

**Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes
September 18, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER: Workforce Development Board Chair, Brian O'Donnell, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. at the Three Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce, 1116 N. Main St., Three Rivers, Michigan.

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

WDB Members Present:

Bobby Beauchamp, alt for
Dr. Paul Watson (EDU)^V
Jill Bland (Econ Dev)
Kathi Cain-Babbitt (Labor)
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)*^V
Jared Hoffmaster (PS)^V

Al Ives (PS)
Brian O'Donnell (PS)*
Jose Orozco (CBO)^V
Dave Pawloski (Labor)^V

Dustin Scharer, alt for
Darrin Adair (Educ)*
Frank Tecumseh (PS)*

* Exec Committee
^V Attended virtually

WDB Members Absent

Darrin Adair (Educ)*
Jonathan Current (Labor)
Ross Daniels (PS)
Jessica Eyster (PS)
John Fiore (RA)
Jeff Heppler (PS)

Lisa Johansen (OTH)
Derek King (PS)
Karen Marcath (PAA)
David Maurer (PS)
Sabrina Radenovic (PS)
Windy Rea (CBO)

Dave Stafford (PS)
Dr. Paul Watson (EDU)
Liz Van Dussen (PS)
Ken Willcutt (PS)

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

Jakki Bungart-Bibb^V
Debbie Horn
Ashley Iovieno
Jennifer Markos

Amy Meyers
Lynn Page
Brian Poynter
Amanda Rosenberg

Jennifer Teske^V
Christine Trevino^V
Mark Waurio^V

Guests Present

Sarah Beckle (SJCISD)
Jim Benton (KRESA)
Jim Berry (SJCISD)
Adam Cloutier (GOCC)

Paige Daniels (KRESA)
Kari Hatt (SACC)
Dr. Bryan Newton (GOCC)
David Prellwitz (AFSCME)

Amanda Sutherland (KRESA)^V
Kristine Stevens (GOCC)

RECOGNITIONS

MW! Southwest Shining Star Awards

May 2025 – Brian Poynter was recognized as the May Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported Brian has been recognized for his exceptional contributions to workforce development. As a Quality Assurance Monitor, Brian is celebrated for his dedication, extensive policy knowledge, and support for staff in St. Joseph and Kalamazoo Counties. Colleagues appreciate his accurate and timely responses to policy inquiries, his humility, and his integrity. Brian's ability to clarify complex issues and his commitment to following through on requests have earned him the trust of his peers. Ms. Meyers congratulated Brian on the well-deserved recognition.

Mr. Poynter thanked the group and appreciated the recognition; he also stated that he has a lot of respect

for Ms. Meyers and appreciates her support.

June 2025 – Jennifer Markos was recognized as the June Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Jennifer has an outstanding ability to uplift colleagues with kindness, reliability, and positive energy. She celebrates others' successes, supports her supervisor, and encourages her teammates, exemplifying compassionate leadership. Her efforts create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere at Michigan Works! Southwest, making it a valued place for both staff and customers. Jennifer embodies teamwork and is dedicated to the mission of preparing and empowering the workforce in Southwest Michigan. Ms. Meyers congratulated Jennifer on this well-deserved recognition.

Ms. Markos thanked the group for their recognition and appreciated being recognized.

July 2025 – Christine Trevino was recognized as the July Shining Star. Amy Meyers reported that Christine has been recognized for her outstanding commitment to the Michigan Works! Southwest mission and her exceptional service as a Career Coach. She supports participants in achieving their goals while encouraging them to realize their potential. Known as a personal cheerleader, she also serves as a trainer, motivator, and accountability partner, providing practical resources and unwavering support. Her dedication not only benefits the individuals she coaches but also positively influences the entire Michigan Works! Southwest team, showcasing her passion for helping others succeed.

TRANSPARENCY & INTEGRITY OF WDB DECISIONS

Debbie Horn 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 Jared Hoffmaster and supported by Kathi Cain-Babbitt to approve the August 21, 2025, WDB Executive Committee meeting minutes. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – In the absence of John Fiore, Debbie Horn reported that the DART Committee met on September 16, 2025. A presentation was provided by a representative of the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), which addresses the needs of people with disabilities in rural America. APRIL offers a variety of initiatives, including a youth program that empowers young people with disabilities through leadership opportunities and scholarships to attend national conferences. The organization also hosts several public standing committees focused on advocacy, transportation, and emergency preparedness, encouraging community involvement and support. Ms. Horn also reported that a discussion took place to address the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities, including agencies that are actively developing programs aimed at supporting these individuals in securing and maintaining employment. The implications of delays in approval of the federal budget were also discussed during the meeting, with many anticipating disability-related services to continue with minimal disruption.

NEW BUSINESS

Plans *(Exhibits B and D)*

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

- PI 25-25 Going PRO Talent Fund FY25 Program Administration Cycle 2 *(Exhibit B)*

- PI 25-26 MWA Apprenticeship Success Coordinators and MWA Registered Apprenticeship Program Group Sponsor & Intermediary Functions (*Exhibit D*)

Motion made by Al Ives and supported by Jill Bland to approve the Going PRO Talent Fund FY25 Program Administration Cycle 2 Plan as presented. Motion carried.

