



**Wyoming Workforce Development Council
Quarterly Meeting – On-Site and Zoom
Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
September 11-12, 2024**

September 11, 2024

Council Members Present

Chairman Eric Trowbridge
Larry Fodor
Wendy Fisketjon
Brenda Morgan
Dan Meyer
Mayor Matt Hall
Lauren Schoenfeld for
Governor Gordon

Ron Wild
Bria Hammock
Nathan Williams
Daniel Burau
Matthew Davis
Travis Lawrence
Laurel Ballard for Ben Moritz

Tony Cross
Debra Zolnoski
Phillip Cornella
Charles Wilson
Director Elizabeth Gagen
Ron Gullberg for Josh Dorrell

Council Members Absent

Dick Smith
Michael Kercher
Katie Hogarty

Senator Fred Baldwin
Tina Conley
Korin Schmidt

Representative Ryan Berger
Nicky Harper
Superintendent Degenfelder

DWS Staff Present

Jennifer Wilch
Holly Simoni
Robin Martin
Trevor Mansfield
Nikki Baures
Gilbert Servantez
Kelsey Keegan
Mark Waltrup
Michael Moore
Yvonne Adekale
Wade Werbelow
Selau Weekes
Pilar Lester
Carol McClure

Ivy Castleberry
Christina West
Daniel Anderson
Denise Rodriguez
Amy Peterson
Jason Wolfe
Steve Miller
Lacey Lavake
Tony Glover
Mary Orr
Keegan Fox
Jennifer Cassidy
Tallia Wachsmuth
James Rude

Kristy Tyrney
Deanna Crofts
Shaye Moon
Tom Saprorny
Della McJunkin
Kavan Johnston
Shannon Gage
Sal Sanchez
Wendy Constantine
Amy Souza
Melissa Lovett
Carola Cowan
LeeAnn Allen
Clifton McCrady



Brynn Schildmeier
Cherilyn Thompson
Melissa Phillips
Kim Tipsword

Erin Cates
Vanessa Miramontes
Lisa Bengé
Julie Garza

Shelby Cunningham
Wynette Culp
Terri Wells

Others Present

Mayor Joel Highsmith
Eastern Shoshone Tribal
Liaison James Sorrels

Dana Miller
Jerri Prejean

Lyle Wadda

September 11, 2024

I. Call to Order & Welcome Presenter: Eric Trowbridge

Chairman Eric Trowbridge called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm and welcomed all in attendance.

A. Roll Call/Introductions Presenter: Jennifer Wilch

Jennifer Wilch took roll call and noted we have a quorum.

B. Approval of Agenda Presenter: Eric Trowbridge

Tony Cross moved to approve the agenda as written; Bria Hammock seconded. The motion carried.

C. Approval of May Minutes Presenter: Eric Trowbridge

Ron Wild moved to approve the May minutes; Brenda Morgan seconded. The motion carried.

II. Message from the Chairman Presenter: Eric Trowbridge

Eric Trowbridge has been on the Wyoming Workforce Development Council for six years, vice chair for three years, and is honored to be the new chair. He founded Wyoming's first technology and design school, Array in Cheyenne. Department of Workforce Services was instrumental in helping Array get off the ground and flourish. Eric is passionate about the council's role and what they provide to the community. He encouraged a culture of feedback and collaboration and shared strategies to optimize the council's work. Strategies included council engagement and participation, asking questions and diving deeper, during site visits ensuring it is made known why the council is present, continuously looking into the bylaws to review everything the council needs is there and that all of our guests and visitors are aligned with our mission and strategic plan. Additional insight will be provided through OnBoard, including why speakers are advising the council, encouraging feedback, and potential considerations for funding. Another prospective goal for the council is to develop a stronger



interstate connection and innovation and to become better engaged in the programs offered by the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) while enhancing the programs we support.

