

Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Date: January 24, 2025

Time: 9:03 a.m.

Place: Francis Tuttle Rockwell Campus, Northwest Hall

Call to Order/Welcome

Chair Gray called the meeting to order and welcomed the group.

Guest Speaker, Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell

The Lieutenant Governor expressed enthusiasm for Oklahoma's workforce and provided updates on ongoing initiatives. He acknowledged Rep. Hill for his vision and contributions. He discussed the workforce tour conducted over the past year, which focused on rural Oklahoma, and how it revealed infrastructure issues. As an example, Durant has great growth potential but there is a concern of water supply. He emphasized the need for proactive solutions to avoid losing businesses to cities like Bentonville or Des Moines, as they are also advertising affordable communities. He encouraged the committee to come forth and contact their legislator regarding any ideas.

Q&A Session:

- Labor Shortages: Lt. Gov. Pinnell said that labor shortages have not been a deal breaker for attracting businesses but expanding the labor pool and preventing talent poaching are important.
- Rural Development Priorities: K-12 education is strong and competitive. Infrastructure remains the primary challenge.
- Job Trends: Emphasis on enhancing career tech programs and increasing technical degrees from Oklahoma's universities. There will be a plateau if there are not more placements in the aerospace area. We need to properly fund both- career tech and higher education.

Determination of Quorum and Introductions

Approval of October 25, 2024 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve October 25, 2024 meeting minutes as presented was made by Jeanie Webb and seconded by Rep. Brian Hill. No further discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Local and Regional Workforce Board Strategic Plans

DeDe Smith, OESC, highlighted that the local and regional plans had some deficiencies. There was a lack of collaboration with the local boards, businesses, and partners. OESC recommended conditional approval of the plans, requiring local boards to attend technical assistance and training to address the deficiencies by July 1, 2025.

Chair Gray also added that the GCWED is invited to LEO/CLEO training. The training will take place on February 6, 2025. This would be a great opportunity to learn more regarding what the boards do.

A motion to approve was made by Nico Ciccone and seconded by Rep. Brian Hill. No further discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Policies

DeDe Smith, OESC, gave a brief overview of the following policies:

1. WSD 01-2025: Incumbent Worker Training Services
 - This policy creates a new referral process for statewide IWT funds, including improvements to the state's application review process. Creates requirements for end-of-training reviews to evaluate outcomes. Updated documentation requirements, including examples for improved clarity.
2. WSD 02-2025: Oklahoma American Job Centers Certification
 - This policy includes updates to the attachments, including revised formatting, updated instructions, and the addition of a signature page. Revises the timelines for certification to ensure efficient implementation.
3. WSD 03-2025: Monitoring, Corrective Actions, and Sanctions
 - A complete rewrite to consolidate four policies into one, significantly reducing the need to search across multiple documents. It is clearer and contains more comprehensive definitions for key terms. Includes an enhanced risk assessment process, including updates criteria and guidelines. Updated state monitoring tools and team structures to improve oversight.

A motion to approve was made by Robin Arter and seconded by Rep. Brian Hill. No further discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee Updates:

- **Career Pathways:**
 - Co-Chairs Shawna Nord and Stan McCabe provided updates from the most recent meeting of the Career Pathways Committee, held on December 13 at Metro Tech. While there was strong representation from state agencies, the committee highlighted the need for increased industry participation. Key challenges include bridging the gap between industry and education terminology to ensure alignment and mutual understanding, as well as strengthening communication channels to enhance awareness and connectivity for work-based learning opportunities. Although many resources and programs exist, greater coordination and awareness are necessary to maximize their impact.

