

Minutes
Kansas City & Vicinity Workforce Development Board Meeting
January 9, 2025
10:00 - 11:30 am via ZOOM

Members Present

Robert Hughes, Jr.
Clyde McQueen
JaCinda Rainey
Leslie Elwell
Joe Reardon
Riki Donner
Edwin Lowndes
Dr. Kimberly Beatty
Yolanda Waldon
Bobby Barlow
George Satterlee
Clifton Campbell
Jill Lawlor

FEC Staff

Tirhas Kidane
Andrea Robins
Rohina Behrmann
April Law
Tami Blair
Valencia Battle
Stephan Townsend

Guests

Tom Gebken
Dr. Rubin Cockrell's Assistant
Deborah Mann
Ida Mathis
Melissa Marquez
Dr. Ruben Cockrell
June Berry
Precy Smith

Call to Order

Chairman Robert Hughes opened the meeting by thanking everyone for the flexibility in changing the meeting from in-person to virtual due to the weather conditions.

Minutes

Mr. Hughes requested a motion to approve the October 10, 2024, minutes. A motion was made and seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes as written.

Employer Partnerships

Emmanuel Family Child Development Partnership

Rohina Behrmann introduced Deborah Mann, the director of Emmanuel Family Child Development, who has been a long-standing partner in developing the apprenticeship program. Ms. Mann shared that Emmanuel Family Child Development faced a teacher shortage after COVID, leading them to create their own workforce development program. With the support of FEC, they merged their program with FEC's, providing training and incentives for their staff. As a result, they have trained 47 teachers, including Ida Mathis, who has completed her Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate. Ms. Mann explained that the program is aimed at providing free education and training to individuals entering the early childhood workforce. The program, which includes incentives such as cash bonuses and laptops, is designed to help participants earn a degree or certificate and advance their education. Ms. Mann emphasized the importance of sustaining the program's incentives to attract more participants. Mr. McQueen added that the program was a success, with 175 participants in Kansas City and Vicinity and a total of 300 across the state. He also noted that the program led to a 35% wage increase for those who completed it. The team agreed on the need to continue state appropriations and local policy support to sustain the program.

Ms. Mann and Mr. McQueen discussed the importance of childcare in their community, particularly for non-traditional families and those working non-traditional hours. They highlighted the success of their joint project with the Kansas City and St. Louis Urban League and the YWCA, which led to the largest CDA early childhood event in Missouri. They also mentioned their efforts to secure a childcare tax credit, which was not passed this session but will be revisited. Miss Mathis, a participant in their workforce program, shared her enthusiasm for working with young children and her desire to continue her career in early childhood education. Dr. Beatty emphasized the untapped potential of seniors in the workforce, particularly those who have raised families and are now retired.

Kansas City Area Transit Authority (KCATA)

Ms. Behrmann introduced June Berry, Sr. Director of HR, who discussed a successful partnership with the KCATA and the Port Authority of Kansas City. The collaboration, which has been ongoing for two years, has led to the recruitment and training of bus operators, mechanics, and office clerical employees. The training program, which lasts for 8 to 10 weeks, is fully funded and includes a wage progression. The program has been instrumental in retaining employees, particularly bus operators, who receive extensive overtime. Ms. Berry praised the program and expressed her wish to have known about it earlier. Rohina and June also highlighted the benefits of the program, including the provision of resources such as gas cards, uniform allowances, and support services for employees facing hardships. Ms. Berry also introduced Percy Smith, who has gone through the apprenticeship program and is now working in the office at KCATA.

Financial Report

Tirhas Kidane presented the financial report for the period ending December 30, 2024. Due to a delay in receiving funding from the state, FEC utilized Discretionary funds to meet its financial needs. She noted that the Child Development Associate Apprenticeship fund concluded on September 30, 2024. Additionally, both the Missouri Work Assistance and KCMO – Jobs for Neighborhoods programs have ended but have been renewed for another year. Currently, we have expended 33% of our Operations budget and 35% of our Program Payments. She also reported that the auditors have completed their fieldwork for the annual audit and hope to have it completed by the end of January, and will present it at the April meeting if completed.

George Satterlee moved to approve the Financial Report, and Dr. Kimberly Beatty seconded it, and the Board approved the Financial Report by common consent.

Performance Summary

Andrea Robins and Mr. McQueen presented data on the services provided by FEC and the Career Services at the job centers. Ms. Robins highlighted that between July 1st and December 31, 2024, 890 employers utilized services, with 31,186 job orders and 33,161 job openings. There was also an increase in the number of Rapid Responses and business downsizing assistance. Ms. Robins also discussed on-site hiring events, such as healthcare recruiting and transportation, and placements that occurred through these services. She noted a slight decrease in the median earnings and an increase in the number of individuals employed. Lastly, she explained that between July 1st and December 31st, 7,379 distinct individuals received employment services, up 943 from a year ago. The services used most frequently by job seekers were Self Service Job Search, Workforce Preparation, RESEA (assistance for dislocated workers), Self Service Resumes, and Career Guidance.

Ms. Robins and Mr. McQueen discussed the partnership between the Missouri Division of Office of Workforce Development and the FEC. The organization is working on a prototype to increase efficiency and reduce processing time by 33%. This system will enable one data platform, eliminating the need for clients to repeat the same information multiple times. The meeting also touched on the organization's efforts to assist individuals affected by layoffs, including providing translation services and resume assistance. Mr. McQueen also discussed its partnership with the UAW to host resource sessions for employees affected by layoffs. The conversation ended with a discussion on the high number of layoffs in the last quarter, particularly in the automotive sector.

Ms. Robins presented the local area unemployment statistics and the year-end performance of the Wagner-Peyser program, noting that the workforce participation rate was lower than the unemployment rate. Mr. McQueen discussed the importance of understanding the unemployment rate and its limitations, emphasizing that it only counts those who are actively seeking employment. He highlighted the need for support services such as transportation, childcare, and housing to improve workforce participation rates. He also pointed out the challenges faced by single parents and individuals with housing issues in completing training courses.

Mr. Hughes requested a motion to approve the Performance Summary Report, and it was moved and seconded, with the Board approving the Report.

President's Report

Mr. McQueen announced that we were awarded the PY24 Occupational Skills Training Grant and that FEC is awaiting updates on several other potential funding opportunities. He then shared the following items in FEC News:

- Proclamation for National Apprenticeship Week
- Dialogue Institute Award Recipient: Clyde McQueen
- LISC Award Recipient: FEC, recognized as a Financial Empowerment Champion
- MDHEWD Award Recipient: FEC, honored with the Legacy Award.

The board commended FEC for their achievements and Dr. Beatty expressed her appreciation for the work being done, recognizing the team as the core of the ecosystem that keeps the economy running.

It was moved and seconded, and the Board approved the President's Report by common consent.

The final order of business before adjournment was Mr. Hughes, announcing his retirement and thanking the board for their service. Mr. Hughes will appoint a nominating committee to recommend new officers for the FEC, including a new chairperson which will be announced at the meeting in April.

The meeting concluded with gratitude and well-wishes for Mr. Hughes's retirement. It was also announced that the Board meeting in April will be held in person.

Adjournment

After a Round Robin discussion, the meeting was adjourned with there being no further business.