



LWIA #15 CAREER LINK Corporate Board of LWIA #15

Serving the counties of: Fulton, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell and Woodford

MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

9am to 10am

GOOGLE MEET VIRTUAL: meet.google.com/kpw-jayy-rzy

or Dial: (US)+1 414-909-3313 PIN: 981 194 722#

- I. **ROLL CALL and Introductions** –Chairman, Bruce Marston opened the meeting at 9:00 am with a roll call of board members and introductions.

Corporate Board Members Present: Chairman, Bruce Marston, Larry Crouch, and Laura Maas

Corporate Board Members Absent: Vice Chairman, Tom Frazier

Career Link Staff Present: *Executive Director*, Steve Martin, *Assistant Director*, Dena Weth and *Technical Specialist/Planner/EEO officer*, David Vaughn *Fiscal Director*, LeeAnn (Whitlatch) Norris

Others Present: *One Stop Operator Manager*, Warren Cheatham

- II. ***ACTION ITEM: Approval of (M) March 09, 2021 Corporate Board Minutes**
A motion was made by Larry Crouch and seconded by Laura Maas to approve the (M) March 09, 2021 'Google Virtual Meeting' Minutes. Motion carried

- III. **Participant Spotlight – Dena Weth, Assistant Director**

Career Link Assistant Director, Dena stated that the “Participant Spotlight” provides an opportunity to recognize Career Link staff as well as the outstanding customers of the LWIA #15 eight county area.

Dena Weth gave a brief story of a Dislocated Worker Customer who was enrolled in Career Link’s Program in the Peoria County area.

*‘Matthew Clevenger was a dislocated worker from Synergetic Industries as a design engineer for tooling where he worked for four years. The manufacturing plant shut down on 3/15/2020 due to COVID-19. Finding it difficult to obtain work during the pandemic, he applied for tuition assistance and went to CDL program at ICC, which began 3/29/2021. He earned his class A CDL on 4/30/2021. Matthew landed a job with Werner right after he received his CDL. He is a team driver with his girlfriend who attended CDL training about the same time. He has already driven to Florida, Texas, Kentucky, and Indiana and is currently on his way to Denver, Colorado. While his pay is based on how many miles he drives, his take home average pay of approx. \$1,600 per week. He really enjoys his new job and says that he could not have done it without the help of Career link and the WIOA grant. **Testimonial:** ‘Thanks to Career Link’s assistance I was able to enroll in truck driver training program at ICC after being unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19. My girlfriend and I completed the training about the same time, knowing we wanted to team drive. We hired on with a major carrier after obtaining our CDL’s and began a new hire training program with our new employer. We noticed right away we were more advanced than the other new hires in our orientation class. The instructors at ICC gave us the skills and confidence to stand out. In our first two weeks of professional team driving, we’ve bene to 18 states and are loving the life on the road together.’*

IV. *ACTION ITEM: Approval of EPH DOCUMENTS: RESOURCE ROOM JOB DESCRIPTION (EPH #91-92) - Dena Weth, Assistant Director

Dena Weth ask that the Corporate Board members refer to the Resource Room Job Description in the EPH (Employee Personnel Handbook). The Career Link offices that have a Resource Room Technician, takes care of the Resource Room and provides assistance with customers with Resumes and online Job Search, and take in Timesheets and distributing checks when customers come in to get their paychecks. The Career Link Management team realized that due to the vast amount of geographical miles that need to be covered, especially in the rural community areas, the Resource Rm Techs are needed to assist by driving their cars to some of the Youth's locations, who may not have automobiles when they need to turn in their timesheets in a quick manner in order to get paid, as well as driving to provider/school locations to delivery pay-checks where, at times, the mail service is not as reliable. Dena stated that the Corporate Board needs to approve this additional language that will be added to the Resource Room Technician Job Description in the Employee Personnel Handbook which will have the last line added to Pg. 91 to read as follows: **'Access to reliable vehicle/driver's license is required at various office locations. Some travel may be required.'** **A motion was made by Laura Maas and seconded by Larry Crouch to approve the EPH (Employee Personnel Handbook) changes to the RESOURCE ROOM JOB DESCRIPTION (EPH #91-92). Motion carried.**

