

Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development

Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: March 28, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual – Microsoft Teams

In Attendance

Board of Directors: Jim Horan, Erin Lukoss, Mercedes Anderson, Paul Bencivengo, Anita Diggs, Doug Edwards, Daniel Grace, Stephen Maund, Jessica Peiffer, Dominic Roberto, Brian Shields, Jennifer Wendling, Marybeth Williams

Bucks County WED Staff: Billie Barnes, Alice Colyar, Brian Cummings, Michael Gilmore, Brittney Jones, Dianna Kralle, Andrea Walls

Guests: Cameron Burrell, Susan Darling, Andre Hardy, Susan Herring, Jessica Peterson, Robert Pisko, Leon Poeske, Vincent Sangmeister, Gwen Stoltz, Kelley Thompson, Liz Keppley, Tiffany Kocher, Cathy Valeriano

Next Meeting: June 27, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual – Microsoft Teams

Agenda Discussion

I. Welcome & Call to Order, Jim Horan

Jim Horan, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and greeted attendees. Dianna Kralle announced that a quorum was present. Mr. Horan welcomed two new board members: Mercedes Anderson, Executive Director of Vita Education Services, and Stephen Maund, President of Demko Enterprises.

II. Meeting Minutes, Jim Horan

Mr. Horan directed board members to review the meeting minutes from December 20, 2022. Mr. Horan requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 20, 2022.

Action/Vote: Erin Lukoss made the motion. Brian Shields seconded the motion. Stephen Maund abstained. All were in favor; none opposed.

III. Monthly Dashboard Review, Billie Barnes

Billie Barnes provided background information leading to the creation of the monthly dashboard report. When Ms. Barnes joined the Bucks County Workforce Development Board (BCWDB) as Executive Director in 2019, she recognized the need to develop communication tools for the board and the Executive Committee. These tools would also convey the wonderful accomplishments of the BCWDB and promote transparency.

Ms. Barnes explained how she and Dianna Kralle put together an outline of content. Andrea Walls, Technical Writer, was tasked with creating a comprehensive and visually appealing. The result of this project is the monthly dashboard. All comments and suggested revisions are welcome.

The goal is to roll out the April dashboard with audio commentary as a video that will autoplay each slide with a voiceover from a different staff member each month.

The sides include:

1. PA CareerLink® Bucks County Overview by Program Year
2. Incumbent Worker Training, Individual Training Accounts, and On-the-Job Training Charts
3. Events – Recap and Upcoming
4. Workforce News
5. Finance – Status of Grant Funding
6. Grant Application Statuses
7. Board Membership Compliance and New Members
8. Monitoring Updates
9. Staff Training Completed, Concerns, and Promising Practices

The dashboard will be emailed to board members each month.

IV. Workforce on Wheels (WOW) Update, Billie Barnes

Ms. Barnes provided an update on the mobile Workforce on Wheels project. Farber created two possible vehicle wrap renderings for the BCWDB's consideration. The wrap will include imagery on both sides of the WOW vehicle. These two versions have already been circulated internally. A final version will be determined in May and submitted to the PA Department of Labor & Industry for approval.

Feedback on Wrap 1:

Ms. Lukoss commented that she liked the use of people, indicating community. Mr. Maund suggested that the text be made larger for greater readability. Mr. Horan stated that he liked this design. Paul Bencivengo suggested adding a QR code to the wrap based on its success on NYC buses. Mr. Maund concurred that this was a good idea.

Feedback on Wrap 2:

Mr. Maund commented that the larger text featured in this design is a benefit. Ms. Anderson stated that the people featured in the first design are more memorable than in the second version. Mr. Maund agreed and restated the importance of enlarging the text on the first design.

V. In-School Youth (ISY) & Grants Update, Alice Colyar & Dianna Kralle

Ms. Kralle provided an update on the In-School Youth RFP due on January 23, 2023. WED received one proposal, which the Review Committee reviewed. The proposal from Bucks County Community College (BCCC) received a score of 10 out of 10. The Review Committee recommended the ISY contract be awarded to BCCC for two years with the option to extend based on performance.

