

EASTERN WASHINGTON PARTNERSHIP

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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A joint meeting of the Eastern Washington Partnership Workforce Development Council (WDC) and the Regional Board was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020. The meeting was held virtually and called to order at 12:31 PM by Chairperson Bill Clemens.

In attendance were WDC members Bill Clemens, Larry Frick, Brian St. Clair, Tony Maiorana, Leslie Druffel, Tessa Wicks, Gabe Coates, John Little, Jerry Anhorn, Jennie Weber, Angela Merritt, Jeff Koffel, and Kathy Covey. Also, in attendance were Regional Board members Scott Hutsell, Art Swannack, Todd Kimball, Brian Shinn, and Charles Armerein (filling in for Mike Talbott). In addition, guests included Bryan Raines, Anne Buchan, Kelly Charlton, Liz Guerra, Jaclyn Jacot, Susan Pearson and Asja Suljic. Staff members in attendance were Rod Van Alyne and Tracy Ferrell.

The meeting began with the call for approval of today's proposed agenda.

Scott Hutsell made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Jeff Koffel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next order of business was the approval of the previous meeting's minutes.

Jeff Koffel made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 28, 2020 meeting as presented. Tony Maiorana seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Regional Board

Scott Hutsell presented the Regional Board report. There was a meeting held on September 17, 2020. In attendance were Scott Hutsell, Art Swannack, Todd Kimball, and Brian Shinn. It was determined that the members in attendance would constitute a quorum. The first order of business was to elect officers. Scott Hutsell was re-elected to serve as Chairperson of the committee. Art Swannack will serve as Vice Chairperson and Todd Kimball was elected to the serve as Secretary.

The next order of business was to review and approve the PY19 and PY20 budgets. After discussion, both budgets were approved as presented.

The meeting minutes were included in the packet for the Board of Directors to review. After review,

Brian Shinn made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Art Swannack seconded the motion. The Regional Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.

The point of business to discuss was that during the recent ESD monitoring, it was discovered that the PY19 budget had not been approved at the September 2019 board meeting as

required. The monitors asked that both budgets be presented for approval at the September 2020 meeting. It was added that there had been significant carry-in funds available due to changes caused by Covid19 (no travel) as well as other issues. Those funds will go towards the hiring of a Deputy Director / Planner and to support a One-Stop Operator. Additional funding will also be added to a "training" line item that will benefit all staff.

Chairperson Report

Bill Clemens presented the Chairperson report. He restated that the budgets for PY19 and PY20 had been approved by the Regional Board. He noted that the budget had been included in their packet and asked if there were any further questions or discussion from the WDC or others. There was none.

Administrative Committee

The Administrative Committee meeting was held by phone on September 14, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and recommend an increase in the Individual Training Account (ITA) limit as listed in EWP Policy 203. In addition, there was a discussion on the definition of unemployed because of general economic conditions in the community in which an individual resides or due to a natural disaster.

It was explained that participants in the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs that enter any classroom training are issued an ITA account that is meant to be used to cover costs associated with the training. It was brought to the attention of Rod Van Alyne that there is a need to increase the ITA limit which is currently set at \$5,000 for the per year limit and \$6,000 for the short term (less than nine months) limit. Exceptions to this rule have been treated as special requests and are often due to the rising costs of training. Rod researched other workforce areas for a comparison of ruling on limits. The result was a wide variety of limits set for ITAs. A proposed change to \$6,000 for the per year limit and \$9,000 for the short-term limit compared well to the limits set by the other workforce areas. There were concerns expressed on how the raise in the limits would impact funding and enrollment. Rod responded that not all ITA's are meeting the current limit. However, if they did meet the proposed new limits it may mean that less individuals would be served. Rod is looking at possible solutions, including balancing by a lowering cost option. The Administrative Committee agreed to recommend that the per year limit be raised to \$6,000 and the short-term limit be raised to \$9,000.