V. *ACTION ITEM: Approval of TUITION REIMBURSEMENT CHANGES (EPH pg. #42) - Steve Martin, Executive Director / Dena Weth, Assistant Director

Steve Martin stated that the Career Link Management adjusted the area of Out-Service Training in the EPH (Employee Personnel Handbook). Steve stated that the Corporate Board needs to approve this additional language/changes that will be added to the the Section: Out-Service Training pg. #42 of the Employee Personnel Handbook and will read as follows:

Section: **Out-Service Training**

Job related Out-Service Training at colleges or other institutions may be compensated reimbursed for by the UWDB. **Qualifying person's training course must be absolutely relevant to their current employment position. The degree, license, etc. must pertain to employment with the 'Company'.** The compensation reimbursement will only include books and tuition. **Suggested compensation Reimbursement would be \$6K \$5,250 for a Master's Degree or \$3K for a Bachelor's Degree with a maximum of \$1,500 per calendar year for License obtainment, dependent on the amount provided in the budget for any given Program year.** Requests cannot exceed the amount the current year budget allows. Regardless of the years it takes to complete the Degree, of License, etc., etc. **Employees will be limited to a total tuition coverage, one degree, not to exceed \$5,250 per calendar year and \$12,000 overall. for the combination of the tuition for Bachelor's and the Master's Degree.** License obtainment maximum will be limited to \$3K. In addition, a maximum of \$500 per calendar year will be allowed for licenses renewals, continuing education, etc., etc. Seniority will take precedence over who would qualify for Out-Service Training courses. The qualifying person must be a full-time employee with the 'Company', having worked at least two (2) years with the 'Company' and must meet or exceed expectations on annual evaluation reports. The qualifying person must remain with the 'Company' for a minimum of five (5) years once the degree is earned; whether it is a Master's Degree or a Bachelor's Degree. However, this does not include license renewals, or continuing education courses required for a relevant license. In the event that the qualifying person terminates from employment with the 'Company', he/she would pay back a portion of the funds **allowed for disbursement.** Amount of payback will be the percentage of the 5 years still remaining when the employee left employment. It will be at the discretion of the Directors to determine if the Training course Tuition will no longer be required to pay back, warranted in cases such as disability, health issues, etc. **Approval for reimbursement for such training must be sought and received, in writing, by the Executive Director or Assistant Director prior to the beginning of the class or seminar. No training should interfere with the operation of the UWDB office.**

Dena Weth expressed that Career Link has exceptional staff. Examples; 1.) A staff member who has their CPA Credential w/ professional certification 2.) A staff has a Licensed Social Worker Master's Degree Level that has been phenomenal with customers who come in with mental health issues 3.) A staff member that has a Master's Degree in Counseling that often times put their skills-set into play on numerous occasions. So the management team wanted to think of different ways outside of general compensations and benefits to entice those individuals in particular, to stay with the Organization. In addition, there are other individuals that have great potential to pursue higher levels of education. These proposed changes will present opportunities to staff, for their future.

A motion was made by Larry Crouch and seconded by Laura Maas to approve the Employee Personnel Handbook to the TUITION REIMBURSEMENT CHANGES (EPH pg. #42) Motion carried.

VI. Report on Status of Re-Opening Career Link offices – Steve Martin, Executive Director

Steve Martin reported that the One Stop Office in Peoria, IL opened up their office, for appointments only, on Sept. 7, 2021. Career Link staff that work in that Center, arrived on Sept. 8, 2021. There was a brief meeting with IDES and Career Link to discuss scheduling, security guard's positions on the premises and the parking lot guidelines. All Career Link office in the eight county area of LWIA #15, and staff will work from the offices during normal business hours. If they

are exposed to COVID-19 virus, they are to be quarantined for 14 days at their homes, and must test negative upon returning. They are allowed to work from home, if they are well enough to do so. Steve stated that he is not mandating vaccinations for the staff but asking that masks must be worn at all times. He stated that Career Link recently received the re-opening plans that were mostly written by IDES, being that they are the lease-owner of the office. These re-opening plans were signed by the Workforce Board Chair, Sam Lewis and the County Board Chairman, David Zimmerman and has been sent into the State. Chairman, Bruce Marston asked Steve if Career Link's plans for 'service-by-appointment' only, does that include the Resource Room Centers, so any individuals that would need to come in to utilize that service, would need to make an appointment, as well? Steve stated that at this time, that would apply, but continue to look at situation unfolds day to day. As an example, a person came into the building but didn't have an appointment, but there was no customers with an appointment, so that individual was able to be seen. So an appointment can be made on the spot. There was no further discussion.

