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**Workforce Development Board  
Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes  
February 19, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Workforce Development Board Chair Brian O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. at the Michigan Works! Southwest Service Center, 200 W. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, Michigan.

**WDB Members Present:**

Darrin Adair (Educ)*	Brian O'Donnell (PS)*	Dr. Paul Watson (EDU)
Jonathan Current (Labor)	Jose Orozco (CBO)	
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)*	David Pawloski (Labor) <sup>∨</sup>	
Al Ives (PS)	David Prellwitz (Labor) <sup>∨</sup>	<sup>∨</sup> Virtual
Dave Maurer (PS)*	Frank Tecumseh (PS)*	*Exec Committee
Karen Marcath (PAA)		

**WDB Members Absent**

Jill Bland (Econ Dev)	Jared Hoffmaster (PS)	David Stafford (PS)
Ross Daniels (PS)	Lisa Johansen (OTH)	Liz Van Dussen (PS)
Jessica Eyster (PS)	Derek King (PS)	Ken Willcutt (PS)
John Fiore (RA)	Sabrina Radenovic (PS)	
Jeff Heppler (PS)	Windy Rea (PS)	

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

Jakki Bungart-Bibb	Ashley Iovieno	Amanda Rosenberg
Debbie Horn	Amy Meyers	Jennifer Teske <sup>∨</sup>
Mike Horrigan (Upjohn)		Mark Waurio

**Guests Present:**

Jim Benton (KRESA)	Blaine Farr (WDI)	Eric Pschigoda (GOCC)
Owen Brennan <sup>∨</sup>	David Gregory	Kristine Stevens (GOCC) <sup>∨</sup>
For Representative	Julie Gregory (WDI)	Amanda Sutherland
Rogers	Sarah Mansberger (KRESA)	(KRESA)

**INTRODUCTIONS**

All attendees introduced themselves and the entities they represent.

**RECOGNITION**

**Michigan Works! Southwest Shining Star Awards**

**December 2025** – Julie Gregory has been recognized for her exceptional performance, professionalism, and positive impact on colleagues and customers. She consistently delivers accurate, high-quality work and supports her team with collaboration and innovative ideas, helping improve internal processes and customer satisfaction. Julie's dedication, reliability, and commitment to excellence reflect the organization's core values and make her a trusted, valued team member. Amy Meyers added that Julie is a resource for so many of the Michigan Works! staff, and her expertise is unmatched.

## **TRANSPARENCY & INTEGRITY OF WDB DECISIONS**

Debbie Horn asked members present if there were any items on the agenda for which a conflict of interest exists, and if so, the conflict should be declared at this time.

There were none.

## **PUBLIC TIME**

None

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Exhibit A)**

**Motion made by Randall Hazelbaker and supported by Al Ives to approve the January 15, 2026, WDB Executive Committee board meeting minutes. Motion carried**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **WDB Plans (Exhibit B)**

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

- CY 2026 Michigan Works! System Plan Instructions (Exhibit B)

**Motion made by Frank Tecumseh and supported by Dr. Paul Watson to approve the plan as presented. Motion carried.**

### **WDB Policies (Exhibits C1-C3)**

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

- WDB Policy 33 R04 – Rapid Response (Exhibits C1-C3)

**Motion made by Dr. Paul Watson and supported by Al Ives to approve the policy as presented. Motion carried.**

## **PROGRAMS**

### **Workforce Development Partner Spotlight – KRESA Career Connect Center**

Sarah Mansberger, Executive Director of Career Connect KRESA, gave a presentation highlighting KRESA's services in the Kalamazoo County Intermediate School District. KRESA provides services across nine local school districts as well as some non-public and homeschooled students. Its core functions include supporting special education and career and technical education (CTE), with additional focus areas such as early childhood programs, educator support, and operational services to help districts run effectively. The Career Connect department, launched in 2019, leads efforts to expand career learning across the county by helping students explore career options early, connect with local employers, and gain real-world experience.

The new Career Connect campus opened on August 25, 2025, and brings CTE programs into one central location for students across the county. The 167,000 square-foot facility includes 22 labs and currently serves about 1,150 students in hands-on, two-hour courses taught largely by instructors with industry experience. Programs are designed with input from local employers and lead to industry-recognized credentials tied to in-demand careers in the region. Since opening, the program has increased countywide CTE participation by 25% and continues to focus on helping students build both technical skills and important workplace skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

### **Economic Outlook – The Upjohn Institute for Employment Research**

Mike Horrigan, President, provided a presentation highlighting that the U.S. economy remains relatively strong overall, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growing at an annualized rate of approximately 4.4% in late 2025. However, some warning signs are emerging. Consumer confidence has been declining, and certain leading indicators have slowed. While job growth continues, it is concentrated in a few sectors, especially healthcare and social assistance, rather than spread evenly across various industries.