Scott Hutsell made a motion to accept the report and recommendation to raise the limits as proposed. Leslie Druffel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

In other Administrative Committee business, it was explained that during the recent ESD monitoring it was discovered that a local definition for "unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community in which an individual resides or because of natural disaster" was missing. Rod did an additional assessment of what other workforce areas were using as the definition. He presented the examples to the service providers for input. There was consensus on the example that is provided in the board packet. The Administrative Committee discussed the changes as they relate to the current pandemic. Rod informed them that the guidance to create a local definition was in place prior to the pandemic. Therefore, he did not believe that the intent of the requirement was specific to the pandemic. However, he would confirm this with the monitors. The Administrative Committee had recommended that the language, as written, be approved. If there were any further changes required after the monitor's review, those changes could be made at today's meeting. Rod shared that he had contacted the monitors and they had agreed that the pandemic should be considered a natural disaster. However, Greg Ferland with the Monitoring Unit was going to run the information

through the Policy Unit and would let Rod know if the pandemic is not considered a natural disaster according to policy. As of the time of the meeting, Rod had not received a reply. Scott Hutsell asked if any of the members of the ESD staff that were in attendance had an opinion. Jennie Weber noted that the language appeared to be more reflective of pre-pandemic times and she saw no red flags.

Leslie Druffel made a motion to approve the definition as proposed. Art Swannack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance committee met virtually on September 17, 2020 to review the performance report of PY 2019, which ended on June 30, 2020 for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and on March 31, 2020 for the Youth programs. Rod mentioned that this will be the last year that the programs will run at different time periods. As of July 1, 2020, all program years will run from July 1 through June 30. During the review it was noted that enrollment numbers in the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are down slightly for year end, especially in the last quarter primarily because of COVID19. Rod stated that the lower numbers were a common factor across the state. He did not see the declines as critical when taking into consideration that from March through June, WorkSource business was focused towards helping those with unemployment needs. In the Youth programs, the enrollment numbers were up as of year-end. In-School youth enrollment was down, but the out of school number more than compensated for the decline. The Exit numbers for all programs were down, but still within a reasonable range. It was noted that the change in numbers in the first quarter of PY2020 will be interesting.

During the meeting it was explained that there had been an error in one number in the initial report that was presented to the QA Committee. The report was corrected, and the numbers are all accurate as presented today. In addition, to the regular report, Rod reported that he had received a snapshot of the final figures for PY18. The overall report was 100% of the proposed goal!

The committee had also discussed the importance of the data and how it can help to project the future. Rod expressed the importance of considering different ways to embrace WIOA to better serve more members in Title I. Future questions that will need to be answered include, "How should that look?" and "How can we provide more service?". The answers to the questions will likely impact the report numbers. Jennie noted that, although the numbers are currently down, the data is still important to help project for the future. Rod added that the historical data should also be reflected on by the Service Providers.

Director's Report

Rod began by thanking everyone for "dialing in" to today's meeting.

Rod announced that EWP has been awarded two grants specifically for those affected by the Pandemic. One grants for approximately \$285,000, will be for Disaster Recovery. Funding will offer the availability to respond in those areas hard hurt by the COVID Pandemic. Blue Mountain Action Council has already agreed to take part in this funding opportunity by placing several dislocated workers in local food banks to help distribute food in the Southern Counties. The other grant has \$400,000 for activities to help with Employment Recovery for those individuals that have lost employment due to the COVID19 Pandemic and are in need of retraining. All wages and benefits under this funding will be covered by the grant funds. The grants will run through March 2022. Art Swannack asked if either of the funding opportunities could be applied to areas devastated by the recent wildfires. Rod replied that the funds were

specific to COVID. There was further discussion about other grant opportunities. Rod will speak further with interested Partners after today's meeting and after he has talked further with the grant funding office(s).

Rod initiated discussion on the Local Strategic Plan that got put on hold in March. The draft copy had been approved and the actual approval process was beginning at the time of closures due to the pandemic. Rod would like to start the process back up again this winter with an aim for final approval at the December WDC Meeting. Rod had been informed that there were no additional requirements needed.

Rod reported on the ESD monitoring that occurred in June. The Eastern Washington Partnership was the first full administrative and fiscal monitoring to be conducted virtually. It took a little longer than usual as paperwork was shuffled back and forth electronically. The initial report was received with no findings or questioned costs. There were some areas that were identified as needing action taken:

1. The RRIE program had been entered in ETO incorrectly. Staff was required to make necessary changes so that the program was correctly entered.
2. The PY 2019 budget needed approval, along with the PY 2020 budget.
3. There is an interlocal agreement to allow Rural Resources Community Action (RRCA) to provide services. It was noted that the services provided by the Employment and Training department of RRCA are billed by a monthly invoice. This process requires more specific internal control. The process is in place and has been working well, but it has not been formalized. The invoices provided by other entities (BMAC, ESD) provide a complete breakdown of expenses. Rod is working on the creation of process to formalize the procedure.
4. A Cost Allocation Plan with ESD is needed. ESD is now requiring a cost allocation rate be determined, for the first time. Rod is working with ESD on a rate that would not affect other pertinent rates. They have come to terms on the rate amount. But need to work out the process.
5. Under the current Property and Inventory Process, it is now necessary to include the date of the purchase. Rod was able to fix this issue immediately.
6. For any procurements done by a third party, it will be necessary in the future for the Board of Directors of the third party to sign a clarification of "No Conflict of Interest". Rod will assure that this is added to the process.