Ms. Kralle requested a motion to approve the ISY contract award to BCCC for two years with an option to extend for up to two years, based on performance.

Action/Vote: Mr. Horan made the motion. Mr. Shields seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

Mr. Maund commented that the option to extend the contract is key to keeping contractors on track.

Ms. Colyar thanked the Review Committee. Since the state has not yet allocated funds for the ISY program for PY23, the contract amount is undetermined.

Ms. Colyar gave an update on the following:

School-to-Work Grant

- \$250,000 awarded
- May 2021-December 2023
- Offered to students attending William Tennett High School (ExcitED Program)
- 120 students served
- Biomed apprenticeships are in development by the PA Apprenticeship Training Office

School-to-Work Grant Round 2

- \$250,000 awarded
- May 2022-December 2024
- Offered to students attending Morrisville High School and Conwell Egan High School
- Collaboration with NuPaths
- IT pre-apprenticeships
- Participants receive 5 IT certifications after program completion
- 22 slots at Conwell Egan in Year 2 of the grant

Business Education Grant

- \$150,000 awarded
- Grant ends in December 2023
- Provides hands-on work experience for students enrolled in the Bucks County Intermediate Unit's Internship program.
- 47 students served – up to 60 served by the end of the school year
- Grant also funds the Mobile Fab Lab for elementary and middle schools in Bucks County (\$3,000-\$4,000 fee per week is covered)

PA Smart Grant

- \$400,000 awarded
- First year of the grant
- Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Consortium
- Funds 5 pre-apprenticeship programs: Electrical, Plumbing, HVAC, Carpentry, and Welding

Apprenticeship Building America & PA Grant

- \$366,000 awarded
- Partnership with MontcoWorks with Bucks as the fiscal agent

- Funding for the Apprenticeship Coordinator position held by Adina Tayar
- Creates two (2) new registered apprenticeships and two (2) new registered pre-apprenticeships
- Expands four (4) existing programs
- 108 apprentices / pre-apprentices
- Reflects the state's initiative to bolster apprenticeship programs

Ms. Krall provided an overview of \$994,286 in additional funding from WIOA Statewide Activities grants:

- \$366,000 to add on-site PA CareerLink® workforce counselor at BCCC
- \$291,000 in relocation funding for PA CareerLink®'s move from Bristol to Trevese
- \$110,000 to continue WEDTalks
- \$55,000 to expand Incumbent Worker Training
- \$13,000 for ADA compliance items at the PA CareerLink®
- \$157,000 for 2 data positions, data entry, and performance measures

Bucks also received \$100,000 in partnership with Philadelphia Works to expand training and supportive services for Dislocated Workers (Economic Transition Grant).

The PA Department of Labor & Industry now sends a quarterly grant forecast. The first forecast was received on March 27, 2023. There are five (5) grants on the docket. Of those, 3 or 4 are apprenticeship-focused.

VI. EARN Update, Jessica Peterson & Kelley Thompson

Jessica Peterson and Kelley Thompson delivered a presentation on the Employment Advancement and Retention Network program. EDSI is the provider of this program, whose contract was competitively procured.

PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners provide an initiative called the Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN). The EARN program addresses the needs of TANF, low-income, and refugee participants with multiple barriers to gaining and maintaining employment. We focus on moving the participants toward self-sufficiency and eliminating their need for public assistance.

We provide comprehensive case management, remediation, skills training, work activities, financial literacy, job placement, retention support, incentive services, and community referrals.

EARN program benefits and skill gains include:

- Barrier remediation
- Soft skill workshops
- Individual Employment Plans (IEP)
- Connection to Behavioral Health Advocate
- Extensive support and follow-up
- Career pathways opportunities
- English as a Second Language (ESL Support)
- Industry/employer connections/job fairs

- Mock interviews
- Stay connected virtually and in person
- Computer workshops

County Assistance Office (CAO) staff determine eligibility for the EARN program and refers participants to EARN based on family status and financial eligibility. Individual Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients can be referred directly by the CAO as a volunteer or a reverse referral from community partner agencies.

