

**Workforce Development Board
 Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes
 February 20, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER: Workforce Development Board Vice Chair, Brian O’Donnell, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

INTRODUCTIONS: Individuals attending in-person and virtually introduced themselves.

WDB Members Present:

Morris Appleby (Labor) [∨]	Al Ives (PS)	Dr. Paul Watson (Educ), and
Kathi Cain-Babbitt (Labor)	Kris Jenkins (Educ)*	Bobby Beauchamp (KCC) [∨]
Jill Bland (Econ Dev)	David Maurer (PS)*	
John Fiore (MRS)	Brian O’Donnell (PS)*	* Exec Committee
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)* [∨]	Windy Rea (Job Corps) [∨]	[∨] Attended virtually
Jeff Heppler (PS)	Dave Pawloski (Labor) [∨]	
Jared Hoffmaster (PS) [∨]	Frank Tecumseh (PS)*	

WDB Members Absent

Jessica Eyster (PS)	Jackie Murray (PS)*	Liz Van Dussen (PS)
Lisa Johansen (DOC)	Sabrina Radenovic (PS)	Ken Willcutt (Labor)
Derek King (PS)	Charles Rose, alt for	
Karla Meeks (PS)	Jose Orozco (CBO)	

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

Jakki Bungart-Bibb (MWSW)	Amy Meyers (MWSW)	Mac Scully (MWSW)
Ben Damerow (CWIS) [∨]	Kathy Olsen (MWSW)	Mark Waurio (MWSW)
Tamara Angle (MWSW)	Amanda Rosenberg (MWSW)	
Ashley Iovieno (MWSW)	Shelby Springett (MWSW)	

Guests Present

Paige Daniels (KRESA)	Mike Horrigan (Upjohn)	Kristine Stevens (GOCC)
Logan Foreman [∨] , for Rep. Julie Rogers	Don Reid (Media) [∨]	

RECOGNITIONS

MW! Southwest Shining Star Awards

December – Tamara Angle was recognized as the December Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Tamara works in the Talent Solutions department at the MW! Service Center in Kalamazoo. Tamara’s nominator stated that Tamara is a hard worker who does whatever it takes to assist her team and complete the tasks put in front of her. She is known for finding ways to improve processes, for paying close attention to detail, and for being a team player. Her readiness to assist when her co-workers need help, alongside her willingness to learn, makes her a great asset to the Michigan Works! Southwest team. Ms. Meyers added that Tamara is a shining example of the MWSW staff who exemplify exceptional customer service.

November 2024 and January 2025 – Sebastian Rodriquez, the November Shining Star, and Kelli Adams, the January Shining Star were unable to attend today’s meeting and following today’s meeting, staff will connect with them to present their awards.

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

No comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (*Exhibit A*)

Motion made by Kris Jenkins and supported by Frank Tecumseh to approve the January 16, 2025 WDB Executive Committee meeting minutes. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Monitoring and Evaluation Committee – Brian O'Donnell reported the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee met on January 23, 2025 to review the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and services. The Committee interviewed one participant, who had enrolled in Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) training in Comstock. The training included 3 weeks in the classroom and one week of clinicals, as well as links for online studying. The participant found Michigan Works! Southwest staff to be knowledgeable and easy to work with using text, emails, and in-person meetings at the Kalamazoo MW! Service Center, as well as working around her responsibilities to care for her special needs daughter. Sarah Pohl provided an overview of the staff monitoring and reported that 53 files were selected for review. Issues regarding equal opportunity and grievance and complaint documentation identified in last year's report appeared to have been satisfactorily addressed. During the staff monitoring, five participants were also interviewed, many of whom had engaged in training and learned about the program through referrals from employment services staff. The participants interviewed described MW! Southwest program staff as welcoming and knowledgeable and stated that staff were easy to get hold of and provided supportive services and referrals when needed. It was also noted that a significant percentage of participants completed a program survey which provided essential feedback. The results revealed that high percentage of participants were satisfied with their overall experience with many ratings of MWSW career coaches as helpful and responsive. Sarah Pohl also reviewed program data at the monitoring committee meeting. Based on eligible files reviewed, Data Validation resulted in a 100% pass rate. There were no corrective actions; one administrative recommendation and two continuous improvement recommendations were made.

