



WDB Meeting Minutes (via MS Teams)

June 20, 2025

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.

Members Present

Kimberly Baskett
Jenny Batista
Peggy Kershner
Cindy Line
Ashley Chambers
Kristina Houck
Ryan Breisch
Karyn Troxell
Crystal Houser
Deb Millman
Mark Pinkasavage
Patricia Shermot
Brian Noecker
Christy Pisker
Barry Unger

Members Absent

Marianne Brown Egolf
Dr. Michael Stauffer
Dayana Groff
William Dorward
Michael Fischetti
Dayana Groff
Dr. Karen Campbell
Alexia Pursley
Nic Thomas

WDB Staff Present

Dan Fogarty
Amber Columbo
Megan Noll
Jesenia Santos

Guests Present

Pamela Menet	County of Berks Director of Economic Development
Ashley Showers	County of Berks Assistant Director of Planning Commission
David Genaro	Equus Workforce Solutions – Regional Director
Larry Melf	PA CareerLink® Operator
Aidelsa Calaman	PA CareerLink® Administrator
Tristin Prostovich	PA CareerLink® Berks County Young Adult Program Supervisor
Robert Kerecz	PA CareerLink® Berks County Employment Services Team Supervisor
David Dopkin	PA Department of Labor & Industry – Assistant Regional Director
Melissa Lewis	County of Berks IS
Carl Long	County of Berks IS

This meeting was held virtually through Microsoft Teams on June 20, 2025. Mr. Fogarty conducted a roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present. WDB Chairperson, Ms. Jenny Batista called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m.

Ms. Batista informed the members that in this virtual environment, she has asked Mr. Fogarty to help her facilitate the meeting. Mr. Fogarty announced that the meeting was being recorded for minutes purposes only and would be deleted after their completion. Board members were asked to state their names when commenting, making, or seconding any motion to assist staff in taking the minutes.

Mr. Fogarty asked the members if there were any items the board would like to have moved from the consent agenda. Hearing none the board will move to adopt the consent agenda. No objections. Mr. Fogarty then asked if any members would like to abstain from accepting the agenda. Deb Millman and Peggy Kershner abstained.

Ms. Batista then thanked her eight fellow WDB members *Mike Fischetti, Brian Noecker, Kris Houck, Barry Unger, Ryan Breisch, Bill Dorward, Deb Millman, and Kim Baskett* who joined her in accepting reappointment to the WDB for another three-year term beginning July 1. As a result, all nine WDB members up for reappointment accepted and will continue their service as WDB members

Ms. Batista then announced the bittersweet news that our longest serving WDB member, **Mark Pinkasavage**, will be leaving the WDB at the end of the month. Mark stated that he was grateful to have had the opportunity to serve on the WDB and that it was a great learning experience. Mark also expressed confidence that his labor representative replacement on the WDB will be an excellent board member. Jenny was joined by Barry Unger in thanking Mark for his service to the WDB over the past 10 years.

I. Executive Committee Report

Ms. Batista then invited Ms. Noll to comment on the Budget vs Expenditures report. Ms. Noll reported the budget and expenditure results through April 2025, which shows all expenses are within budget.

Next, Ms. Noll reviewed the proposed PY2025 WDB budget that includes the following: (1) \$100,000 transfer from WIOA Dislocated Worker funds to WIOA Adult funds (2) An increase in Direct Charge Services due to the renewal of the WIN Software license during PY 2025 (3) A reduction in WIOA Out-of-School Youth and TANF Youth services due to funding cuts (4) An inclusion of a full program year budget for the Community Outreach Coordinators, and (5) An inclusion of Community Training grant awards for Berks Latino Workforce Corp and Connections Work.

Mr. Fogarty facilitated a motion to approve the PY 2025 proposed budget as presented. Trish Shermot made a motion to approve, and Christy Pisker seconded. All members voted to approve the PY 2025 proposed budget except for one abstention from Peggy Kershner.

