



**The Workforce Connection Board and Chief Elected Officials  
Meeting Minutes**  
**The Workforce Connection Board,  
Workforce Board for Boone, Winnebago, and Stephenson Counties**

**Meeting: December 7, 2021**  
**Time: 8:00 am**  
**Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Board Members Present: Ben Bernsten; Karen Brown; Todd Cagnoni; Len Carter; Kathy Crandall; Pamela Fettes; Sue Fischer; Einar Forsman; Jessica Greenberg; Dr. Daniel Grohens; Greg Harle; Vanessa Hughes; Kim Kuborn; Eva Kretschmar; Amy Nord; Amy Ott; James Pirages; Dan Ross; Frank Rotello; Glendia Strandin for Tammy Shippert; Dr. Amanda Smith for Dr. Howard Spearman; Craig Steege; Mark Stefanic; Mark Williams; Ed Wood; Jeff Zeal

Board Members Absent: Scott Bloomquist; Michelle Cassaro; Frank Delarosa; Al Golden; Bob Guirl; Jordan Priest; Todd Wells;

CEO Members Present: Thomas McNamara (8:39 am); Todd Cagnoni for Mayor McNamara; William Hadley; Karl Johnson;

CEO Members Absent: Joseph Chiarelli;

Board Staff Present: Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones; Chris Connors; Cathy Cornelius; Amanda Sink; Dan White;

Partner Staff Present: Tom Austin; Courtney Geiger; Tabitha Sims; Tonya Thayer

Guests Present: Carmine Burns; Kevin Catlin; Valerie Johnson

1. **TWC Board Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello presided and called the TWC Board to order at 8:02 am.  
**CEO Call to Order:** Todd Cagnoni called the CEO meeting to order at 8:06am.
2. **TWC Board Roll Call:** A roll call was taken and a quorum was present.  
**CEO Roll Call:** A roll call was taken and a quorum present.
3. **Approval of Consent Agenda – Action Item:**
  - a) TWC Board Meeting Minutes – 09/14/2021
  - b) CEO Meeting Minutes – 09/14/2021
  - c) PY2021 MOU Technical Changes Approval

- d) Policy Approvals
  - EO Policy Update
  - Conflict of Interest/Ethics Policy Update
  - Whistleblower/Fraud Policy

**TWC Board**

**Motion: Brown Second: Ott Approved**

**CEO Board**

**Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved**

**4. Finance**

- **October 2021 Financial Report**

Amy Ott, Finance Committee Chair reviewed the October 2021 Finance Summary Report noting that Adult & Dislocated Worker Training Expenditures were at 65%, well above the 50% requirement. Youth Work-Based Learning spending requirement was at 22%, above the 20% requirement. Subrecipient spending for the Boone/Winnebago County Youth Services and the One-Stop Operator & Career Services were above the reasonable spending requirement. The Elevate Stephenson Youth Services were slightly below and this will be addressed in the Quarterly Conversation. The Overall Actual Costs & Obligations finds all three funding streams (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) above the reasonable spending threshold of 20% but obligations for the Adult & Dislocated Worker funding streams are below the 80% requirement. Dislocated Worker formula funds are under-obligated because the National Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant funds are being spent first. Participant Service Levels are tracking as expected. If needed, a modification will be done between the Dislocated Worker and Adult funding streams. However, spending is in a much better position than the same period last year. Lastly, the Finance Committee firmed up the internal controls for the transition to an Interim Executive Director.

**5. Boone/Winnebago Elevate Youth Services RFP Timeline**

Chris Connors shared the timeline with the group and asked Board members who are interested in participating on the Proposal Review Team to contact him. Frank Rotello asked if there were any major changes to the RFP and Chris replied that there are not any changes.

**6. Quarterly Conversations – Program Update:**

Chris Connors, Planning & Quality Assurance Manager informed the group that the reason for Quarterly Conversations with Program Staff is to have the ability to address any concerns before they become an issue and cannot be corrected. This report reflects information from July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter enrollment numbers for Elevate Boone & Winnebago and Elevate Stephenson Youth Services were slightly below the goal but they are confident that they will meet their goal numbers by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

Dan White, Fiscal Manager, reviewed the Subrecipient Spending and noted that Elevate Stephenson is historically underspent at this time of year because some budget line items aren't typically spent until the end of the program year.

Both the Adult & Dislocated Worker and Youth Work-Based Learning Minimum Training Expenditures were well above the requirement.

Chris Connors reviewed the observations and comments for each contract.

**7. PY2022 Regional and Local Plan Update-February 2022 Deadline**

Amanda Sink, Strategic Initiatives Manager, gave an overview of the PY2022 Regional & Local Plan Modification Timeline. She noted that the 4-year plan is at the 2-year mark and requires an update to ensure that the effects of COVID have been addressed and to include a Workforce Equity Lens to all the

activities and strategies implemented into this plan and daily work. The work to address these updates has been done in The Workforce Connection committees.