Motion made by Jared Hoffmaster and supported by Jill Bland to approve the MWA Apprenticeship Success Coordinators and MWA Registered Apprenticeship Program Group Sponsor & Intermediary Functions Plan as presented. Motion carried.

Amanda Rosenberg further reported that the PI 25-27 Food Assistance Employment & Training (FAE&T) Plus Program Plan Instructions for Fiscal Year 2025 (*Exhibit C*) had been rescinded; therefore, no vote was necessary at this time.

Workforce Development Board Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion made by Randall Hazelbaker to appoint Brian O'Donnell as WDB Chair for a two-year term to begin October 1, 2025, and end on September 30, 2027. O'Donnell accepted. Motion carried.

Motion made by Frank Tecumseh to appoint Randall Hazelbaker as Vice Chair for a two-year term to begin October 1, 2025, and end on September 30, 2027. Hazelbaker accepted. Motion carried.

PROGRAMS

Workforce Development Partner Spotlight – St. Joseph County ISD

James Berry, Director of Career and Technical Education, and Sarah Beckle, Work-Based Learning Coordinator, for St. Joseph County Intermediate School District, provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the mission of the Career and Technical Education program at the SJCISD, including providing students with opportunities to explore various careers, engage in practical learning experiences, and empower them for successful futures. Currently, 752 students are enrolled in 18 programs across eight high schools, showing significant growth from 504 students in 2019. The staffing structure includes 21 CTE teachers, multiple instructional aides, office assistants, coordinators, and a director, highlighting a robust support system for the programs. Additionally, the introduction of a CTE mobile lab and a new National Technical Honor Society enhances student engagement and scholarship opportunities. Key achievements this year include a student receiving an honorary state Future Farmers of America (FFA) degree – the highest honor from Michigan FFA- and a welding student attaining third place in a state competition. CTE averages 26 interns annually, and students have enjoyed visits from notable figures like celebrity chef Jet Tila in the culinary arts program.

Field trips to various local employers in various industries, including the St. Joseph County Jail and Fabtech in Chicago, have further enriched students' learning experiences, while partnerships with local businesses have facilitated real-world connections.

In conclusion, the CTE program not only enhances educational opportunities but also fosters community involvement and industry partnerships. Celebrating at an open house in late September, the program showcased the students' activities and achievements. Furthermore, the CTE's status as a U.S. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Intermediary since 2021 has led to successful apprenticeship placements, reinforcing the program's commitment to preparing students for diverse career paths.

Workforce Development Partner Spotlight – Glen Oaks Community College

Dr. Brian Newton, President, and Dr. Adam Cloutier, VP of Academics, were accompanied by Kristine Stevens, Director of Business Services and Outreach, to speak on behalf of Glen Oaks Community College.

Dr. Newton and Dr. Cloutier provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the GOCC vision, which empowers learners and advances regional growth through innovative education, strong community partnerships, and pathways to lifelong success. The GOCC strategic plan includes expanding recruitment, improving student support, and providing industry-related training programs. Key initiatives involve increasing customized training aligned with employer needs, enhancing job placement services, and promoting community engagement. Administrative changes emphasize aligning resources to support workforce development, with an emphasis on non-credit programs. The college plans to offer various workshops and short-term training opportunities in response to community and employer demands, ultimately fostering a culture that prioritizes workforce development alongside traditional academic offerings.

STAFF REPORTS

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

Ashley Iovieno provided a Business Solutions update, which included information regarding the number of employers served, the Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF), unemployment rates, job demand, and the Charging the Future event and Race to Talent events.

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

Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) – Ms. Iovieno detailed a discrepancy on the Dashboard related to a GPTF employer who failed to clear their tax obligations on time, resulting in their award being removed. Conversely, the ELC line increased due to a recent award for three companies in the Calhoun area. The team has participated in two State webinars about FY26 rules, with minimal changes anticipated from FY25. The independent application period is scheduled to open from October 1 to October 17. While a state budget is being proposed, it has not yet been finalized.

Unemployment Rates - The unemployment rate for the four counties in the Michigan Works! Southwest service area ranged from 5.6% to 7.4%, showing a continued increase in all four counties compared to May numbers. For July, Branch County was at 5.6%, Calhoun County at 7.4%, Kalamazoo County at 5.9%, and St. Joseph County at 7.3%. The Michigan unemployment rate was reported to be 5.3%, with the national rate at 4.2%.

Job Demand - The link to the most recent Lightcast reports (*Exhibit F*) 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 demand for positions has remained consistent in recent months, with the top four occupations all within the healthcare field. The employers' postings match this data as well. The report also shows 338 unique job postings in the MWSW area, which is slightly higher than last month's report, which totaled 331. Ms. Iovieno reported that the Lightcast reports indicate a concerning trend: the advertised median salary has decreased by 43% from May to August, falling from \$37.54 to \$21.17.

