, and they said for “the greatest flexibility to help the widest pool of people,” we should “make the self-sufficiency wage relatively high.” It is important to note that training scholarships do not operate in a vacuum. Those most likely to be eligible for these are: 1) low-income individuals who, 2) have not already earned a post-secondary degree, and 3) plan to attend community college. Ms. Ehresman’s suggested guidelines are to use a percentage of the federal poverty guideline, which is well-known and updated annually. Other options are to use measures such as the LLSIL, a flat threshold, or housing assistance guidelines. She recommended using 300% of the federal poverty guideline (\$18.01/hour or \$37,470/year) as the self-sufficiency wage; this sets the wage threshold high, which gives KentuckianaWorks more flexibility in offering scholarships.

Ms. Ralston said “Sarah, you actually are my favorite person. This will help tremendously.” The new self-sufficiency wage presentation, she feels, addresses the concern some Board members felt last time about not offering a “living wage.” This presentation is better and the new examples will help, but she is still not sure how the vote will go.

Ms. Karem asked: “if you are working in a hospital in a low-wage position, will there be any kind of other evaluations/criteria to get training funds other than just the wage threshold?” For example, an EMT is already in a medical pathway; why would they not get the funds even if they are above the threshold? Ms. Ehresman directed the Committee to the salmon-colored memo. WIOA guides us in this role. The first criteria is the wage. The second is a determined need to train. However, you have to meet the first in order for the second to be relevant. That is why we are recommending a higher wage threshold, in order to help more people. Ms. Ralston agreed that we need to “go wide” in the lower ranges (i.e. raise the threshold) so you can cover more people. Ms. Thompson said she was “pleased to see as people graduate from some specialized trainings they are no longer supportable,” giving kudos to KentuckianaWorks programs. The concern, mentioned by both Ms. Thompson and Ms. Ralston, is that it is important for employers to take over the pathways work at that point. Ms. Read referred to the national consultant emphasizing the career pathways model, and then the LMI’s yearly list of targeted occupations.

Ms. Karem asked about the will of the committee regarding Ms. Ehresman’s recommendations (setting the self-sufficiency wage at 300% of the federal poverty guideline). Ms. Thompson expressed concern that by raising the wage threshold, those at the very bottom might lose out on the finite resources available. Ms. Read assured her that Priority of Service is the law, so they would still receive services. Ms. Rosenthal briefly discusses the different funding streams for Adult Priority, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. An interview/assessment is required for determining training need. WIOA is intended to be the last resort of available funds; ideally, other sources (employer funding, Pell grants, etc.) would be available first. The basic criteria are to be receiving public assistance, be low income, and have basic skills deficiency.

Staff Recommendation: Supportive Service Policy - *Mary Rosenthal*

The current Supportive Service Policy provides a limit of \$600 for up to two years. We are seeking board input on a couple of things: first, requirements for accessing supporting services money and second, the amount of support available.

The last time the policy was examined, it was decided to focus on Adult Priority customers. The question now is whether to keep that funding exclusively to that population or to expand it to include self-sufficiency level customers. Ms. Rosenthal recommended access be aligned to self-sufficiency (in other words, option #2) with the justification being that if you can access training, you would then also be able to access supportive services. As the policy currently is, there are some people who can access the training but not the support. Ms. Read said once we take someone on, we are invested in their success. Aligning access with self-sufficiency would help.

The second topic involved the amount of supportive services available. The limit is currently set at \$600. However, KentuckianaBuilds has asked to raise it to \$700 due to increased tool and transportation costs. A third option is to raise it to \$1,000, benchmarking it to community college costs. Ms. Rosenthal recommends option #3. This policy revision does not mean everyone would automatically get \$1,000; rather, it allows for up to a maximum of \$1,000. Ms. Ralston asked if computer purchases were part of “supportive policy” allowances, as so many courses at JCTC are either fully or partly online classes. Ms. Rosenthal said this is where it gets tricky. Computers are not explicitly listed, and this is a topic that has been debated. If it is a requirement for the course, though, it is considered part of the required materials. Ms. Read said we have approved some computers in the youth program, though it was pointed out that the official policy is still murky, as in some other cases, we have said no.