Ms. Columbo reviewed the PY2024 Q3 WIOA Title I performance, both the state and Berks County WDB received the desired “green check mark”. The WIOA Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs continue to make improvements and work with their participants to perform well against measures. Ms. Columbo reported she is confident the programs will receive the desired green check mark for overall performance when PY2024 ends on June 30, and she will continue to work closely with Title I providers to ensure accurate reporting.

Ms. Columbo reported the Local Workforce Development Board re-certification letter and report from the Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA) was clean and the board is re-certified through January 2027. Ms. Columbo expressed she worked closely with the assigned local monitor to provide all required documentation to ensure board compliance under WIOA and local governance.

Ms. Menet informed the board that Dan Fogarty will be retiring from the Workforce Development Board in early September, and she voiced her deep appreciation and wanted to formally thank him of his accomplishments and elevated exposure that he has brought to the WDB in the past ten years at the local, state, and regional level. Ms. Menet went on to announce that Amber Columbo will be the new Director of the Workforce Development Board.

II. Planning Committee Report

Deb Millman reported that the planning committee worked very closely with the WDB staff over the past year to develop the proposed 4-year local and regional plans that were distributed to WDB members on June 13. Our local plan was released for the required 30-day public comment period, but no comments were received from the public. Mr. Fogarty facilitated a motion to approve the WIOA 4-Year Local Plan as presented. Kristina Houck made a motion to approve, and Ryan Breisch seconded. All members voted to adopt and approve the WIOA 4-Year Local plan effective July 1, 2025 with no abstentions. The plan will next go to the County Board of Commissioners for approval.

Mr. Fogarty then facilitated a motion to approve the WIOA 4-Year Regional Plan as presented. Deb Millman made a motion to approve, and Patricia Shermet seconded. All members voted to approve the WIOA 4-Year Regional plan with no abstentions.

Ms. Columbo shared that the TPMA Local Talent and Demographic study is underway and email requests for either individual interview or focus group participation were sent out to selected employers and key stakeholders. Interested individuals are being scheduled virtually next week to provide any additional input in aiding the workforce for the next five years in Berks County. TPMA has been holding biweekly meetings with the WDB's project steering team and has started collecting preliminary data regarding housing, PSSA Scores, and numeracy literacy and how it affects the workforce. The next board meeting in September will have TPMA reports available for review.

III. Access & Opportunities Committee Report

Ashley Chambers referred the board to the "By the Numbers" report for the first nine months of PY2024 and provided a brief update. The foot traffic numbers at the PA CareerLink® are up to 21,000 compared to 19,000 for the same period from the year before. The resource room utilization is up 1% from last year. Individual Training Accounts (ITA) are at 77 with an average approved allowance of \$5,300 per participant. Individual businesses served are currently at 673 with many being in the manufacturing field. Virtual services are up 120% over last year's numbers, so more individuals are utilizing the services virtually and at the PA CareerLink® over last year.

Peggy Kershner shared that the PA CareerLink® Spring Job Fair took place on April 21st from 1pm to 5pm at the Double Tree by Hilton located in downtown Reading. There were more than 1300 job seekers in attendance to meet with over 85 exhibitors. Ms. Kershner reported that there is some uncertainty about the hiring needs in the community going forward, so the fall job fair will be at a smaller venue. Amber Columbo shared that the PA CareerLink® Berks County team is considering October 23rd, 2025, at the Redner's Event Center at the Reading Fightin' Phils Stadium for the fall job fair.

Amber next reported on a proposed revision to the Work Based Training Policy and explained that 'Torque', the assessment tool for individuals to utilize OJT funds, is no longer available. Due to the absence of Torque, Mr. Fogarty approved of an exception of using a program known as 'Skilldex' to determine an individual's skill level before they start training. The revised policy will provide flexibility for the service provider to identify the appropriate assessment tool instead of specifying the required tool.

Dan Fogarty facilitated a motion to approve the revisions in the Work Based Learning Policy as presented. Ashley Chambers made a motion to approve, and Kimberly Baskett seconded. All members voted to approve the Work Based Learning Policy with no abstentions.