Program staff also met with the committee and provided highlights of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and services. They shared information pertaining to grants and labor market information used to support participant training and highlighted information specific to CDL training for truck driving. Staff reported that when selecting a training provider, the need for an accommodation, such as one to address a significant language barrier, is considered. Supportive services for CDL training may include items such as work boots, a wireless headset, and a reflective vest. Program staff are planning to hold a CDL hiring event with multiple employers, on April 17, 2025 at the Kalamazoo Service Center and multiple staff will be on hand at the event to assist with resume development. The next Monitoring Committee meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2025 from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – John Fiore reported the DART Committee met on February 13, 2025. A survey was recently sent to members seeking their input for planning future meetings. The DART Committee is also hoping to expand the committee to include more business engagement. Ripple Effects, an autism learning center, gave a presentation at the DART meeting. Members learned that Ripple Effects has multiple locations in the MWSW service area, and that they provide a broad range of services and support for the autism community and families. He noted that individuals with autism often have behavioral challenges in social situations, and specialized staff work with autistic individuals on

behavior modification and change. Ripple Effects also provides parent and caregiver training to help parents learn how to interact and work with their children around their behaviors and help them grow to be successful within the community. Ripple Effects also has an Inclusion Center in Portage that has recreation and meeting space, open to anyone. The presenter also shared information about Registered Apprenticeship Programming for Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBT). They are currently accepting applications. Following the presentation, DART Committee members provided agency updates. He reported a [Disability Policy Seminar](#) sponsored by Arc Community Advocates is scheduled for April 7-9, 2025 in Washington D.C. and the [18th Inclusion Conference](#) also sponsored by the Arc Community Advocates, is scheduled to be held on Friday, March 14, 2025 at the Delta Hotel and Conference Center in Kalamazoo. Emerging issues were also discussed at the meeting and in summarizing, Mr. Fiore reported that there are a lot of changes, many of which are impacting, or could impact, services to individuals with disabilities. He encouraged members to take notice and advocate as they see fit. The next DART meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2025.

NEW BUSINESS

Plans (*Exhibit B*)

Amanda Rosenberg requested Board consideration and approval of one workforce development plan, *Going PRO Talent Fund Program Administration FY2025, Cycle 1, January 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*. Details of the plan were described in Exhibit B, which was included in the agenda packet.

Motion made by Kathi Cain-Babbitt and supported by Al Ives to approve the Going PRO Talent Fund Program Administration FY2025, Cycle 1, January 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026 Plan. Motion carried.

Workforce Development Board Policies (*Exhibits C1 Amended and C2-C3*)

WDB Policy 24, Revision 09 Grievance and Complaint Handling - Kathy Olsen requested Board consideration and approval of WDB Policy 24, Revision 09 Grievance and Complaint Handling. She reported changes made included updating references, adding sections for Definitions, Action, and Inquiries, as well as minor edits to the following sections:

- Section I.A. - added 'Office of External Enforcement' to the mailing address and added directions for faxing a discrimination complaint.
- Section IX.C. – updated text to align with State policy.

Motion by John Fiore and supported by Dr. Paul Watson to approve WDB Policy 24, Revision 09 Grievance and Complaint Handling. Motion carried.

PROGRAM

Recent Trends and a Vision for the Future – Focus on MW! Southwest Service Area

Mike Horrigan, President, Upjohn Institute, provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting recent trends and a vision for the future with a focus on the four county Southwest Michigan service area. In summarizing, he noted that the data shows that the regional economy is fairly robust, long-term demographic changes will be dramatic, resulting in fundamental changes in the labor market, and there will be significant increases in the use of automation and AI. Following the meeting, a link to the presentation was sent to attendees.

STAFF REPORTS

Business Solutions Update and Dashboard (*Exhibits D & E*)

Ashley Iovieno provided a Business Solutions update that included information regarding the number of employers served, the Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF), unemployment rates, job demand, CTE Month, the Sturgis Career Opportunities Expo, and the planned Pactiv Evergreen closure.