III. Department of Workforce Services Update Presenter: Director Liz Gagen

Director Liz Gagen provided updates on the latest developments for the Department of Workforce Services to the council. DWS currently has a full executive staff since the departure of former Director Robin Coley. The deputy director position has now been filled by Jason Wolfe. Jason has been with DWS for several years primarily in Worker's Compensation and the Administrator of Workforce Standards since 2017. Karen Bebensee filled the position as Workforce Standards Administrator, previously filled by Jason Wolfe. The agency is in the final stretch of ARPA-funded projects and must be fully obligated by December 31, 2024. The Governor's office has requested completion by October of 2024. There are currently five ARPA-funded projects that include; the talent transition project, WyHealthTrain, an early childcare program for those obtaining degrees in early childhood, an upskilling program to provide WIOA type of services, and a pre-apprenticeship program to help students do career exploration activities. The agency is supportive of another grant-funded program that will expand the IT sector, also being funded by the National Science Foundation to build a climate tech sector. The climate tech sector encompasses water availability & prediction, soil carbon capture data & analysis, methane emissions analysis, wildfire risk & protection, complex earth sensing, & extreme weather modeling. The unemployment insurance division is working on grants with the Department of Labor to make services more accessible to claimants. A big part of that work is translating form documents into simple-to-understand documents in English and Spanish. Technology changes are also being made to make the UI system more smartphone-friendly.

IV. One-Stop Operations Report Presenter: Christina West

Christina West provided current data regarding One Stop Center operations, which included how many individuals walked in for resources, in addition to participants. Department of Vocational Rehabilitation is a core Title 4 partner and this week had an in-service gathering with several workforce center employees in attendance. Within the workforce centers and at the leadership level trainings and cross-trainings have been provided. Currently, there is work being done to streamline how services within centers are presented to the public. A big part of this process is within one-stop center resource computers. Each center has a resource area and within the computers, HIREWYO is provided in addition to a lot of helpful tools. The centers have adopted new branding, banners, table clothes, items on the table for job fairs, and educational fairs. These steps have supported our branding efforts and provided a new professional presentation. Discussion took place on how council members could support local career fairs across the state of Wyoming.



V. Spending Plan and Expenditures Presenter: Jennifer Cassidy

Jennifer Cassidy provided the council with the spending plan for the 2025 fiscal year that began in July of 2024. Grant funding currently open includes 2025, 2024, 2023, and 2022 fiscal years, council expenditures in 2022 are just about spent. Council expenditures for July 2024 total \$43,648. Almost 100% of the funds from the 2022 grant year have been spent with \$4 remaining, 51.5% of the funds from the 2023 grant year have been spent with \$232,720, and 0% of the funds from the 2024 grant year have been spent with \$427,230 remaining. Jennifer shared the updates to current projects including micro-credentialing having the final invoices cleared out soon, and Onboard being completely paid out for the annual contract. Jennifer provided the council with the local budget and expenditures and the agency budget for the 2022 grant year has been 96.35% spent with \$181,688 remaining, regarding the 2023 grant year 73.66% has been spent with \$1,307,945 remaining, and in the 2024 grant year 20.87% has been spent with \$2,505,968 remaining.

Motion to approve the Spending Plan and Expenditures

Ron Wild moved to approve the spending plan and expenditures; Danny Bureau seconded. The motion carried.

VI. Big Horn Basin Experience Sector Grant Request Presenter: Jennifer Wilch

Jennifer Wilch presented the Big Horn Basin Sector grant request to the council, which was previously approved and recommended by the Next Gen Sector Partnership Committee and the Strategic & Performance & Finance Committee. The Big Horn Basin Experience partnership plans to expand by 50% in one year. Objectives include cataloging businesses through the Wyoming Tourism portal, educating businesses about the Next Gen Partnership, WIOA, and providing training programs in hospitality, outdoor recreation, agri-tourism, communications, and business programs offered by post-secondary training institutions. The partnership plans to provide more than 10% in-kind match, and all counties' chambers plan to allocate time to the partnership. The partnership will incentivize participants and highlight why being a member is beneficial.

Motion to approve the Big Horn Basin Experience Sector Grant Request

Danny Bureau moved to approve the Big Horn Basin Experience Sector Grant; Tony Cross seconded. The motion carries.

VII. Next Gen Support Grant Changes Presenter: Jennifer Wilch

The sector partnerships committee would like to change the grant application to apply for up to \$25,000 because, in the two and half years since Jennifer Wilch became the WWDC Director, the council has not approved a request for \$5,000 or less. Approved grant requests have



averaged between \$12,000 to \$15,000. These revisions support the application process to facilitate more grant opportunities for established partnerships or new up-and-coming partnerships. Requests can be accepted for any amount and the consensus was that the \$5,000 limit had been there for a long time and become outdated. The objective is to hopefully encourage more requests in the future.