IV. Youth Committee Report

Youth Committee Chairperson Trish Shermot invited Amber Columbo to begin her report by presenting the outcome of the Undecided Senior Career Fair that took place on May 13, 2025, from 10am – 2PM at Albright College. A total of 54 high school seniors attended the event and 12 out of the 18 local school districts participated. Local colleges in attendance included Albright, Alvernia, Penn State Berks, RACC, and Kutztown. In addition, the PA CareerLink® staffed a table to provide workforce development program information, such as training opportunities in high demand sectors. The event had a total of 18 various employers as well as recruitment officers from the Army Reserve. Ms. Columbo shared that she attended the event and witnessed that the young adults initially came into the career fair with hesitance, but the students eventually navigated their way to meeting the employers. The employers were great at engaging with the youth in return. For example, Ms. Columbo witnessed that almost every young adult received a one-on-one interview conversation with Unique Snacks personnel. Feedback received from the internship coordinators at the local high schools was that the relatively small size of the event seemed less overwhelming for students, and the educators suggested having the event in April next year might increase student participation and engagement.

Ms. Columbo next presented a recommended update to the Young Adult Work Experience Policy. The change would allow the young adult program service provider to propose the employer of record for young adult work experience opportunities instead of mandating the service provider to be the employer of record. Another update to this policy would include increasing our hourly wage cap from \$15 to \$16 per hour. However, it will still be required that the work site identify the appropriate entry level wage for the position, which could be between \$9 to \$16 an hour, as stated in the revised policy. Lastly, the TANF Youth wage cap will remain at \$15 per hour in the policy due to the reduction in available funding and continued desire to serve as many young people as possible.

Dan Fogarty facilitated a motion to approve the Young Adult Work Experience Policy as presented. Trish Shermot made a motion to approve, and Barry Unger seconded. All members voted to approve the Young Adult Work Experience Policy with no abstentions.

V. COO Report

Mr. Fogarty, WDB COO, began his COO report by explaining that the minutes from the May 15 WDB's Training & Industry Partnership have been unavoidably delayed but will be distributed to all WDB members via separate email

Mr. Fogarty reported that the WDB is entering a new program year in which the board has awarded two \$250,000 grants to excellent proposers to expand training opportunities in our community. With a new fiscal year budget, the White House has called for a 35% reduction in USDOL funding, and the elimination and consolidation of workforce programs within 90 days of the signed executive order on April 23rd. In addition, the state has not yet passed a budget for the upcoming fiscal year which begins on July 1, 2025. Mr. Fogarty referenced the Access and Opportunities Committee report which provides recent rapid response activities including the closing of IWCO, a 300-person distribution center in the Hamburg area. Our local rapid response team is providing extensive support, including onsite job fairs for these soon to be dislocated workers.

Mr. Fogarty went on to explain that the local areas have not received seasonally adjusted local labor market data since January.

VI. Market Intelligence Discussion

Following the COO Report, Mr. Fogarty opened the market intelligence discussion with a focus on the five strategic strengths leveraged by the Berks County WDB as detailed in our new 4-year local plan.

Ms. Troxell shared that Penske has been working with various organizations to help with translation services and technology to help communicate with non-English speaking job seekers. By asking “what is the need”, “what is the makeup of the local population”, and who can help us meet that need Penske has developed a better understanding of the challenges and responses unique to each of its many locations. Penske believes that well targeted services, including translation software, can help individuals understand key pieces of Penske’s policy and procedure handbook and specific job requirements.

Ms. Batista affirmed that when you make an effort as an employer to be inclusive you can attract and retain employees’ long term.

Mr. Noecker stated that he agrees with all five local strengths as listed in the plan. He believes that people in Berks County are looking for good opportunities to advance their careers here, especially with all the different types of businesses, diversity and growth that have been developing in the community. Working adults want an opportunity “where I can bloom”.

- VII. **Public Comment** – Mr. Fogarty then asked for any comment from the public. There was no public comment presented. There was a total of two attendees via YouTube present for the meeting.

CY2025 Meetings - The next 2025 Berks Workforce Development Board Meeting will be held in person at South Campus on **Friday, September 19, 2025 @ 7:30A.M. – 10:00A.M.**

Following a motion to adjourn, Ms. Batista announced that the meeting officially adjourned at 8:57 am.