Ms. Karem suggested accepted Ms. Rosenthal’s recommendations of aligning access with self-sufficiency and raising the amount to \$1,000. Ms. Thompson made a motion which was seconded by Ms. Williams. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff Update: WIOA Performance - *Huston Monarch*

Ms. Read introduced Mr. Monarch, pointing out that this will be his final POC meeting since he is retiring. He directed everyone to the second yellow page in the packet. The more we have looked at it, he said, the WIOA performance measures are a lot different than previous WIA law ones were. These are measures the federal and state governments look at. Specifically, five measures apply to participant outcomes: 1) employment rate, 2nd quarter; 2) employment rate, 4th quarter; 3) median earnings; 4) credential attainment; and, 5) skills gain. The first three are all exit-based (meaning clients have to be exited from the system). One measure – “Effectiveness in serving employers” – applies to how we serve business, but it is still in development; the Department of Labor will decide more. It has a few components; specifically, employer penetration rate, repeat business customer rate, and retention rate (Kentucky chose to examine the first two components). In order for these to be measured, the Department of Labor has set a four-quarter parameter (for someone who exits, we have four quarters to see how they perform).

Mr. Monarch said we have not yet seen the final performance for 2018, but we do have information up to the third quarter. In the Adult program, we have had consistent problems with the credential rate. However, this has been caused by the new data system. The state has assured us they are trying to improve it. Right now it says we are at 32.8% when our goal is 55%, but we are pretty sure that is wrong. We are working diligently with the state to get it sorted out. The same can be seen in the Dislocated Worker program and the Youth programs. All other measures are good, though; it is just the credential rate that is giving us issues. The state has told us that with all the WIA-to-WIOA transitions and data system technical issues, we will not held

accountable this year. Hopefully the data system improves for next year and we will be able to give more accurate information. Ms. Karem said that as a staff, we should set some of our own expectations, as “not being held accountable” likely will not fly for some people. Set our own bar for performance, do not wait for the state. Ms. Read said that when we negotiate with contractors, it is done with this in mind. She and Mr. Monarch will discuss specifics in coming weeks.

Ms. Karem thanked Mr. Monarch and wished him a happy retirement.

Year End Program Review / Deputy Director’s Report - *Cindy Read*

Due to time, Ms. Read combined these two sections. The highlights/concerns (pink sheet) serves as the digest for all of our programs, followed by more detailed reports for each. One new feature that is being rolled out: the One Stop Operator is collecting data for all foot traffic. This metric is important because it gives us a gauge of how our system is being used. Ms. Wann will play around with the formatting, but you will be seeing this every month from now on. At the start of the year, the comprehensive career center was flooded with foot traffic. Then the state made some changes, and it was crickets. Now, it is starting to tick up again.

Ms. Read said there was one other thing to share with the committee: hot off the presses (actually, still at the printer!) is the new annual report. Kudos to Mr. Garvey and all the other teams for putting it together. We culled all our data and included lots of pictures, with a focus on programs and workforce alignment. We are really happy with the spread on the counties, both on adult and youth programs. The county judges are happy with the services we are providing to them. Another thing to point out is that we track how much money we raise. Some workforce boards use only the funding WIOA gives them. We do not; WIOA only covers about half of our funding. The rest comes from grants and other donations. We recently received a new grant, from HUD, to work with homeless youth.

Ms. Karem said the report looked excellent. Ms. Ralston agreed, saying it will be helpful when the POC members interact with people from other communities. Ms. Karem claimed she just finished up a nine-month-long program with other Chamber of Commerce executives from around the country and was amazed at how little partnership/collaboration there was with their respective workforce boards. That sort of collaboration, along with bringing in the county judges, has been transformational for KentuckianaWorks and the Louisville region.

Announcements - *Cindy Read*

Vincent James, who is a Board member, was previously on the POC but has stepped down due to a structural conflict that prohibited him from participating in the Committee. Ms. Read has recruited Michael Hesketh, another Board member, to replace him. Mr. Hesketh will provide valuable perspective from the surrounding counties.

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 A.M. following a motion by Ms. Thompson and a second from Ms. Williams.