

**BERKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
(WDB)**

**7:30 a.m.**

**December 13, 2019**

**PA CareerLink® Berks County, 1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604  
Meeting Summary**

**Members Present**

Ms. Debra Antol (via conference call)  
Ms. Jenny Batista  
Ms. Auria Bradley  
Mr. John DeVere  
Mr. William Dorward  
Ms. Joanne Judge (via conference call)  
Ms. Peggy Kershner  
Mr. Lewis McCoy (via conference call)  
Mr. Thomas McKeon  
Mr. Thomas McNelis (via conference call)  
Mr. John Morahan  
Mr. James Nichols  
Mr. Mark Pinkasavage  
Mr. Michael Rowley (via conference call)  
Mr. Russell Showers  
Mr. Pablo Tejada  
Ms. Karyn Troxell  
Ms. Tammy White  
Dr. Anne Zayaitz

**Members Absent**

Ms. Marianne Egolf  
Mr. Michael Fischetti  
Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman  
Mr. Robert Harrop  
Ms. Carole Homolash  
Mr. Mark Schlott  
Mr. Barry Unger

**Staff and Guests Present**

Mr. Daniel Fogarty	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. John Moser	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Megan Noll	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. Rory Stevenson	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Patricia Spencer	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Helen Amole	PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator
Ms. Amber Columbo	ResCare Young Adult Program Director
Ms. Marybeth Ferguson	BWPO Assistant Regional Director
Mr. Larry Melf	Educational Data Systems, Inc.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Showers at 7:30 a.m. A quorum was present.

Mr. Showers welcomed Mr. Dorward, Business Agent, Sheet Metal Workers Local 19, to the Board. Mr. Fogarty announced the birth of a baby boy to Ms. Gage-Linderman.

Mr. Showers introduced the Consent Agenda items and asked if any item should be removed for later discussion prior to the vote. Hearing no such request, Mr. Showers moved to adopt the consent agenda:

- Approval of the minutes of the September 20, 2019 Board meeting
- Approval of the Revised PY2019 Budget
- Approval of final revisions to Berks County WDB Local Multi-year Plan thru PY2020
- Approval of WDB/PA CareerLink® Paid Work Experience Policy Revision

The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Ms. Noll commented on the Approved PY19 Budget Vs. Actual YTD in the Finance Committee Report handouts stating that expenditures for the year to date are at or within budget for all programs. An additional unrequested PY2019 Dislocated Worker allocation, in the amount of \$142,798, was received in November from PA L&I.

Mr. Fogarty added that while some PA Local Workforce Development Areas were experiencing elevated layoff activity in 2019, most (like Berks) were not. Rather than allocating additional funds to those areas in need, L&I decided to distribute additional Dislocated Worker funds to all 23 workforce areas. We as a local WDB are required to obligate 80% of our allocation. The Board can obligate funding to contract for services that have not been previously available by issuing three new Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for an Employer Best Practices/Employer Engagement Study, a Greater Reading Manufacturing Skills Gap Study, and an Individuals with Disabilities Employer Symposium Event. Finally, we have requested County approval for a new Fiscal & Quality Assurance Assistant position to assist with fiscal and program oversight due to the projected increase in the number of grants and resulting contracts. It is expected that this position will be approved and filled by April 1.

A summary of Berks County WDB contracted services PY2014 through PY2019 was included in the Board's package. At the end of November 2019, the Board administered 17 contracts. Two strong grant proposals have been submitted to the State—BEP 2020 and Youth Re-Entry—which if successful could add 6 additional contracts. In addition, grant proposals for SLIP 2020, multiple PAsmart grants, and a Teacher in the Workplace 2020 grant, could add at least 4 additional contracts. Contracts are projected to increase from 17 to at least 27 total contracts before the end of this program year.

