

**NORTHEAST OHIO CONSORTIUM (“NOC”)
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, September 24, 2025
12:00 p.m.

Geauga County Offices, Meeting Room B167-B168
12611 Ravenwood Drive
Chardon, Ohio 44024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Casey Kozlowski
Commissioner Jim Dvorak
Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Hattie Grubke-Barnard (OMJ-Ashtabula), Alissa Drees (ACJFS), Richard Szasz (OhioGuidestone), Carla C. (OhioGuidestone), Kimberly Brown (OhioGuidestone), Alyssa Steinhoff (GCJFS), Rebecca Abbott (PCJFS), Karen Stephens (PCJFS), Kellijo Jeffries (PCJFS Director), Craig Sernik (Area 19 Director), Denise Gehring (Area 19).

Mr. Kozlowski called the meeting to order at 12:13 p.m.

Approval of Past Business

Approval of the Minutes from August 27, 2025.

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve the minutes from August 27, 2025. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Administrative Report

Mr. Sernik reported the unadjusted county unemployment data for August 2025 shows Ashtabula County at 3.9%, Portage County at 5.0%, and Geauga County at 3.2%. The Area will not know until October if the Performance Measure data corrections that were made to the CCMEP WIOA measurable skills gains will move the Area into passing. The OMJ-Geauga Center is experiencing a turnover of staff and is down to one Auburn Career Center contracted employee. Auburn Career Center posted the position and hired at least one individual and has been providing OMJ-Geauga with the services of Mandy Vacik. ODJFS mentioned they will be conducting CCMEP Youth Mystery Shopping, which has never been done before. Results of the youth Mystery Shopping when received will be shared with the Board. Geauga Growth Partnership is administering an

Industrial Sector Partnership Grant in the medical industry of which OMJ-Geauga has earmarked \$15,00.00 in WIOA funds. The Lake to River JobsOhio Region is active and the grant application is being spearheaded by Mahoney Manufacturing Coalition also with the Lake to River Jobs Region who are looking to obtain an industry sector partnership grant for medical for the four counties that include Ashtabula County down to Columbiana County. Tomorrow is the Lake to River JobsOhio Business Services Convention held at the Eastwood Mall Expo Center which will be on business services. Congress passed the short-term Pell Grant which means possibly the only schools allowed to participate will be community colleges. The Senate has proposed appropriation legislation that would flat fund WIOA through next year. The House's counter to this would completely eliminate the WIOA youth program and cut adult by 80 percent. Neither of their long plans are moving and there is talk of a 2 week extension or if there will be a government shutdown. The new One Stop Partner MOU was just submitted to ODJFS last week and should receive a signed MOU within a week or two. The Workforce Board Certification deadline for submission has been extended through to the end of September and after today we will be able to submit the documentation to certify the Workforce Board. The NOW Regional and Local four year plan was submitted last week to ODJFS. The RFP's for the procurement of CCMEP Youth providers will need to be revised and therefore will extend the existing contracts for one quarter. Geauga County will not be procuring but will be providing OhioGuidestone with quarterly extension until they can decide what to do with the program. Certification of the OMJ Centers will need completed by the end of this year. H-1B Visas would require a \$100,000 annual application fee instead of the approximately \$1,500 which is for highly educated foreign workers to work in the United States.

Fiscal Report

Report on Status of Transfer of Funds to Avoid Returning Funds in Jeopardy to ODJFS. Mr. Sernik reported the youth money in jeopardy for Geauga has been swapped out, but the Geauga adult and dislocated worker funds in jeopardy were moved to Portage to expend but Portage was not ready, so the funds were moved back to Geauga. Ashtabula County was asked if it could do a swap of these monies of which they could and booked as much as possible leaving \$3,338 that was returned back to Geauga County. There is approximately \$75,000.00 still exposed of Geauga adult and dislocated worker. ODJFS fiscal has a Teams meeting scheduled next Monday with Portage County to assist them with coding as much as the remaining Geauga adult and dislocated funds as possible.

Reports of County OMJ-Centers

OMJ Portage County. Ms. Abbott reported Portage continues to see a lot of unemployment clients and the Business Services team held an event "Why didn't I get hired" included 8 employers and 5 resource tables, 45 job seekers, and 40 HR professionals attended.

OMJ Geauga County. Ms. Sernik reported Auburn Career Center hired one individual to staff the OMJ-Geauga Resource Room. Ms. Steinhoff stated the position that Geauga is currently hiring for will a primary focus on CCMEP in both TANF and WIOA, and adult/dislocated worker, and with some Public Assistance work activities components as well. The position title is Workforce Program Specialist.

OMJ Ashtabula County. Ms. Grubke reported placed 17 job orders this month, 22 ITAs approved 1 RN and 2 LPN to RN and 18 LPN and 1 CDLA, Resource Room saw 80 individuals in August with half there for UI assistance, ODJFS placed the Lisa Chatbot on the Resource Room computers to use when looking for unemployment assistance, on September 30th from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. the Albion Prison will do a job fair and then October 7th the APL will be there from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., RESEA January until September had 116 scheduled initial appointments and 115 subsequent appointments, and yO! as of September 11th had 697 enrolled in CCMEP program with 266 in follow up.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Extension of the Program Year 2024 CCMEP Agreements (3 month extensions):

Ashtabula JFS CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with ACJFS to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, for a no cost extension. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Geauga JFS CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with GCJFS to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, unless terminated earlier, for a no-cost extension. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Portage JFS CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with PCJFS to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, unless terminated earlier. Amend the amount of compensation available during the amended term by adding an additional \$67,830.00. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

A-Tech CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with A-Tech (Ashtabula County) to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, unless terminated earlier. Amend the amount of compensation available during the amended term by adding an additional \$62,500.00. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

OhioGuidestone CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with OhioGuidestone (Geauga County) to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, unless terminated earlier. Amend the amount of compensation available during the amended term by adding an additional \$62,200.00. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Family & Community Services, Inc. CCMEP Youth Agreement:

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve amending the WIOA Youth Program Services Agreement with OhioGuidestone (Geauga County) to amend the conclusion of the term of the agreement from September 30, 2025, to that of December 31, 2025, unless terminated earlier. Amend the amount of compensation available during the amended term by adding an additional \$44,650.00 of WIOA funds and \$106,375.00 of TANF funds. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Workforce Development Board Positions:

Mr. Sernik reported he reached out to Elizabeth Darling-Ruple (Ayrshire) and to Steve Mikolsky (V&S Schuler Engineering) regarding board membership for the remaining Geauga business vacancy and that two business individuals are on a waiting list for Portage County they are Betheny Mucci (Kent Elastomer) and Rita Battaglia (Buckeye Residential).

WDB Membership New Appointments:

Ms. Christian-Bennet moved to approve Jonathan C. Sague, University Hospitals, to the Area 19 Workforce Board for a 2-year term, as a representative of Geauga County Business. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve Denise Patton, Aqua Doc, to the Area 19 Workforce Board for a 2-year term, as a representative of Geauga County Business. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to approve Kathy Lucha, The Technology House, to the Area 19 Workforce Board for a 2-year term, as a representative of Portage County Business. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Executive Session

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to enter into executive session personnel matters, ORC 121.22(G)(1). Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Executive session commenced at 12:57 p.m.

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to exit executive session. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Executive session concluded at 1:27 p.m.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn the Meeting

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:29 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Denise Gehring.