Employers Served – Ms. Iovieno reported updated numbers for employers served and services provided through January 2025, as reported on top left corner of the Business Solutions Dashboard included in the agenda packet. (Exhibit D).

Going PRO Talent Fund – The Going PRO Talent Fund numbers on the Dashboard are reflective of the FY2025 Cycle 1 application period. The numbers on the Dashboard were updated to include two additional employers that cleared tax obligations and were awarded GPTF grants. The total amount awarded to the MWSW area is just under \$2 million. The State intends to release application information for Employer-Led Collaboratives near the end of March and the Cycle 2 application period is expected to open in either April or May.

Unemployment Rates - The unemployment rate for the four counties in the Michigan Works! Southwest service area ranged from 4.6% to 5.8%, with Branch County at 4.7%, Calhoun County at 5.8%, Kalamazoo County at 4.6%, and St. Joseph County at 5%. She reminded members of a recent spike that was as high as 6% due to some temporary layoffs. The Michigan unemployment rate was reported to be 5%, with the national rate at 4.1%.

Job Demand - The link to the most recent Lightcast reports (*Exhibit E*) was included in the agenda packet email sent out prior to the meeting and they are also posted on the MWSW website. Ms. Iovieno reported that the same positions remain in demand as during the last several months, with registered nurses, medical assistants, and fast food and counter workers all rounding out the top. The employers' postings match this data as well. The report also shows 473 unique job postings in the MWSW area, which is slightly lower than last month's report.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month – Ms. Iovieno reported that February is Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month and to celebrate MWSW staff have reached out to CTE partners to highlight some of their current activities. A snapshot of the activities in each of the four counties in the MWSW area appears on the last page of the Dashboard. MWSW Business Solutions staff also have plans to continue to highlight these programs through the Employer Newsletter as well as on social media.

Sturgis Career Opportunities Expo – Ms. Iovieno reported the Sturgis Career Opportunities Expo will take place on March 12, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Sturgis High School. This event is a partnership with the Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce and Sturgis High School, and it includes student career exploration in the morning and a hiring fair component later in the day for employers. Michigan Works! Southwest is sponsoring this event and Business Solutions Coordinator, Lynn Page, is serving on the planning committee.

Pactiv Evergreen Closing - Pactiv Evergreen, located on Miller Road in Kalamazoo, is planning to close this location, affecting approximately 153 individuals. The layoffs are expected to begin April 11, 2025 and should be completed on or before June 13, 2025. MWSW staff were able to contact the company prior to the WARN notice being filed, which allowed staff to set up several activities and supports to assist. Next week, MWSW staff are scheduled to meet with employees working all three shifts for worker orientations. Plans are to conduct four sessions and then assess if additional sessions will need to be held in March. Two mini jobs fairs are also planned. One will take place on March 5, 2025 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and the second is scheduled for March 26, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Each job fair will host five area employers onsite that will showcase similar positions at their companies.

Operations Update and Dashboard (*Exhibit F*)

Amy Meyers reported the Operations Dashboard was included in the agenda packet (Exhibit F) and that she will defer her verbal report to next month's meeting.

Director's Report

State Updates

Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) - Jakki Bungart-Bibb reported the Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) is set to take effect on February 21, 2025, following a Michigan Supreme Court ruling; however, negotiations are still in process to make changes before it takes effect. The Governor has called upon leadership of both the House and the Senate to reach bipartisan agreement and if they do not, she is calling for legislature to pass a short-term extension through July 1, 2025 to allow more time for negotiations. The link to follow detailed bill information in real time is <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-SB-0015>. The link will be sent to members following the meeting.

Executive Budget - On February 5, 2025, Governor Whitmer released the 2026 executive budget recommendations. Highlights related to workforce development include:

- Approximately \$55 million for the Going PRO Talent Fund, which is the same level as previous fiscal years;
- \$19,000,000 for expanding access to Registered Apprenticeships; and
- \$7,500,000 for Barrier Removal Employment Success (BRES).

Overall, this budget positions the workforce system to continue making significant, positive impacts in communities across the state. She noted that the release of the recommended budget begins the negotiation process with the legislature and the relevant appropriations subcommittees.

