

**Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER: Workforce Development Board Chair, Jackie Murray, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. at the Branch County Community Health Conference Room, 570 Marshall Rd, Coldwater, Michigan.

INTRODUCTIONS: Individuals attending in person and virtually introduced themselves.

WDB Members Present:

Morris Appleby (Labor)[✓]
Kathi Cain-Babbitt (Labor)[✓]
Jill Bland (Econ Dev)
John Fiore (MRS)
Jared Hoffmaster (PS)
Al Ives (PS)
Kris Jenkins (Educ)*
Brian O'Donnell (PS)*

Jackie Murray (PS)*
Frank Tecumseh (PS)*[✓]
Dr. Paul Watson (Educ-KCC)[✓],
& alt. Bobby Beauchamp (Educ-KCC) [✓]

* Exec Committee
[✓] Attended virtually

WDB Members Absent

Jessica Eyster (PS)
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)*
Jeff Heppler (PS)
Derek King (PS)
David Maurer (PS)*
Charles Rose, alt for Jose Orozco (CBO)

Lisa Johansen (DOC)
Dave Pawloski (Labor)
Sabrina Radenovic (PS)
Windy Rea (Job Corps)
Liz Van Dussen (PS)
Ken Willcutt (Labor)

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

Debbie Horn (MWSW)
Ashley Iovieno (MWSW)
Amy Meyers (MWSW)
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)
Lynn Page (MWSW)

Amanda Rosenberg (MWSW)
Jennifer Teske (MWSW) [✓]
Jim Walters (MWSW)[✓]
Mark Waurio (MWSW)[✓]

Guests Present

Jim Benton (KRESA)[✓]
Rebecca Burns (CHA BHSJ)[✓]
Paige Daniels (KRESA)
Reggie Ferguson (KRESA)[✓]
Peter Kalogiros,[✓]
for Sen. Elissa Slotkin

Ryan Quandt [✓],
for Rep. Julie Rogers
Joe Sobeske (BACC)
Kristine Stevens (GOCC)
Amanda Sutherland (KRESA)[✓]
Audrey Tappenden (BCEGA)
Kaela Wunderlich (KRESA)

RECOGNITIONS

MW! Southwest Shining Star Awards

February – Jim Walters was recognized as the February Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Jim is the Service Center Liaison for Michigan Works! Southwest. He is a hard worker who goes

above and beyond to assist with any updates needed in the MWSW Service Centers. He is known for being thorough when going into a project, repair, and day-to-day operations, and is considered a jack of all trades. Jim consistently displays a willingness to do anything needed and is committed to excellence in all the Michigan Works! Southwest facilities. Although considered part of the Administration team, each Michigan Works! Southwest team considers him a part of their own. Ms. Meyers thanked Jim for his dedication and commitment to the Michigan Works! Southwest mission, and for ensuring each Service Center is updated, welcoming, and professional.

March – Kaela Wunderlich was recognized as the March Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Kaela is a Youth Career Coach for Michigan Works! Southwest in Kalamazoo. Kaela's peers nominated her for this well-deserved recognition, highlighting her incredible impact on Youth Services and her unwavering commitment to excellence. She plays a vital role in guiding young individuals through the application and enrollment process for youth programming.

April – Kathy Olsen was recognized as the April Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Kathy is part of the Administrative team and widely regarded as a steady and inspiring presence across the organization. Kathy's career spans decades of service in the workforce development field and has left a lasting impact on colleagues and community partners. Bringing a unique blend of wisdom, patience, and purpose to every role she steps into, Kathy's influence is especially evident in her work as a mentor and teacher, where she consistently empowers her peers through thoughtful conversations, tailored training, and quiet encouragement. Drawing on her deep well of experience and historical knowledge, she provides meaningful context that enhances team understanding and supports confident decision-making. Known for her integrity, professionalism, and deep understanding of the value of workforce programs, Kathy leaves a positive impression in every space she engages in, and colleagues frequently highlight Kathy's joyful disposition, calling her a culture-carrier and role model whose influence extends far beyond her job description. She brings light, connection, and care to every interaction, embodying what it means to serve with heart.

MW! Southwest WDB Member Recognitions

Jackie Murray – Kathy Olsen acknowledged Jackie's significant contributions as a member of the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board. Due to her upcoming relocation, Jackie will regrettably be stepping down from her position.

Kris Jenkins – Kathy Olsen recognized Kris's significant contributions as a valued member of the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board as she prepares to retire from her position, effective June 30, 2025. Kris is committed to ensuring a smooth transition for her successor, facilitating a seamless handover of responsibilities.

MW! Southwest Impact Award

Ariel Martinez Ochoa – Amy Meyers announced that Ariel was recognized as the Michigan Works! Southwest 2025 Impact Award recipient. With support from Michigan Works! Southwest, the Neighborhood Employment HUBs, and partners, including Kellogg Community College, Ariel, overcame barriers to launching a successful healthcare career. A video was presented that highlighted this prestigious award, illustrating the community's collective efforts to support Ariel in pursuing his chosen career path. [Link to video](#)

MWSW staff reported that Ariel now has his medical assistant certification and is continuing to grow in his chosen profession.

