

**Workforce Development Board  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
July 17, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Workforce Development Board member Frank Tecumseh called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**WDB Members Present:**

Darrin Adair (Educ)*	Jeff Heppler (PS)	
Jonathan Current (Labor)	Dave Maurer (PS)*	∇ Virtual
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)*	Frank Tecumseh (PS)*	* Exec Committee

**WDB Executive Members Absent**

Brian O'Donnell (PS)\*

**Center for Workforce Innovation and Solutions / Michigan Works! Southwest Staff Present:**

Amy Meyers	Debbie Horn	Kathy Olsen
Jakki Bungart-Bibb	Ashley Iovieno	

**Guests Present:**

Representative Julie Rogers	Kristine Stevens	Jennifer Teske <sup>∇</sup>
Kevin Reese	Amanda Sutherland <sup>∇</sup>	
For Rep. Julie Rogers		

**INTRODUCTIONS**

All attendees introduced themselves and the entities they represent.

**ELECTION OF CHAIR/VICE-CHAIR**

Motion made by Randall Hazelbaker to move Brian O'Donnell into the Chair position for the remainder of Jackie Murray's term that ends September 30, 2025, due to Jackie Murray changing employment and resigning from the Board; and nominating Frank Tecumseh to fill the Vice-Chair position, also for the remainder of this term, which ends on September 30, 2025. Motion was supported by Jeff Heppler. Motion carried.

**TRANSPARENCY & INTEGRITY OF WDB DECISIONS**

Kathy Olsen asked members present if there were any items on the agenda for which a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest exists; and if so, the conflict should be declared at this time. There were none.

**PUBLIC TIME**

State Representative Julie Rogers reported that all legislators hold "Coffee Hours" for community engagement. These events are announced on social media, and staff can provide details if needed. Representative Rogers announced that her next coffee hour was Friday, July 18, 2025, at Davis Street Park in the Vine Neighborhood. Additionally, a town hall on maternal health equity was set for July 31, 2025, and featured a panel discussion from 6:00-7:00 p.m. on initiatives such as the Rx Kids program,

which supports pregnant families in Kalamazoo. The town hall will be held at the Kalamazoo Nonprofit Advocacy Coalition (KNAC), with the doors opening at 5:30 p.m.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Representative Julie Rogers reported that the FY26 Budget for the state has missed the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the first time in years. She shared the traditional steps in the budget formulation, noting that while the Senate has progressed, the House has struggled, particularly with significant cuts proposed in a “skinny budget” that many legislators opposed. The lack of progress in budget deliberations significantly concerns key areas such as Medicaid and behavioral health, where no committee discussions have occurred thus far. Additionally, Ms. Rogers reported that recent federal legislation has introduced significant cuts to state funding, exacerbating the budget crisis. Despite Michigan's Budget Stabilization Fund, which is designed for emergencies, the reliance on federal funds means that the state may not be able to backfill these losses effectively. Meanwhile, new processes for legislatively directed spending are being introduced, and discussions on these earmarks are expected in the coming weeks. As the legislature approaches its mandatory budget deadline of October 1, 2025, the urgency for advocacy and communication from community leaders was emphasized. Ms. Rogers reported that the delay in budget approvals has already affected local governments and educational institutions, with some schools facing layoffs due to uncertainty in funding. To effectively address current challenges and ensure the timely delivery of a budget that meets the needs of Michigan's residents, the legislature needs to maintain sustained pressure and foster open channels of communication. This proactive approach will help mitigate the risk of a potential government shutdown.

A brief discussion took place regarding the potential implications of a federal and/or state shutdown. Ms. Rogers emphasized the importance of sharing personal experiences to illustrate how impactful budget cuts would be on local businesses.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES *(Exhibit A)*

**Motion made by Jeff Heppler and supported by Randall Hazelbaker to approve June 18, 2025, WDB Executive Committee meeting minutes. Motion carried.**

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Dave Maurer reported that the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee met on May 22, 2025, for the monitoring of the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) and Food Assistance Employment & Training (FAE&T) programs. Mr. Maurer reported that overall, the report was positive. Issues with incomplete files are still occurring; additionally, some files still contain old documentation. It was also noted, progress has been made on the Work Participation Rate (WPR). Mr. Maurer reported that one participant was interviewed, who praised the program, highlighting the helpfulness of the staff and the overall assistance provided. The participant's only concern was with the timing of benefits due to a handoff between DHHS and Michigan Works!, which did not directly reflect any shortcomings regarding the program operated under MW! Southwest.