After an eligibility determination, the CAO develops an Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR) with the participant. This agreement determines the participant's activities and hourly requirements for compliance to maintain benefits.

Bucks County Community Partners include:

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|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • PA Department of Human Services | • Credit Counseling Center |
| • Bucks County Housing Group | • Advocacy of the Homeless Network |
| • Family Service of Bucks County | • Bucks County Transportation |
| • A Woman's Place | • The Wardrobe |
| • Libertae, Inc. | • United Way of Bucks County |
| • Livengrin | • Early Learning Resource Center |
| • Health Choices | • Health Partners |
| • Legal Aid of Southeastern PA | • Bucks County Intermediate Unit |
| • Bucks County Opportunity Council | • Bucks County Community College |
| • Vita Education Services | • Service to School |

Bucks is committed to serving individuals with barriers to employment:

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Returning Citizens | • Domestic Violence Survivors |
| • Individuals with Disabilities | • Individuals in Recovery |
| • Veterans | • Refugees |
| • Single Parents | • Crisis survivors |

In PY19 through PY 21, Bucks served 272 EARN program participants.

Examples of challenges program participants face include:

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|--|---|
| • Housing Crisis / Homelessness | • Educational Deficiencies |
| • Childcare | • Returning Citizens |
| • Transportation | • Scheduling Conflicts |
| • Observable/Unobservable Disabilities | • Proper Interviewing Techniques and Attire |
| • Domestic Violence | • Self Esteem |
| • Mental Health | • Substance Abuse |

PY19-PY22 Demographic Challenges:

- No diploma/GED: 15%
- Limited transportation: 15%

- No transportation: 1%

EARN Flow of Services through PA CareerLink®:

1. CAO referral processed
2. CareerLink® program introduction
3. EARN Group Orientation
 - a. Review of handbook and policy
4. Intake – IEP– expectations reviewed
5. Interview skills reviewed
6. Behavioral Health Advocate referral review of family needs
7. Assessments completed
 - a. BESl (Barrier Identification)
 - b. CareerScope (Interest Survey)
 - c. TABE Test (Basic Skills)
 - d. eSkills (Readiness Surveys)
8. Assessments reviewed and utilized for:
 - a. Support to overcome current barriers
 - b. Career pathways discussions
 - c. Industry-specific direction/training
9. Personalized schedules for career pathways implemented
10. Training opportunities reviewed with WIOA dual enrollment opportunities
11. CareerLink® general orientation
12. Workshop attendance/schedules
13. CareerLink® recruitment participation
14. Business services support provided
15. Direct employment support initiated

Comprehensive and Holistic Assessments:

TABE

- Test of Adult Basic Education
- Measures Reading and Mathematics Proficiency
- Identifies areas of instruction for remedial attention
- Primary screening tool for ITAs

CareerScope

- An interest inventory that provides a broad range of career assessment measures
- Provides individual profiles that assist job seekers with options
- A primary tool utilized to research specific titles and industries identified through a self-report process

Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESl)

- The BESl identifies barriers through a self-reporting tool
- Provides participants and staff with targeted information regarding issues in five categories; Personal/Financial, Emotional and Physical, Career Decision Making and Planning, Job-Seeking Knowledge, and Training and Education

eSkills

- A web-based system that surveys individual skills within an identified industry
- The proficiency assessment measures academic readiness for training in reading and mathematics
- Prepares candidates for assessments currently utilized during the employment screening process

Community service activities include:

- Book Drive – Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- Toy Drive – Local families, children’s homes, and partner agencies
- Care packages to deployed soldiers
- Holiday cards for area nursing homes
- Animal shelter support
- Wreaths for Joy
- Donations to Vets and local assisted living homes

Community involvement and program connections have supported EARN in its outstanding success. The CAO, EARN, and PA CareerLink® Bucks County work jointly to secure participants’ needs and services.