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- The committee created a Google Drive to develop a toolkit and for collaboration. Rep. Hill emphasized the importance of leveraging the apprenticeship model within CareerTech to improve coordination between education and industry. Brent Haken discussed the need for common language and tools to help educators build meaningful connections with businesses, and CareerTech plans to place dedicated individuals across the state to facilitate these connections.
 - From an industry perspective, Jamie Payne noted that funding does not guarantee that students will transition into employees. Offering hands-on experience is critical to ensure that training translates into employment opportunities.
- **Healthcare:**
- Lara Morris introduced herself as the Healthcare Committee Chair. The committee met on December 11 and identified three key areas of focus: organizing a Health Career Day modeled after similar initiatives in Missouri, hosting Regional Career Fairs, and developing apprenticeship programs in collaboration with SSM Health and the Oklahoma Hospital Association.
 - The group discussed dedicated schools for healthcare education, with the example of Oklahoma City having four high schools equipped with 'flex spaces.' Brent Haken noted that specialized high schools are most effective in urban areas where partnerships can drive success. Oklahoma's recent changes in graduation requirements offer greater flexibility. Oklahoma is unique because we have more schools per capita than most states.
 - The committee is looking for a co-chair in healthcare.

Partnership Updates:

- **OESC:**
- Trae Rahill, CEO of OESC, praised the group's engagement and commended their collaborative efforts, highlighting the increased activity compared to previous years. He provided an update on OESC initiatives, including the recent launch of Employ Oklahoma, which enhances the organization's capacity to assist employers. Trae noted that additional functionality is being developed to further expand support for businesses. Recognizing the challenges faced by small businesses, where employees often manage multiple roles, Trae emphasized the importance of raising awareness about available resources. To improve accessibility and visibility, OESC is introducing branded mobile offices, with the first wrapped vehicle recently launched. These mobile units aim to bring resources directly across the state. Trae highlighted OESC's commitment to rapid innovation, citing eight technology releases completed last year and two already implemented this year.
- **DRS:**
- Renee Samson Briscoe presented information on Pre-Employment Transition Services, which aim to help students with disabilities identify career interests early and promote community integration. The presentation also covered work-based learning opportunities, noting that the program has reached over 20,000 students across 200+ schools.

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- The Summer Transition Employment Program provides students with up to 25 hours of part-time work experience, accompanied by faded assistance from a coach and half a day of skill development and debriefing. This program is offered at no cost to participants.
 - Additionally, Renee discussed VIBE (Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment), a one-week program for individuals aged 14-24. The focus of VIBE is to prepare participants for higher education, competitive employment, and independent living.
 - Project SEARCH was highlighted as an unpaid internship program aimed at high school students or young adults in career tech, particularly for those with significant to most significant disabilities. The goal is competitive, integrated employment, with state coordinator support provided through a contract with OU.
 - Finally, the Young Adult Programs were introduced, which are four-year postsecondary certificate programs for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. These programs include paid internships and work experience, and DRS offers up to \$3,000 per semester to cover tuition and board
- **CareerTech:**
- Letha provided an overview of Adult Education and Family Literacy programs, which support students without a high school diploma. In Oklahoma, one in ten individuals lacks a diploma, often due to the lack of pathways for obtaining it. To address this, a bill was passed to create an additional pathway for high school equivalency. There are currently 29 different programs across the state serving 11,000 students, spread over approximately 120 classrooms.
 - One key opportunity highlighted was for students who wish to pursue CareerTech programs. By entering an adult education program first, students can refresh their skills and prepare for successful enrollment in CareerTech training. For example, a student who has been out of school for 10 years could use this program to rebuild their skills and move on to technical education.
 - Partnerships play a crucial role, and Letha mentioned a new collaboration with DHS. Individuals qualifying for TANF can now participate in these programs. Additionally, there is a growing initiative with JAG, with a goal of expanding to 20 programs by the next school year, up from the current 4. The program, which includes work-based learning, aims to keep students engaged in high school to prevent dropout.
 - The Student Organization Program is designed to teach leadership skills and job readiness, ensuring that students graduate prepared for the workforce. Letha emphasized the importance of aligning Adult Education and Family Literacy programs with business and industry needs and encouraged outreach to explore opportunities to offer GED programs in local businesses. Last year, 1,500 students graduated with a high school equivalency diploma through these efforts.

Next Meeting: April 25th

- Francis Tuttle Technology Center: Rockwell Campus
12777 N. Rockwell Ave
Oklahoma City, OK 73142

Meeting Adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Maci Majors*

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