Motion to approve the Next Gen Support Grant Changes

Ron Wild moved to approve the Next Gen Support Grant changes; Danny Burau seconded. The motion carries.

VIII. One-Stop Bid Exception or RFP Discussion Presenter: Ivy Castleberry

Ivy Castleberry provided a document for council members to review and additional information regarding the typical administrative framework and procurement process of WIOA in Wyoming and states across the nation. Council members will review the information and vote on this in November at the next quarterly meeting.

IX. Break

X. Justice Involved Hiring Presenters: Selau Weekes, Ron Gullberg, Julie Garza

Selau Weekes provided information to the council about the second chance hiring program for justice-involved individuals. The Department of Labor has provided funding through the Pathway Home Grant to Workforce Services in collaboration with the Department of Corrections. From the inception of the Career Compass Program, there have been approximately 600 referrals, 260 enrollments, and 164 individuals receiving follow-up services. Selau provided success stories and challenges faced along the way. Having local partners is vital to achieving success, the strength of these programs rests upon the collaboration among all partners.

Ron shared additional commentary on collaboration, identifying problems and solutions, and supporting childcare constraints. A collaboration has been created between non-profits, government agencies, and employers. Julie Garza from the Wyoming Department of Corrections is working together in collaboration with the justice-involved committee and provided additional information to the council. All states have a correctional industry program that falls under Title 25 Chapter 13 for Wyoming. Four of the five prisons in Wyoming have a justice-involved program. The Department of Education has provided a breakdown of job functions and skills paired with a micro-credentialing program. The program emphasizes the concept of being a lifelong learner. Each client will receive a portfolio that demonstrates competency and development of soft skills. Support of job skills and continued collaboration with Workforce Services helps to reduce the recidivism rate. The Bureau of Justice shows that 68% are arrested within three years and 77% are arrested within 5 years. Individuals who secure employment are less likely to re-offend.



XI. Senior Community Service Employment Program Presenter: Nikki Baures

Nikki Baures presented details regarding the Senior Community Service Employment that targets individuals age 55 and older, unemployed, and low-income individuals that are 125% of the federal poverty level. Priority service is provided to individuals who are over the age of 65, disabled, have low literacy skills, limited English proficiency, are residents of rural areas, are homeless or at risk of being homeless, have low employment prospects, or failed to find employment after WIOA Title I support. Benefits to employers include gaining additional temporary help, a lot of experience from previous careers, and hiring prospects of program participants. This program operates in the following counties: Natrona, Converse, Hot Springs, Fremont, & Washakie. The remaining counties fall under AARP, which serves as a sub-recipient. Natrona County is one exception where both DWS and AARP both provide local support.

XII. Wind River Job Corp – Presenter: Matthew Davis

Matthew Davis presented details to the council about the Wind River Job Corp, which opened its doors in 2015 and is the newest facility in the nation. Job Corp is the nation's largest residential employment and training program to obtain a career and high school equivalency. Individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not court-mandated and qualify as low-income are eligible for the program. The program started in 1964 during the War on Poverty under Lyndon Johnson's presidency. There are over 120 job centers and annually approximately 33,000 students are served. Wind River is the only Job Corp in the state of Wyoming. Job Corp is administered under the DOL and there is an employment and training administrator. The operator of Wyoming's Job Corp is WRJCC Equus Workforce, they are authorized through WIOA and receive Congressional oversight. Most centers across the country are operated by private companies that provide training and placement services and recruit students. All training programs require a performance report card. Wind River Job Corp primarily serves students from Texas 40%, Colorado 40%, and Wyoming/Montana 20%. Currently, Job Corp has over 30% of students from Wyoming. Students have arrived from a handful of other states including Oregon. Technical training that leads to related employment: building construction technology, carpentry, electrical, heavy construction equipment mechanic, heavy equipment operator, heavy truck driving, medical, petroleum service technician, welding. Wind River Job Corp is the only facility in the nation to offer a petroleum program. Matthew provided the council with ways they could support the facility in the future.

XIII. Resess

The meeting recessed at 4:17 pm and will reconvene on September 12 at 8:30 am.