Charging the Future – Ms. Iovieno reported that the Michigan Works! Southwest Charging the Future event, held on August 27 at the Catalyst Center in Kalamazoo, was a successful gathering with around 43 attendees. Key insights that focused on the electric vehicle and mobility sector were shared by speakers Jill Bland from Southwest Michigan First, Brian O'Donnell from Hi-Tech Electric, and Anne Pentiak from the State of Michigan. This event was organized by the Advanced IT Solutions Consortium, highlighting ongoing efforts to educate and engage the community in emerging technologies. The organizers are enthusiastic about continuing these initiatives.

Race to Talent – Ms. Iovieno reported that the Race to Talent event at the Michigan Works! Association Annual Conference on September 8th attracted over 50 attendees, exceeding capacity. It featured a panel

discussion with award-winning employers who have successful apprenticeship programs, including Bronson Healthcare Group, Better World Builders, and Ripple Effects. An apprentice also shared valuable insights about her experience. The event aimed to educate employers on how to establish their own programs and has already generated multiple leads for further engagement.

Operations Update and Dashboard (*Exhibit G*)

Amy Meyers reported that the Operations Dashboard was included in the agenda packet (*Exhibit G*). The PATH program is approaching the end of its fiscal year, with only one month remaining until the final report is available. Specific to WIOA programs, with the start of a new program year in July, we expect to see an increase in performance outcomes.

Operationally speaking, Ms. Meyers reported that the Unemployment Insurance Agency announced that they will start collecting overpaid unemployment benefits from individuals, with payments due starting September 29. This news surprised many, leading to an increase in visitors at our service centers. While Michigan Works! has a partnership with Unemployment, staff can only assist customers by directing them to schedule appointments or contact Unemployment directly for further inquiries.

Director's Report

Going PRO Talent Fund - Jakki Bungart-Bibb reported that Michigan Works! Southwest discussions have centered around addressing scoring flaws that influence funding allocations for small and medium businesses. The state has acknowledged these issues and is actively seeking solutions to ensure continued financial support for the region. Ms. Bungart-Bibb highlighted a recent state budget proposal that zeroed out funding for GPTF and expressed hope that increased awareness from Michigan Works! and employers will help to restore this crucial funding.

Recognition – Ms. Bungart-Bibb recognized the MWSW Workforce Development Board for receiving the Annual Board of Excellence award for the second consecutive year, reflecting their active participation and commitment. Ms. Bungart-Bibb expressed gratitude to those who attended the Michigan Works! Association Annual Conference and witnessed the award ceremony, including board members and volunteers, noting that attendance at the recent conference was lower than in previous years, likely due to budget constraints.

State Budget Update – The state budget remains unresolved, with significant differences in spending priorities, making a resolution by October 1 uncertain. Ms. Bungart-Bibb reassured that local contingency plans are being developed in light of a potential shutdown. She stated operations are expected to continue as normal while awaiting final budgets and guidance. Historically, shutdowns in Michigan have been short. A meeting with the state is scheduled for next week, promising further updates. The proposed budgets from the Governor and Senate partially align with Michigan Works! legislative priorities, though they differ in funding amounts.

Federal Budget Deadline – The federal budget faces significant cuts, with many programs eliminated in the House proposal. Due to looming spending gaps and a tight deadline, a Continuing Resolution (CR) may be necessary to prevent a government shutdown, with a CR bill proposed to fund operations until November 21, while a complete proposal suggests a CR only through October 31. If no agreement is reached, the government will shut down on October 1. There are notable discrepancies among the three proposed federal budgets, with two featuring drastic changes and potential cuts to workforce development programs, while the third maintains nearly the same funding levels.

In closing her report, Ms. Bungart-Bibb thanked members who joined in advocacy efforts and encouraged others, particularly from the private sector, to get involved. She invited anyone interested in learning more about key talking points for effective advocacy to reach out for additional information.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC TIME

None.

MEMBERS' TIME

Brian O'Donnell expressed gratitude to Kathi Cain-Babbitt for her service to the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board.

Jared Hoffmaster invited attendees to explore Three Rivers, highlighting its dining, historical sites, and recreational areas.

Jill Bland reported that Michigan's economic developers have concerns regarding the state's competitiveness in attracting business, attributing these concerns to budgetary challenges. Ms. Bland also encouraged the group to volunteer at the upcoming MiCareerQuest™ events in October.

Al Ives reported that Kadant Johnson has a beautiful display of international flags lining the driveway of the facility for the local homecoming.

Jose Orozco announced a college fair at the Burma Center in Springfield on October 21, designed to be inclusive with interpreters available for Spanish and Burmese speakers.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

- Executive Committee meeting is Thursday, October 16, 2025, from 9:00-10:30 a.m. at The Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.
- Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) meeting is Monday, December 8, 2025, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. at The Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.
- Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) meeting is Thursday, November 13, 2025, from 2:00-3:30 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other reports or business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m. by Brian O'Donnell.

Debbie Horn Date

Brian O'Donnell Date

APPROVED

These minutes were approved on _____