Mr. Maurer also reported that the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee met on June 26, 2025, for the monitoring of the following programs: Gain Employment Maintain Support (GEMS), Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES), Michigan Citizen Reentry Initiative (MiCRI) and MiCRI Expansion, Michigan Rural Enhanced Access to Careers in Healthcare (MiREACH), and Michigan Statewide Targeted Apprenticeship Inclusion and Readiness System (MiSTAIRS). Mr. Maurer reported challenges related to incomplete files and files containing incorrect forms for both GEMS, MiCRI/MiCRI Expansion, and MiSTAIRS. It was also noted, some improvements were made over the previous year. Interviews were conducted with two participants who complemented the services offered by MWSW, one a BRES participant and the other a GEMS. Both individuals learned about the program through word of mouth and expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes they received. One suggestion for improvement was made regarding the GEMS program, which was to enhance collaboration with the

Friend of the Court (FOC) to share the available services through MWSW.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **IFA Modifications – Wagner Peyser Update (*Exhibit B*)**

Amy Meyers reported on the IFA Modifications as described in Exhibit B. Ms. Meyers provided additional explanation for this modification, reporting that on June 30, 2025, a federal notice for proposed rulemaking (NPRM) was posted for a 60-day comment period that would remove the merit-based requirement for the Wagner Peyser funding. The Board was asked to approve changes in the infrastructure funding agreement (IFA), specifically removing Area Community Services Employment & Training Council (ASCET), also known as West Michigan Works!, as a partner, while re-identifying the Upjohn Institute to maintain the current operations of Wagner Peyser services. The team was thanked for their quick adaptation and support during this transition. A brief discussion was held regarding the merit-based staffing requirement.

**Motion made by Jeff Heppler and supported by Jon Current to approve IFA Modifications. Motion carried.**

### **Plans (*Exhibits C-F*)**

Amy Meyers requested Board consideration and approval of five workforce development plans that were included in the agenda packet. Details for each plan were described in the corresponding Exhibit and are listed below:

- PY2025 Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult and Youth Programs (*Exhibit C*)
- AY 2024/PY2025 WIOA High Concentration of WIOA Eligible Youth (*Exhibit D*)
- AY2024/PY2025 Customer Relationship Management (*Exhibit E*)
- AY2024 WIOA Career Exploration and Experience Events (*Exhibit F*)
- AY2024 WIOA Statewide Activities Funding to Support Continuity of Service Delivery (*Exhibit G*)

**Motion made by Dave Maurer and supported by Darrin Adair to approve the five plans as presented. Motion carried.**

### **Public Notice – Rescission of WIOA Plan Modification**

Amy Meyers reported that the Modification of the WIOA Plan, which designates the Area Community Services Employment & Training Council (ASCET), also known as West Michigan Works!, as the provider of Wagner Peyser services at Michigan Works! Southwest has been retracted, in follow-up to the release of the NPRM. Pending the outcome, additional changes could occur on October 1, 2025.

## **STAFF REPORTS (*Exhibits H & I*)**

**Business Solutions** - Ashley Iovieno reported that the revised dashboard (Exhibit H) was provided in the agenda packet, and it includes the updated numbers for employers served and services provided through May 2025. Ms. Iovieno also reported that the Business Solutions Dashboard contains the updated Going PRO Talent Fund Cycle 2 awards. Planning for FY26 has begun, and info sessions have been scheduled with the State in August to learn about any updates to the grant. May 2025 unemployment rates for our four-county region ranged from 5% to 6.3% with the state unemployment rate currently 5.3% while the national rate is 4.2%.

Ms. Iovieno further reported that the most recent Lightcast reports were included in the email sent to Board members as a link and can also be found on our Michigan Works! website. The same positions as in the last several months remain in demand, and the employers' postings reflect this data. There were 303 unique job postings in the area, which is lower than last month's 348.

Ms. Iovieno also reported that Marshall Excelsior has announced plans to close its entire Marshall facility by March 2026, a decision that will impact approximately 71 employees. In response, Michigan

Works! Southwest has stepped in, providing immediate assistance to those affected by the closure. MWSW plans to host orientation sessions to help displaced workers secure new employment as quickly as possible. MWSW has worked closely with this company for many years, as they have been an Employer Resource Network® (ERN®) partner.

Additionally, Ms. Iovieno reported that The Ferrero Group has purchased the W.K. Kellogg Company for \$3.1 billion. The MWSW Business Solutions Team has reached out to check in and offer support. The potential impact is currently unknown; however, the support is appreciated. It has been reported that the plan is to keep Battle Creek as the core location for the company and that it will be Ferrero's headquarters for North American cereal. The link for the official press release from The Ferrero Group is <https://www.ferrero.com/int/en/news-stories/news/ferrero-to-acquire-wk-kellogg-co>

Ms. Iovieno reported that an exciting outreach event is planned for Wednesday, August 27, 2025, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Catalyst Center in Kalamazoo. This event is called Charging the Future, and it is a lunch and learn event for individuals interested in learning more about the EV and mobility sector while enjoying a complimentary lunch. Additionally, the efforts with the Ford Blue Oval battery plant continue. MWSW continues to host monthly meetings with local partners and Ford to keep everyone informed about the progress, along with separate check-ins directly with Ford. Training opportunities are also being explored with a grant that ends in September.