September 12, 2024

Council Members Present

Chairman Eric Trowbridge
Larry Fodor
Wendy Fisketjon
Brenda Morgan
Dan Meyer
Lauren Schoenfeld for
Governor Gordon

Ron Wild
Bria Hammock
Daniel Burau
Matthew Davis
Ron Gullberg for Josh Dorrell

Tony Cross
Debra Zolnoski
Phillip Cornella
Travis Lawrence
Director Elizabeth Gagen

Council Members Absent

Dick Smith
Michael Kercher
Katie Hogarty
Charles Wilson

Senator Fred Baldwin
Tina Conley
Korin Schmidt
Mayor Matt Hall

Representative Ryan Berger
Nicky Harper
Superintendent Degenfelder
Nathan Williams

DWS Staff Present

Jennifer Wilch
Holly Simoni
Brynn Schildmeier
Trevor Mansfield
Nikki Baures
Gilbert Servantez
Lacey Lavake
Michael Moore
Selau Weekes
Melissa Lovett

Ivy Castleberry
Christina West
Shelby Cunningham
Denise Rodriguez
Lisa Bengé
Jason Wolfe
Tony Glover
Yvonne Adekale
Pilar Lester
Carola Cowan

Kristy Tyrney
Deanna Crofts
Wynette Culp
Shaye Moon
Jaime Cruz
Bryce Roberts
Shannon Gage
Wade Werbelow
Tallia Wachsmuth

Others Present

Mayor Joel Highsmith
Eastern Shoshone Tribal
Liaison James Sorrels

Jerri Prejean

Jaime C

XIV. Welcome

Meeting called to order at 8:30 am

A. Roll Call Presenter: Jennifer Wilch

Jennifer Wilch took roll call and noted we have a quorum.



XV. Wind River Reservation Workforce & Economic Development Brief

Presenter: James Sorrels

James Sorrels is the Tribal Liaison on behalf of Governor Gordon's office. James shared details regarding the Wind River Development Fund receiving 36 million dollars for several projects on the Wind River Reservation, including the Buffalo Initiative, a new museum, and a building for Wyoming Fish & Game. These projects will also support growth in the local workforce and the biggest barrier will be finding enough people to fill the needed positions. The tribal employment rights office, which includes the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and the Northern Arapahoe Tribe will be collaborating to support upcoming projects. Near the Trout Creek area, 30 acres will be developed for native plants and harvesting to bring back some of the native plants. The Wind River Development will provide strategic planning and help allocate funding for these projects.

XVI. Riverton Workforce Center Update Presenter: Deanna Crofts

Deanna Crofts provided an overview to the council of what it is like to be inside a workforce center. Workforce centers provide resources for community members that include HireWyo registration, and a resource room. Deanna highlighted a partnership with the Department of Family Services through the POWER program as well as rapid response support for employees when a sudden reduction in employment occurs or a business is closing. Every Thursday at the Wind River Job Corp center, an orientation is provided to students who are coming to participate in trades or complete their high school equivalency (HSET) education. The Riverton Workforce Center participates in quarterly meetings on the Job Corp campus and is also partnered with Central Wyoming Community College (CWC) to provide a well-attended employment expo in the art center where approximately 50 employers sign up.

XVII. Northern Illinois Evaluation Report Presenters: Jennifer Wilch, Trevor Mansfield

Jennifer Wilch presented the details of the Title I evaluation report provided by Northern Illinois University. Findings included having great front-line staff working hard to meet people where they are and equity-focused programs to level the playing field and overcome barriers. It was found that it would be beneficial to acquire more data from sources such as the Department of Family Services, for childcare, transportation, housing assistance, high-speed internet, utility bill assistance, and more. Jennifer shared that an area that had room for growth was working to focus on priority populations and accessibility to everyone. Informing participants and ensuring they have a full understanding of needed steps as they transition into the workforce. Supporting individuals into self-sustaining employment and quality jobs versus in-demand jobs and ensuring jobs include benefits. Trevor Mansfield provided additional information about looking at what tools and resources are available for local workforce centers so they can have conversations with participants.



Council Roundtable Discussion

Chairman Eric Trowbridge invited council members to a roundtable discussion to have a conversation about what everyone would like to see in the next four years.