Mr. Showers asked Mr. Moser to comment on the Executive Committee Report. Mr. Moser referred to the WIOA Title I Performance Outcomes for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter PY2019 Program Year-to-Date Results. Berks received a positive average indicator score. He said measurable skill gains figures are not required yet so there is no historical data available on General Equivalency Diploma (GED) credentials or (Test of Adult Basic Education) TABE tests. Mr. Moser added that Dislocated Worker results to date were below normal scores but that he is working with the Title I Adult and DW contractor to identify opportunities for improvement.

Mr. Moser commented that the State pulled back from eliminating and replacing the current TANF/EARN program and approved working with local WDBs to improve the program. Senator Schwank submitted a very helpful letter to Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa D. Miller in July to which she received a very positive reply. Guidance should be issued by DHS by the end of 2019 regarding the renewal of local contracts through June 2022.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Greater Reading Employer Engagement/Best Practices study was announced and released by the County with a bidder's conference scheduled at the CareerLink office on December 13, 2019. Mr. Fogarty thanked Mr. Showers and Mr. Rowley for their assistance in drafting the Statement of Work.

Mr. McKeon commented on the Berks County WDB's Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities report. There was a great success at the 2019 Symposium with 84 persons in attendance with representation by 20 employers. Planning discussions have begun for the 2020 Symposium including adding topics such as legal issues and the use of assistive technology. Ms. Troxell focused on the "take action" component to help HR professionals rethink their employer-focused job descriptions to change their mental mindset to consider more emphasis on individual-based skill sets. Mr. Moser added that a Statement of Work has been submitted to County Purchasing for an RFP for procurement of a consultant to manage continued expansion of the symposium. The RFP should be released sometime in January.

The Youth Committee Report was commented on by Ms. White. She thanked the committee members for their enthusiastic support.

Mr. Moser commented that the program's growing paid work component has been expanded and improved to help participating youth find experiences along career pathways. Using TANF youth dollars allows the expansion of the program to year-round, after school work. Ms. Columbo, Program Director, requested flexibility for a wage increase up to \$12.00/hour when appropriate to encourage out-of-school youth to stay in the GED program. That policy was approved with the consent agenda.

Mr. Stevenson reported on the Career Ready Berks (CRB) Alliance stating that through Ms. Connie Skipper's and the BCIU's ongoing outreach activities, 138 businesses have joined the Career Ready Berks Platform providing nearly 200 career-related workplace experiences in queue and available to Berks County school districts. The BCIU has also been chosen to join the national Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Learning Systems Ecosystems Community of Practice, one of only four ecosystems recognized nationally in October, 2019.

159 educators successfully completed the one-day school year *Teacher in the Workplace* (TIW) experience. 35 educators were recruited into the five-day summer *inside Berks business* (iBb) Educator in the workplace internships.

The Berks WDB is fiscal agent for a 2019-2020 Berks Education Partnership (BEP) grant award of \$130,000 through June 30, 2020. BEP grant project partners include the Berks and

Reading/Muhlenberg Career and Technology Centers (CTCs), Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) and the Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC).

The 2020 Manufacturers Resource Center “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing” annual video contest campaign is underway.

Ms. Kershner provided the One Stop Oversight Committee Report. The October 28, 2019 PA CareerLink® Berks County Job Fair held at the Crowne Plaza was a successful event with 91 business employers and 7 training agencies participating. 929 job seekers attending the event had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the employers and training providers.

Ms. Kershner referred to the 8,223 foot traffic total on the *By the Numbers* handout for the period July 2019 through September 2019. She added that 227 individuals attended orientation during the same period.

An operating budget has been submitted to all partners and signed by all CareerLink partners thus far with the exception of one partner.

Mr. Moser commented on the operator transition adding that Ms. Amole has taken ownership of her position as CareerLink Administrator very well.

The Training and Industry Partnership Committee Report was introduced by Mr. DeVere. He commented that the Committee endorsed a Statement of Work (SOW) detailing deliverables to be included in a competitively-procured Request for Proposals to study employment gap projections for advanced manufacturing skilled job families in Berks and our surrounding six counties through 2030. Funds have been allocated in the approved Board budget. Mr. Schlott added that there is a challenge in finding and employing qualified industrial maintenance employees.