PY19-22 Program Success

- 272 Participants Served
- 72% Placements
- Average wage is \$17.32
- 42 Dual EARN/WIOA Enrollments
- 31 Credentials Achieved

EARN PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES		
PY21	Actual	Goal
Assessment	97.87%	85.00%
Social Service Professional	100.00%	80.00%
Credentialing	57.89%	50.00%

Placement	67.65%	70.00%
Retention	63.16%	50.00%
Earned Income Increase	83.33%	75.00%

Byron’s Success Story (OJT & ITA)

Byron was enrolled as a SNAP client and worked on setting training and employment goals to develop a career pathway that would provide long-term sustainability. The program provided goals to project the next steps for dual enrollment that would result in a credential and skill gain. Byron decided to enroll in a Commercial Driver’s License Program to obtain his CDL-A. After he reviewed area providers, he enrolled in Smith and Solomon Driving School on August 23, 2022, and completed his training plan on October 13, 2022. Byron continued to grow and utilize the PA CareerLink® services as he was introduced to OJT opportunities. The team supported Byron with interviewing skills. Byron continued his success as he was accepted for an OJT opportunity with Liberty Coca-Cola as a driver through the PA CareerLink® Business Service Team connections.

Marilena Success Story (KEYS/Direct Hire)

Marilena Transitioned to KEYS program with Bucks County Community College, as she was approved for the Radiology Department. She showed dedication while attending college, maintaining strong academics. She attended EARN in between semesters for employment support. While Marilena utilized job search tools and obtained employment leads, she also engaged with resources for childcare. Marilena was happy to receive employment with Genesa Home Health and Companion Agency as a Home Health Aide starting at \$12.00 per hour. Marilena worked diligently in seeking proper care for her son with special needs and was able to work increased hours once she gained access to resources.

VII. Fiscal Updates, Michael Gilmore

Michael Gilmore reported that WED’s budget is in line with expenditures for the current year within the first eight months of PY22. The Summary of Grant Expenditures shows a first year at an 80% obligation rate for Adult and Dislocated Worker categories. Youth expenditures have carried over from earlier in the quarter. WED is working closely with BCCC, the Youth program provider, to meet the obligation rate by identifying areas to spend the remaining funds.

In the LWDA PY21 Budget YTD Q6 October to December 2022, all State provisions are in compliance. In quarterly filings with the state, expenditures are just slightly below. WED should have the budget for the next program year within the next month or two. All looks positive going into the last quarter of the year.

Mr. Horan stated that small differences could be attributed to timing and is pleased that the team is fully compliant.

Mr. Maund asked if there is a push in the last quarter for partner expenses that may be halfway through expenditures. Ms. Kralle confirmed that WED sits down with partners to discuss what difference can be made with these funds before they expire. Mr. Gilmore mentioned that differences could sometimes result from a timing lag and spike in the last quarter.

Mr. Gilmore requested a motion to approve the LWDA PY21 Budget YTD Q6 October to December 2022 FSR.

Action/Vote: Mr. Maund made the motion. Ms. Lukoss seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

VIII. 2022 Statement of Financial Interest (SOFI), Jim Horan

Mr. Horan stated the importance for all board members to take the time to complete the SOFI and return it to Kris Shovlin at kshovlin@buckscounty.org. A reminder email will be sent by the close of business.

IX. Public Comment

Robert Pisko spoke about the ease of completing the SOFI, which reports common findings.

X. Open Discussion

Ms. Kralle thanked the ISY Review Committee and announced that the Out-of-School Youth Review Committee will meet on April 10 to discuss proposals.

XI. Adjournment, Jim Horan

Mr. Horan thanked all attendees and requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

Action/Vote: Ms. Lukoss made the motion. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrea Walls

Andrea Walls
March 28, 2023