VII. *ACTION ITEM: MANAGEMENT TEAM PHONE DISCUSSION & APPROVAL – Steve Martin, Executive Director

Steve Martin explained that a few years ago, the Corporate Board approved to have the four members of the Career Link upper management personnel to cover their monthly cellphone plans since they are being used for Career Link business purposes. Each of these staff have purchased their own private cellphones. Steve expressed that an additional management personnel staff member, currently has a cellphone which was purchased with their own monies and they are currently paying for their own cellphone plan, which is used for Career Link business. The staff member uses a different Carrier other than Verizon. With the authorize and approval of the Corporate Board, Steve is requesting that an agreement is established for Career Link to reimbursement the management personnel staff member, each month, for their current monthly charges for their cellphone plan expenses that are approx. \$34 monthly.

A motion was made by Laura Maas and seconded by Larry Crouch to authorize Career Link to reimburse the monthly cellphone plan costs for an additional MANAGEMENT TEAM member. Motion carried.

VIII. DCEO Monitoring Report – LeeAnn (Whitlatch) Norris, Fiscal Director/Dena Weth, Assistant Director

LeeAnn Norris stated that DCEO began 'remote monitoring' in the Spring in April 2021, where all documents were scanned to them. Fiscally, Career Link is allowed to have up to three days cash-on-hand and there was one month with the Holidays and such, we ended up being slightly over at 3.14 but they did not write that up so in the final report there were no fiscal issues on their monitoring report.

Dena Weth referred to the programmatic aspects regarding the monitoring visit. She stated that, as LeeAnn stated, the monitoring was conducted entirely by remote methods. This was quite an undertaking and it was difficult to get accustomed to this new monitoring practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Dena stated that the monitors asked Career Link to upload 36 customer's files and one of the customer's had over 500 pages to be uploaded. This was quite an endeavor that started in April 2021 and Career Link received the final approval on Career Link's Action Plan on August 27, 2021.

In addition to the 36 customer files; which included Trades Funding files, the National Disaster Grant, Work Experience, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth files, Career Link also had several Policies that were reviewed, including the Incumbent Worker Policy and On-The-Job training Policy. In addition, all of Career Link's sub-contracted Youth Programs were reviewed as well as three (3) years of monitoring. Dena expressed that overall, the Career Link staff did an excellent job and she commended them for their hard work and efforts during these unprecedented times.

During the last three years, there have been different monitors in each session and they each wanted different things done in different ways and this can be very challenging for Career Link Career Planners as they have to work with different monitoring groups, and each monitoring group can have their own interpretations that can vary significantly different.

One area that the monitors pointed out, was with one of the 36 customer's file where there was not a 90-day two-way communication entry but instead it was entered on the 100th day. The Career Planner diligently attempted to contact the customer, every 30 days. However, since the customer did not respond, the monitors noted a finding of not have a two-way communication within a 90-day period. Since the monitoring visit, this particular customer, unfortunately, was removed from the program for non-compliance and is no longer in our program.

The second finding was an encompassing finding; data validation and when a service line is opened on the IWDS data system. Dena stated that at least since 2006 up until April 2021, once a file is created by a Career Planner and all documentation is turned in, it is referred to as going through a 'certification process' and at that time Career Planners enter an occupational training line on IWDS data system. When a customer comes in, and the file is certified, the Career

Planner would open up an occupational classroom training line. Frequently, Nursing students and CDL students have pre-requisites to complete. Dena expressed that after Career Link had been doing this for many many years, the Monitors said that this procedure was incorrect and instead wanted the occupational training line to be entered on the first day of training; not before. Dena stated that Career Link has been assured that the monitors will not look back at any customers that were certified before this new ruling was implemented. Career Planners have now changed that process.