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*)

The approval of the meeting minutes from February 20, 2025, was postponed due to the absence of a quorum.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Monitoring and Evaluation Committee – Amy Meyers reported that the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee met on April 24, 2025, to review Youth programs and services, including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Jobs for Michigan Graduates (JMG), Young Professionals (YP), and Young Professionals Plus (YPP). The Committee interviewed six participants, all of whom provided overwhelmingly positive feedback and were referred to the program by a family member or friend. Notably, there was representation from all four counties involved. Key highlights of the programs included support for obtaining driver's permits and assistance with resume writing. Participants expressed enthusiasm for the financial literacy courses and are eagerly anticipating an updated version. An overview of the staff monitoring report was reviewed with Committee members during the April 24th meeting and stated that 32 files were selected for review. An Administrative Recommendation was made to ensure documentation is both consistent and accurate, in alignment with program requirements. Additionally, a Corrective Action was issued to ensure that marketing and outreach materials adhere to contract requirements related to the identification and use of the Michigan Works! Southwest logo, which is essential for supporting funded services. During the staff monitoring, six participants were also interviewed, many of whom learned about Youth services through referrals from friends and family, and many shared their own positive experiences by recommending the program to others. The participants reported that they valued work experience opportunities, which helped them explore and refine their career interests. A standout moment for one participant was receiving an acceptance letter for a work experience, which was a significant accomplishment. Strong relationships with Career Coaches were highlighted, as they provided consistent support and assistance, including job placements. Suggestions for improvement included more college tours and transportation for internships, and those suggestions were communicated to program leadership. Program performance and demographic data were also reviewed at the Monitoring Committee meeting. Based on eligible files reviewed, Data Validation resulted in a 100% pass rate.

Amanda Sutherland, Administrator for KRESA's Youth Services, gave a presentation to the Monitoring Committee, where she shared key highlights regarding the Youth programs and initiatives. She also reported on their survey results, where participants expressed positive feedback, particularly regarding the face-to-face meetings, which accounted for over 75% of interactions. Another noteworthy aspect was the Engagement Squad, which successfully organized a variety of events, including talent tours, educational tours, virtual reality experiences, CPR training, and professional headshot sessions. The next Monitoring Committee meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2025, from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) – Kris Jenkins reported that the CEAC Committee met on May 12, 2025. Updates from Business Solutions included news regarding training grants and workforce events, as well as some recent layoff announcements. Ms. Jenkins reported on the updates from each county that were provided at the CEAC meeting; they were as follows:

- St. Joseph County - A full-time Special Populations consultant has been appointed and will commence their role on July 1, 2025. Additionally, MiCareerQuest™ proved to be an exceptionally successful event, and Signing Day is now expanding beyond athletics. St. Joseph County is now celebrating students who are transitioning to post-secondary educational opportunities.
- Kalamazoo County - The Grand Opening for the Career Connect / Career and Technical Education (CTE) building will be held on May 22, 2025. There will be a private open house from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., followed by a public celebration from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. The Culinary Arts program's Chef Kharen Shelton was honored at the 2025 American Culinary Federation (ACF) as Culinary Educator of the Year.
- Branch County - Ms. Jenkins thanked Jakki Bungart-Bibb and Lynn Page for attending the Branch County OJT Banquet last month. The sixth and eighth graders participated in an exploration to visit the CTE building. The welding program created a large tree sculpture, which has been installed in downtown Coldwater. The Career Center building is undergoing upgrades, including signage.
- Calhoun County - Pennfield High School hosted a Senior Recognition Night for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Delta Dental provided funding to collaborate with KCC to address the need for more professionals in the dental field. Two successful "Crayons to Careers" events were held and were highly successful. They are looking for additional employers to participate in future events.
- Adult Education - Adult Education programs throughout the region are hiring Career Navigators and Career Coaches.

The next CEAC meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2025. Ms. Jenkins further announced that her successor has been identified; his name is Darrin Adair. Mr. Adair will officially begin on July 1, 2025.

NEW BUSINESS

New business was postponed due to the absence of a quorum.

PROGRAM

Branch County Intermediate School District On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program

Joe Sobeske, OJT Coordinator, Branch Area Careers Center (BACC), provided a presentation highlighting the On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Work Experience program, which allows 12th-grade students to work at a local business in a career related to the training they received at the BACC instead of attending regular classroom schooling. Businesses that host OJT students gain early access to emerging talent, while students receive essential experience that enhances their employability. Students typically work a minimum of three hours per week for at least minimum wage, with flexible hours. Supervisors evaluate student performance every nine weeks, and the OJT coordinator visits the site during these evaluations. Unpaid work experience, which is available for students without transportation or when employers cannot pay, requires a minimum of 10 hours per week and lasts up to 6 weeks, with assignments rotating every six weeks. Employers can transition from hosting unpaid work experiences to OJT positions.