Michigan Works! Association's Legislative Priorities – The MW! Association finalized their legislative priorities and a [link to the document](#) was previously sent to members and will be resent in the meeting follow-up email after today's meeting. The priorities include:

- \$20 million increase for GPTF - Each year the demand outpaces available funding and MW! continues to advocate to increase this fund.
- \$10 million increase for the Michigan Skills Fund - This fund provides support for short-term training and credentialing in high demand fields. The current funding is \$1 million statewide which equates to about \$54,000 for the MW! Southwest service area.
- \$19 million for Registered Apprenticeship Expansion.
- \$7.5 million for Barrier Removal Employment Supports.

Michigan Works! Association's Advocacy Day - Increasing investment in workforce development is essential for economic growth and MW! staff will continue to meet with lawmakers to advocate for these investments. The 2025 Advocacy Day is scheduled for March 19 in Lansing and Ms. Bibb reported that she, along with the MWSW Board Chair and Vice Chair, will be attending. She noted that this is a key opportunity to engage with state legislators, discuss MW! priorities, share success stories, and showcase the impact of the Michigan Works! statewide system.

Federal Updates

Executive Orders – There has been a flurry of Executive Orders, many that could affect workforce development funding, programs, and the overall workforce system. MWSW staff are closely monitoring and communicating with state and federal contacts for detailed guidance for any Executive Order that could affect the workforce system.

Budget Deadline – The federal government is currently funded until March 14, 2025 by a continuing resolution, which temporarily extends funding levels from the previous year. Absent a final agreement, Congress will need to enact another continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown.

WIOA Reauthorization - There was a bipartisan bill put forward last year with the intent for it to be included in the continuing resolution; however, it was not included. Currently, there are a couple of key representatives in Congress leading efforts to reintroduce the bipartisan WIOA reauthorization from last year.

WIOA Impact Report – Ms. Bibb shared positive highlights from an article demonstrating the value of WIOA. The article referred to a WIOA Impact Report from 2023. The numbers were compelling and showed that WIOA delivers significant economic value for individuals, communities, and the economy. Highlights included:

- 2.17 million people completed WIOA programs with staff assisted services in 2023.
- Of those who exited the programs, close to 70% found employment,
- The total estimated annual earnings for program participants who found employment was \$61.6 billion dollars. That figure compares to a \$3.8 billion cost allocation.
- In calculating the return on investment, for every \$1 dollar invested in WIOA, there was over \$15 dollars in wages earned. This calculation does not factor in the time value of money, it does include costs associated with participants who did not find employment.

She noted that while the ROI based on wages alone is impressive, WIOA’s impact goes beyond individual paychecks. Workforce programs create ripple effects that strengthen communities. Based on the data in the referenced report, it is clear that WIOA is an investment that pays off. It helps individuals find meaningful work, reduces the burden on social programs, and generates billions of dollars in wages—money that supports families, businesses, and communities. Links to the article, infographic and additional information will be sent to members following the meeting.

- [LINK to article](#): Demonstrating the Value of WIOA: A Strong Return on Investment.
- [LINK to Infographic](#)
- [LINK to More Information](#) about the source of this data and the metrics used.

In closing her report, Ms. Bibb thanked members for their engagement on the Workforce Development Board and for their continued support of the public workforce system.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC TIME

None.

MEMBERS’ TIME

Kris Jenkins reported there is a large immigrant population in Branch County who need assistance learning the English language. The Adult Education program in Branch County has become predominantly English as a Second Language (ESL); however, the need for General Educational Development (GED) programming still exists. Local education partners are working towards building a system to increase capacity and Kellogg Community College (KCC) is now offering lifelong learning classes. The first class began earlier this week with approximately eight participants. For this semester, the class is free as the result of a grant from the Branch County Community Foundation. She further reported that Clemens, a large employer of immigrants in Branch County, is now offering classes onsite. This is a positive movement as the county is starting to build numerous ways for individuals to receive services and increase capacity.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Brian O’Donnell referred members to the list of upcoming WDB meetings that were listed on the agenda.