Lastly, the monitors questioned Career Link regarding sub-contractors for all of the Youth Programs; GED Recovery and Drop-Out Prevention program. In all of the programs, there are incentives that are provided to use. However, these incentives are directly paid to the Youth by the sub-contractors. The Sub-contractor directly provides the incentive to the student. Therefore, Career Link's involvement is only when Career Link's Fiscal Director, LeeAnn Norris, monitors and reviews their incentive program at different times, making sure that students are signing off for gift cards, making sure they are meeting the guidelines of why that card is being given to the student. So the monitors suggested that every time a subcontractor would issue an incentive, Career Link was to get a receipt of that incentive and open up a service line. That could entail 200 kids at least a couple times a month and we argued that in no way could our Career Planners maintain this heavy load first of all and it would be very difficult to go into a subcontractor and ask their Fiscal Dept to provide us with receipts every time a gift card is given out to a student. Career Link sent in a rebuttal and all agreed upon that Career Link would just add a service line at the very beginning of the semester specifically stating that they are receiving an incentive and that it is being provided directly by the subcontractor. Dena stated that overall, the monitors were satisfied with the other outcomes.

Steve Martin expressed that in addition to LeeAnn and Dena's report, he received a letter stating that during the program year 2020-2021, Career Link did not meet the 50% training requirement. Steve Martin stated that during the monitoring of obligations and expenditures, it was determined that Career Link was very low in every category; Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers. All LWIAs across the state had experienced similar issues in meeting the required goals, mainly due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The issue when making this Report, the COVID-19 Pandemic would not be allowed as a reason of not meeting the goals, according to the DOL. Career Link asked for a waiver on the 80% expenditure requirement and on the 50% training requirement. Career Link was in the same position that quite a few employers were in, trying to get people through their doors. Outreach had been ongoing through the Pandemic, although has been via virtual outreach for the majority of it. Having the AJC (America's Job Center) in Peoria, IL being closed to the Public, had not helped the matters. Outreach continues via Comcast Advertising and Facebook postings. Career Link was in a unusual, unlikely and unfamiliar position of having to ask for a waiver for not meeting obligations and expenditures because Career Link has always met and exceeded expenditures. As of Sept. 13, 2021, Steve was informed by the DCEO Regional Manager, Andy Doer, that Career Link will be receiving approval for the 'Hold Harmless' clause for PY 2020 and that there will not be a reduction in Career Link's funding. Career Link will continue having progress monitored for the coming year, with DCEO, moving forward.

Chairman, Bruce Marston commented on these reports as he has had experience with DCEO and monitoring when he worked with the City of Peoria. When hearing things that the monitors took issue with, he can empathize with Career Link. He stated that when there are different auditors over different years, they do have different opinions on how things can be done and that can be very frustrating and he can relate to that. A LWIA will do something one way based on correspondence and communications with the auditors/monitors and a few years later, there could be different interpretation. From his view, from his recall, there were rather minor points on the programmatic side and on the fiscal side it is excellent that there were no findings or issues. Also, knowing that sometimes the monitors come in with the idea of trying to find things. They are not just coming in and doing a drive-by; they are looking for things to find. And when all they can find are those little dates points, or didn't open a service line for one particular client, then Career Link is doing pretty good and he was encouraged by those two reports. Regarding the 50% training, I can certainly understand how that can come about, given the situation that occurred in 2020, with the businesses being shut down and being rather difficult to meet some of those requirements, particularly performance requirements, and also with On-The-Job training when that was pretty much a stand-still. It is good to know that that is not going to be held against Career Link and it is not going to be a situation where you have 'if this happens again next year' then that puts you into a category of performance, correct? This is not a cumulative situation. . .that DCEO pretty much forgave that 50% for that one year?

Steve stated that is correct.

I. Other Comments

There were no further comments.

II. **Public Comments**

There were no Public comments.

III. ***ACTION ITEM: Adjournment**

A motion was made by Laura Maas and seconded by Larry Crouch to adjourn. Motion carried. Adjournment time: 9:31 am

Respectfully submitted,

WIB Recording Secretary,
Theresa Kotte, Executive Assistant
LWIA #15

rev. 09-14-2021 trk