Some dialogue occurred regarding transportation being a challenge, and there was discussion about some proposals to facilitate this. Additional discussion also occurred regarding students being assessed before placement. Mr. Sobeske reported that he personally assesses students' interests and maturity before placement. Employability skills are graded at the Career Center, emphasizing the importance of instructor recommendations and the need for students to display proper behavior and readiness for work opportunities.

Branch County Economic Development Update

Audrey Tappenden, Economic Development Director, Branch County Economic Growth Alliance, provided a presentation on the Branch County Economic Development. Ms. Tappenden shared that Coldwater's unemployment rate ranks 9th lowest in Michigan, alongside a projected 4% population growth. Significant employers such as Clemens Food Group, which currently employs approximately 1,800 people and plans to expand, contribute to this positive trend. A 2023 workforce talent survey aims to link employers with training providers to enhance hiring capacity. Strategic initiatives include childcare support, talent attraction efforts, housing grants, and broadband expansion. Upcoming projects, such as the Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program Grant for commercial space and several solar initiatives, are expected to create over 120 new jobs and improve community resources.

STAFF REPORTS

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

Ashley Iovieno provided a Business Solutions update, which included information regarding the items listed below:

Going PRO Talent Fund – The Going PRO Talent Fund FY 2025 applications are being reviewed during the next week.

CDL Hiring Event – A CDL Hiring Event was hosted by Michigan Works! Southwest at the Kalamazoo Service Center on April 17, 2025. Many local companies participated with a variety of driving jobs available, and on-the-spot interviews were conducted. Approximately 60 job seekers attended this successful event. Ms. Iovieno thanked the Workforce Development Institute (WDI) and Denise Mott, a MW! Southwest Business Solutions staff, for their critical roles in organizing and ensuring the event's success.

National Apprenticeship Day – National Apprenticeship Day featured Helmets to Hardhats events in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, engaging many participants who signed up for programming on the spot.

MiCareerQuest™ St. Joseph County - Ms. Iovieno reported that the MiCareerQuest™ event in St. Joseph County was a success. This event featured over 50 employers, attracting nearly 700 students. Ms. Iovieno gave a special shout-out to Lynn Page, Business Solutions Coordinator, for her efforts in making this event successful.

Calhoun County Job Fair – Ms. Iovieno reported that the Kellogg Community College (KCC) Eastern Academic Center in Albion hosted a job fair on May 7, 2025, where many employers were in attendance. The event was open to both KCC students and the public, providing valuable networking and employment opportunities for attendees.

Operations Update & Dashboard (*Exhibit F*)

Due to time constraints, a verbal report was not provided at the meeting, however, the dashboard was included in the agenda packet.

Director's Report

Due to time constraints, this information will be provided via email.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC TIME

Kathy Olsen thanked the Board again and mentioned that she treasures the relationships she has built, and following her retirement, she plans to continue volunteering at Michigan Works! Southwest events.

MEMBERS' TIME

Jill Bland reported that Southwest Michigan First will host an Intern Mixer Series throughout 2025 to help interns connect and explore the local community. Ms. Bland shared a flyer about the series and asked for it to be distributed across all four counties to promote participation. For additional information, please contact Rachael Tiesenga at 269-553-9588 (phone) or email Ms. Tiesenga at riesenga@southwestmichiganfirst.com. Ms. Bland also reported that some employers are reducing their workforce and are putting hiring on hold. There will be a Foreign Trades Webinar on June 5, and Ms. Bland will provide additional information once it is available.

Jared Hoffmaster expressed his family's positive experience with MiCareerQuest™, highlighting that it is an excellent event. Mr. Hoffmaster also noted the valuable collaboration between Century Bank and Trust and the Branch County OJT program, emphasizing that many current Century Bank and Trust employees began their careers through this initiative.

Kristine Stevens shared that on April 30, 2025, Jakki Bungart-Bibb received the Distinguished Alumni Award for 2025 from Glen Oaks Community College.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Jackie Murray referred members to the list of upcoming WDB meetings on the agenda.

- The next quarterly meeting of the full Workforce Development Board is scheduled for Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at a location in St. Joseph County.
- The next Executive Committee meeting is Wednesday, June 18, 2025, from 9:00-10:30 a.m. at the Michigan Works! Service Center, 200 W. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek.
- The next Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 15, 2025, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo.
- The next Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) meeting is Tuesday, June 26, 2025, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- The next Monitoring and Evaluation Committee is Thursday, June 26, 2025, from 8:00-9:30 a.m. at the Michigan Works! Service Center, 200 W. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other reports or business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

Kathy Olsen

Date

Brian O'Donnell

Date

APPROVED

These minutes were approved on _____