The Committee has been briefed on the Lancaster/Berks Construction Connection Next Generation Industry Partnership meeting in Denver, PA and the IP’s activities related to several action items targeting opportunities for career awareness and talent pipeline growth.

The development of new Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certification Training programs are targeted to carpenter and electrician apprenticeships and are aligned to National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) standards. In our last Committee meeting, Dr. James Kraft expressed interest in learning more about possible BCTC participation in the program and advised the members of the Committee that BCTC is moving forward with plans to provide consortia apprenticeship sponsorship of several skilled occupations in support of BCTC’s related instruction programs.

Mr. Fogarty offered his COO report referring to the sudden closing of Fleetwood Fixtures in the Hamburg area in early November leaving 50+ light manufacturing employees without work and the excellent response from our local Rapid Response Team. Using UC records, letters were sent to 52 persons. Sixteen impacted workers attended an informational meeting at CareerLink and Ms. Yanie Serrano (L&I Regional Rapid Response Coordinator) submitted a Trade Act

petition on their behalf that same afternoon. Mr. Fogarty thanked Ms. Ferguson and Mr. Nichols for their support. Ms. Batista said that L&H signs had recently hired four former employees of Fleetwood and they have turned out to be good, hard working employees.

The WDB staff is preparing to develop and submit our annual report to the PA State WDB. Top accomplishments for 2019 and promising practices as well as challenges will be included.

Mr. Fogarty followed up on the September WDB discussion on the labor market new hire “churn” in Berks County.

During the first quarter of CY2019, a “whopping” 14,010 of all employed Berks County residents were new hires—representing 7.8% of the local workforce. In response to our request, L&I’s Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) provided updated information showing that our local new hire rate for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter CY2019 jumped to 8.5%. A breakdown of the new hires by local industry sector shows that:

- Manufacturing sector employers (exclusive of East Penn Manufacturing) hired 1,078 workers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter – 4.7% of their total workforce.
- Construction sector employers hired 715 new workers—11.6% of their total workforce.
- Administrative and Support Services sector employees reported hiring 6,058 new employees in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter—7.2% of the sector’s local employment. Statewide, 77.7% of this sector’s employees were new hires. However, no neighboring workforce area reported above 19.0% for this sector.
  - This sector includes employees of staffing agencies. Based on our understanding of local employer practices, we believe that many of these new hires are for manufacturing and warehouse help.
  - The extremely high number of new hires in the Administrative and Support Services sector represents over 40% of all new hires in the County during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of CY2019.

The above comments led to opening the floor for Market Intelligence Discussion.

Mr. McKeon commented that providing transportation for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift employees will be an interesting trend to watch. The Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) is focusing on how to get employees to their workplaces.

Mr. Showers commented that technology in health care occupations is becoming more complex.

Dr. Zayaitz reported on the ALEKS (Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces) training module. Kutztown University requires incoming students to take an ALEKS Mathematics Placement Assessment to determine readiness for various mathematics courses. Students can determine the need to go back and work on specific modules and have a much better sense of strengths and weaknesses in math preparedness. A student who shows a high level of mastery of

an ALEKS course will likely be successful in the actual course taken. Dr. Zayaitz commented that fundamental skills through high school classes are not coming through with many students entering college.

Mr. DeVere stated that this problem with high school mathematics has been recurring for 12-15 years.

Mr. Fogarty said that employers have a great opportunity to utilize Career Ready Berks in building support for promoting math skills necessary for success.

Mr. Tejada commented that this issue should be strategic for the County and he is looking forward to the literacy rate improving as well.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Showers adjourned the meeting at 8:50 a.m.

The next quarterly meeting of the Board will be held at 7:30 a.m. on Friday, March 20, 2020 in Room 100 of the PA CareerLink<sup>®</sup> Berks County, 1920 Kutztown road, Reading, PA 19604.