**8. Labor Force and Employment by Industry Update**

Tom Austin, IDES Economic Information & Analysis Division, presented information on Labor Force and Employment by Industry for Local Workforce Area 3 (LWIA3), which serves Boone, Stephenson, and Winnebago counties. The presentation highlighted the changes in unemployment in LWIA 3. The number of unemployed is down from 2020, but higher than in 2019. As an urban community with a high concentration of manufacturing employment, the region's unemployment rate is typically higher than the state and national levels. In October 2021, the unemployment rate was 6.7 % compared to the 21.5 % level at the beginning of the pandemic. While the number of unemployed and the unemployment rate have declined, the LWIA's October 2021 rate is still higher than its 4.4 % level in October 2019. This report is available by request.

**9. Workforce Highlights from Chief Elected Officials**

- **City of Rockford** – Mayor McNamara thanked Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones for her service to the area. He commented that she had some big wins and quiet successes. The announcement of the \$2.6 million dollar grant for AAR that will be managed by The Workforce Connection is an example of the work she has put in. He also mentioned the initiative of collaborating the community agencies around the \$20 million Kellogg Foundation Grant proposal. Although our area was not awarded the grant, the work started around this initiative will improve our area. He also thanked Dr. Bly-Jones for her help with the many, many calls from City of Rockford citizens that the Mayor received regarding unemployment during the pandemic. The mayor highlighted the opening of the temporary casino that employs 250 people. Other highlights include the small business help the City of Rockford has been providing by reducing liquor license costs; \$1 million in micro-enterprise loans forgiven; awarded RAISE grant for downtown improvement to include bike paths and electric busses; capital improvement plan approved for a total of \$250 million by leveraging funds from the 1% sales tax with state and federal funds; and passed the City of Rockford budget with no property tax increase for the 9<sup>th</sup> year in a row.
- **Boone County** – Chairman Johnson thanked all community leaders for their support with the Stellantis plant in Belvidere and for helping with the legislature bill to incentivize electric vehicles. The outlook is positive with the Governor signing the bill and the work continues to get Stellantis to utilize those incentives and save the Chrysler plant in Belvidere. It's important to the whole region.
- **Stephenson County** – Chairman Hadley thanked Tom Austin for his presentation and he appreciates the monthly IDES reports. The county continues to work on the City/County sewer project for the Mill Race Crossing Industrial Park. They received a \$2 million commitment from a company, and are working out the details of the contract with that company. The businesses in Stephenson County are still struggling to find workers. The Chairman thanked Mark Williams and his team with the Greater Freeport Partnership for the great work they do for Economic Development for Stephenson County and the City of Freeport, especially their work with Enterprise Zones and TIF Districts.

**10. Executive Director Report (Hand out)**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones gave a brief update on the update of the Business Service Team. The focus is on business development and business engagement using a consultative approach by using the suite of services offered by The Workforce Connection and being a connection to other resources. Courtney Geiger, Director of Workforce Services for the One-Stop Operator added that the updated design refines the way we can connect with businesses. The approach is tailor-made for each employer.

Frank Rotello reflected how the new structure is a cleaner and leaner structure with the resources more focused. A playbook was created to ensure the Board strategies are aligned with the Business Team service delivery. This new structure will help build on the strategies of the Board and its economic development partners such as Greater Rockford Growth Partnership, Growth Dimensions, and Greater Freeport Partnership to achieve the results needed to strengthen our region. Organizations coming together to

leverage the knowledge each brings and with their unique perspectives will help to solve our region's problems.

11. **Board Chair's Perspective**

Frank Rotello thanked Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones for her service and thinks she left the board in a good position to move forward. She developed a great staff team and he was able to learn from her. He learned that Workforce Development is local and if it was easy everyone would do it. The Workforce Connection is in a better place and that is a mark of a great leader to leave it better than you found it. The challenge is to continue to build on what you left us.

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones responded that this work is all about working together with all of the partners. When the Mayor talked about calling her during the pandemic she was reaching out to our IDES partner, Jeff Zeal, who was very responsive despite all his organization had going on. She appreciates all the relationships she has built with the workforce partners. It's an ecosystem and LWIA 3 works very well together and she enjoyed the benefit of that partnership. In her new role, she will be able to better advocate for northern Illinois.

Frank continued by informing the group that the Executive Director search is underway and Dan White, the Fiscal Manager, has stepped up to act as the Interim Executive Director. The job has been posted and Workplace is beginning screening of candidates that have applied and is networking to find other qualified candidates. The search committee and the HR Committee had to create a vision of where they want the organization to go so that they could find the right person to fill the position.

12. **Announcements**

None

13. **Member Comments:**

14. **Public Comment:**

None

15. **Adjournment**

TWC Board Motion to adjourn at 9:13

**Motion: Ott Second: Steege Approved**

CEO Board Motion to adjourn at 9:13

**Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved**

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Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Cornelius

Date: February 22, 2022

**ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE MEETING PACKET**

*TWC Board Meeting Minutes 09-14-2021 (Action Item)*

*CEO Meeting Minutes 09-14-2021 (Action Item)*

*PY2021 MOU Technical Changes Approval (Action Item)*

*EO Policy Update (Action Item)*

*Conflict of Interest/Ethics Policy Update (Action Item)*

*Whistleblower/Fraud Policy (Action Item)*

*October 2021 Financial Report (Information)*

*PY2022 Regional & Local Plan Modification Timeline (Information)*

*Quarterly Conversations Report – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (Information)*

*Boone/Winnebago County Youth RFP Timeline (Information)*

*IDES Labor Force & Employment by Industry Update (Information)*

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