XVII. Break

XVIII. Labor Market Information – Annual Report Presenter: Michael Moore

Michael Moore is the research supervisor for the research & planning division of Wyoming DWS and presented the annual workforce report and information about the state's labor market. Michael presented data from the quarterly census of employment and wages that includes 90% of all wage and salary disbursements with the exception of self-employment, gig jobs, and people working in other states. Average monthly employment from 2022 to 2023 experienced a 2.3% increase from 272,220 to 278,581. Total wages from 2022 to 2023 increased by 7.3% from \$15.3 billion to \$16.5 billion, with the average annual wage increasing by 4.9% from \$56,320 to \$59,064. The counties that experienced the most growth included Natrona with 3.3% growth, Laramie with 2.2% growth, Teton with 4.2% growth, and Campbell with 3.4% growth. According to the data it took Wyoming 4 years until 2023 to reach pre-pandemic levels of employment. The national average of job growth since the pandemic is 3.3%, and Wyoming experienced 0.5% from 2019 to 2023. Meanwhile, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota experienced between 2.6% to 12.1% in overall job growth. The mining sector lost 3,685 jobs, a 17.7 decrease that contributed to slow job growth data. Four of every ten jobs in Wyoming's mining sector in 2008 were gone in 2023. Wyoming's labor force in 2023 was 295,207, of that labor force 286,669 were employed and 8,538 were unemployed, with an unemployment rate of 2.9% and a US unemployment rate of 3.6%. Wyoming is following a similar national trend of a tightening labor market with twice as many job openings as there are unemployed people. As of June 2024, there were 17,000 job openings. Michael discussed the Wyoming Labor Force Trends publication and how to obtain a copy and subscribe. Wyoming is projected to add more than 35,000 new jobs from 2022-2023.

XV. Strategic State Plan Update Presenter: Jennifer Wilch

Jennifer Wilch presented an update on the Strategic State Plan. The council is in charge of setting the strategic direction for the Workforce System, part of that is writing the WIOA state plan. There are some other goals from other core title partners. Future items are for years 3 and 4, otherwise strategies are categorized as now and next on the list. Some of these goals require prerequisite elements to be completed first. Core partners will meet again in October. The call to action is to go through all of the strategies that are highlighted for the WWDC and in October Jennifer will be bringing the 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Strategies spreadsheet to each committee meeting to identify strategies that each committee will be working on and when the committees meet; additionally, council members not on the specific committee who want to help with a strategy are welcome to attend the committee meeting and work towards the identified goal. Chairman Eric Trowbridge added that sometime in 2025, he will present an



idea to the council regarding better performance tracking and action items concerning the state plan and strategic planning. Everyone in industry, education, philanthropy, workforce agencies, or anyone who contributes to the workforce is invited to a get-back-to-basics and larger conversation about the workforce system, and identify gaps so we can meet the needs of our businesses and workers in the state, after our quarterly meeting on Nov 7th about the workforce system as a whole.

XVI. Committee Breakouts

11:05 am to 11:20 am

XVII. Committee Updates

A. Communications & Community Relations – Danny Bureau

Some of the challenges have been getting quorum and better attendance. The committee is going to send out a survey to get more input as we are looking at some of the strategic plan strategies. We are working to obtain more engagement and set up a system that helps set us up for success. Discussion of approvals via email if necessary and becoming as efficient as possible.

B. Sector Partnerships & Career Pathways – Tony Cross

We are going to have some further requests for changes relating to our grant application in the future, there is some continued discussion on how we distribute money, and how we can be more efficient. Ignite the active partnerships. Larry Fodor shared apprenticeship is kicking off in Torrington later this month, and they asked for criteria for the Dept of Corrections. Got with the school districts and figured out their go-to's. Six positions for the apprenticeship, with 48 applicants from the prison system. The Albany County partnership is still going strong, combining construction and manufacturing into one partnership. The has 400 million dollars to spend on state construction projects over the next year, Del McCombe is concerned that there are not enough employees, and schools are reducing CTE spaces.

C. Strategic Performance & Finance – Travis Lawrence

Since becoming the new chair of the committee, committee members have become oriented in their key roles and provided additional education on the functions of the committee. In this last quarter, Jennifer Cassidy gave a tutorial on the council budget and different revenue allocations. On the Strategic Performance side, reviewing our ETPL and Trevor Mansfield gave a presentation on that process and what it takes to become a provider. The other core function of the committee is also reviewing grants and projects that our council chooses to do. We have six current projects, three of those are grants, and three are internal projects of the council. Lastly, we have reviewed the policy and any updates to our policy. We look those over and get



an understanding of the change. Additional discussion on an allocation of what we think we can afford on Next Gen Grants as a line item budget amount.

XVIII. Public Comment

No public comment at this time

XIX. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:47