A brief discussion was held regarding the unemployment rates. It was noted that the demand for MWSW services is on the rise, while funding is being reduced. Additionally, some questions were asked about the age, location, and sector trends of the unemployed. Ms. Iovieno confirmed that the manufacturing sector is the main one affected, especially for individuals between 25 and 55 years of age. Additionally, it was noted that many employers are uncertain in this economy and have become reluctant to make big purchases and hiring decisions. Ms. Iovieno reported that more specific trends can be provided if anyone desires this information.

## Operations

Amy Meyers reported a comprehensive analysis of foot traffic across all four counties, which was displayed in a handout she distributed at the meeting, illustrating traffic trends at each site. The data provided was for the time period 7/1/2024 to 6/30/2025 and was broken down by month. While there has been a notable increase in foot traffic, it remains below pre-pandemic levels. The reported figures for each county are as follows: Kalamazoo reported 90,000 visits, St. Joseph had 21,000, Calhoun reported 45,000, and Branch recorded 26,000. Foot traffic data for the community-based offices located at the Douglass Community Association in Kalamazoo and Albion were not included in this analysis.

## Directors Report

Jakki Bungart-Bibb reported that the state of Michigan's Labor and Economic Opportunity department, in collaboration with a consulting agency and the statewide Barrier Removal Committee, is working together to finalize a Career Navigation Strategy. This is being driven by the state workforce development board and in alignment with the state's workforce plan. The Michigan Works! system, which has been providing career navigation for years, contributed insights through interviews and focus groups to identify existing practices, potential improvements, and necessary funding. The next steps involve presenting the findings and recommendations to the state workforce board, with ongoing monitoring of the initiative's progress and potential implementation of the suggestions. Appreciation was expressed for the team's valuable feedback in this process.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb also reported, in addition to State Representative Julie Rogers' update, that the budget delay has resulted in additional time spent on enhancing advocacy efforts for workforce development funding. Advocacy letters were sent to lawmakers, showcasing the importance of these programs and sharing local outcomes, which led to several requests for meetings to discuss these

issues further. She encouraged board members, particularly those from the private sector, to attend these meetings as their input is valuable. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of program leaders sharing participant stories, as these personal narratives can significantly impact discussions with lawmakers.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb also reported that the Michigan Works! Association and a couple of local Michigan Works! directors recently advocated for the reauthorization of WIOA and increased workforce development funding in Washington, D.C., while having productive discussions with key lawmakers. The directors plan to maintain momentum by communicating with lawmakers and sharing success stories. The message emphasizes the importance of individual voices in advocacy efforts and invites others to participate. To facilitate this, a statewide document and talking points have been provided for anyone interested in engaging in advocacy opportunities. Copies of this document were provided at the meeting and can be accessed virtually via this [LINK](#).

Ms. Bungart-Bibb also reported that the reauthorization of WIOA faces uncertainty despite bipartisan support, primarily due to ongoing congressional debates over critical elements such as training mandates and funding flexibility. The A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA) gained momentum in late 2024; however, discussions have since stalled. Meanwhile, the administration proposed the Make America Skilled Again (MASA) block grant program, which aims to consolidate various funding sources into a formula-driven allocation for states, potentially leading to significant funding cuts and new apprenticeship spending requirements. Currently, ASWA and MASA are the primary proposals under consideration for WIOA reauthorization, though more options may emerge.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb added one additional Federal update: The U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Labor (DOL) have announced a new interagency agreement (IAA) outlining a new partnership between these agencies intended to streamline federal oversight and administration of education and workforce development programs. Workforce Boards should anticipate increased centralized communication from the DOL and watch for forthcoming implementation guidance from ED and DOL.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **PUBLIC TIME**

None

## **MEMBERS' TIME**

Frank Tecumseh thanked Kathy Olsen for her 32 years of dedication to the Board and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement. A brief discussion took place regarding the recruitment of additional members for the Workforce Development Board. Acknowledgement was made that all current open positions are filled; however, there is an opportunity to add new members based on the required composition. Referrals for potential candidates are still welcome, and all submissions will be thoroughly considered.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- Full Workforce Development Board – Thursday, September 18, 2025 (9:00-10:30 am)  
At the Three Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce, 1116 N. Main Street, Three Rivers, MI 49093
- Executive Committee – Thursday, August 21, 2025 (9:00-10:30 am)  
At the Michigan Works! Service Center, 200 W. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, MI 49017
- Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) – Monday, September 15, 2025 (1:00-3:00 pm)  
At the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007
- Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – Tuesday, September 16, 2025 (2:00-4:00 pm)  
At the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007



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## ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional reports or business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:19 a.m. by Frank Tecumseh.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Debbie Horn Date

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Brian O'Donnell Date

## APPROVED

These minutes were approved on \_\_\_\_\_