Labor Market Report

Asja Suljic provided a report on the local economies. She presented statical data that could be considered when making decisions in the future. A copy of her presentation can be found on the ewpartnership.org web site.

WorkSource Report

Jennie began the report with an update on information from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. There has been an increase in self-service seekers. Jennie went over the information on job seeker demographics presented in the report. Then local offices reported as follows:

- Bryan Rains, ESD – Colville: Staff is learning to operate virtually. Substantial improvements have been made to the virtual services that are being provided. Bryan sees this as a benefit as they move into the future. However, they are taking into

consideration the challenges caused by the lack of internet services in the area. They are currently looking at data closely to better target their services. This is happening in conjunctions with other partners to coordinate local Business Service Teams. The information ties directly to the unemployment claims to see who is looking for work and what type of work is needed. They are allowing for what the specific skills are and what the communities need. He concluded with the news of an additional business closure in Pend Oreille County (Safran). There were 32 employees affected. Approval to provide TAA services has been granted. The employees affected by the closure of Ponderay Newsprint are still waiting on determination of TAA approval. The number affected at this company is 148.

- Angela Merritt, DVR – Their case loads are down slightly in rural areas. Staff is using phones, ZOOM, face time, and whatever other electronic service they can to provide outreach to clients. Angela noted that she is seeing more people use ZOOM for communicating. However, connectivity continues to be an issue. They are looking at the creation of other options including Hot Spots. They have received 90 I Pads for customer use in the DVR offices, as they continue to partner with Worksource and other partners. On-line education continues to be a challenge. Angela concluded with the announcement that there would be a new director in the Colville Office. Lesa has accepted the offer to become a Regional Trainer.
- Kelly Charlton, RRCA: Kelly's staff is continuing to provide services in new and non-traditional ways to meet the needs of the clients. They are all adapting well and looking forward to the future. Enrollments are down, but referrals continue to come in at a regular pace. The students at the Curlew Job Corps will be back to school soon, and that will create more opportunities. Kelly noted that she is pleased to be working with Bryan on the Business Service Team. By partnering staff, they will be creating an impact on business services in the area.
- Anne Buchan, ESD – Walla Walla: Anne reported that due to COVID19, much of her staff was moved to assist with unemployment claims. She too is utilizing virtual tools to provide a full menu of services to clients. They have been able to reconvene the Integrated Business Team through a virtual format. Anne concluded by briefly going over the Closure phases in the Walla Walla area.
- Elizabeth Guerra, BMAC: Liz reported that as of June 2, 2020 staff was back in the office at 50% capacity. However, they are still not allowing clients into the building. They are using outdoor space and large meeting rooms for interviews. BMAC has also seen a decline in enrollments. However, they have become more wholistic in providing their services. They are looking forward to using Disaster Relief funding to help with staffing at the food pantries. In addition, they are still providing training to youth (while recognizing social distancing).
- Jaclyn Jacot, SCC: Jaclyn concurred that she is seeing enrollments down as well. To date, they are down 12%. However, interestingly the K12 Students (Running Start) are working from home, and that enrollment is up 20%. This has saved many jobs! The offices at the Spokane Community Colleges are at 50% capacity in-person staffing.

They have several hundred students that are regularly on campus and they are trying to meet the needs of those students as well as those that are studying from home. In Pend Oreille County they have closed the lone Center. This was a decision made pre-COVID19. The center in Newport is still open and readily available to help students.

- Jerry Anhorn, WWCC: Jerry stated that the situation at the Walla Walla Community College was much the same as Jaclyn had reported with the exception that their enrollment was even worse – down 26%. They are feeling the lower enrollment as they continue to keep the face to face programs running.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM. The meeting scheduled for December 10, 2020 will be a ZOOM meeting. Rod shared that he is currently looking at various options to do a hybrid of virtual and in-person meeting as we go into the future. This will help with travel expenses and time. The change may include a different venue, possibly Spokane Community College. Rod will keep all informed.