Inflation has improved significantly, dropping from a peak of 9.1% in 2022 to around 2.4%, though many people still feel the impact of higher prices, particularly for housing, rent, and healthcare. Locally, the economic outlook is somewhat stronger than the national picture. Employment in Kalamazoo and nearby counties has largely recovered from pandemic losses, with solid labor force participation and job growth in areas like healthcare and local government, although sectors such as retail and food services remain softer.

### **STAFF REPORTS (Exhibits D & F)**

**Business Solutions** - Ashley Iovieno reported that the Dashboard (Exhibit D) was included in the agenda packet and contains the updated numbers of employers served and services provided through January 2026. Ms. Iovieno also stated that in December 2025, unemployment rates for the four-county region ranged from 4% to 5.1%, which continues to show an increase compared to past numbers. The state unemployment rate is currently 4.4%.

Ms. Iovieno further reported that the most recent Lightcast reports were included as a link in the email sent to Board members and can also be found on the Michigan Works! Southwest website. Currently, no significant changes are posted. The top four occupations remain within the healthcare sector. There are 261 unique job postings in the MWSW area, which is below the average of 300.

Ms. Iovieno also reported that the Going PRO Talent Fund section of the dashboard now reflects FY26 Cycle 1, with awards announced in mid-December. The other two sections pertain to FY25 figures, which are still in progress. It is important to note that GPTF's budget has been significantly reduced, resulting in approximately \$29 million being available statewide, compared to \$55 million in previous years.

Additionally, Ms. Iovieno reported that the Michigan Works! Association is organizing an AI Summit titled "AI at Work" scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> at the MotorCity Casino Hotel in Detroit. Registration for this event is now open and encourages the participation of employers. Two sessions are scheduled that will feature small to mid-size businesses showcasing how they are using AI. National Apprenticeship Week this year will be April 26<sup>th</sup> through May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and plans for that week are underway.

Ms. Iovieno reported that Shiloh Industries, also known as Grouper Acquisition Company, recently announced a significant layoff impacting 160 positions, scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup>. This unfortunate news was anticipated, and MWSW has been actively working with the company to avert layoffs. Positively, the company has expressed a willingness to cooperate, and MWSW will advocate for a job fair prior to the closure. This company is located in Galesburg, Michigan.

### **Operations**

Amy Meyers reported that the state has released the updated four-year Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plan for public comment as part of its required two-year modification cycle. This update will prompt revisions to the Region 8 regional plan and the local four-county plan. The updated regional and local plans are expected to be presented to the board for review in late spring or early summer.

Ms. Meyers further reported that the unemployment insurance system, MIWAM, is currently undergoing a planned outage while updates are made to transition to a new system called MIUI. Employer-side updates are expected to launch on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, with customer-side updates scheduled for later this summer. Staff have been assisting job seekers during the transition due to increased foot traffic at service centers.

Additionally, Ms. Meyers reported that changes related to merit-based staffing requirements for Wagner-Peyser services have been delayed. Although the requirement was scheduled to take effect in January 2026, implementation has now been extended to January 2027 while federal guidance finalizes. Service delivery at Michigan Works! Service Centers will remain unchanged in the meantime.

Ms. Meyers further reported that Michigan Works! Southwest continues to expand services beyond its main offices by hosting office hours with community partners. Current locations include VOCES, Liberty Commons, The Northside Association for Community Development (NACD), the Douglas Community Association, and the Kalamazoo Defender, allowing residents to access employment and career services directly within their communities.

Lastly, Ms. Meyers reported that the dashboard included in the agenda packet contains highlights such as a youth Talent Tour with the Battle Creek Police Department and increased participation in the Food Assistance Employment and Training (FAE&T) program. The growth in recent months shows that over 160 individuals have been served, which follows the end of a state waiver that previously made the program voluntary.

### **Directors Report**

Ms. Bungart-Bibb reported that Congress passed a funding package at the end of January, allowing workforce programs to avoid operating under a continuing resolution. Funding will remain largely level through September, with only a small reduction in WIOA funding despite earlier concerns about significant cuts.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb reported that staff attended the National Skills Summit in Washington DC, where workforce leaders met with members of Congress to discuss workforce priorities and share program successes. While there is bipartisan interest in supporting workforce development, congressional members indicated that full WIOA reauthorization is unlikely this year, meaning programs will continue operating under current rules.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb shared that Senator Gary Peters recently reintroduced the Lifelong Learning Act, a bipartisan bill that would increase flexibility and funding caps for workforce boards to invest more in training programs that address local talent shortages. The bill is currently in the early stages of the Senate committee process.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb also reported that the Governor's proposed FY2027 budget includes \$30 million in ongoing funding to support Medicaid and SNAP work requirements. Of that amount, \$25 million would support Michigan Works! agencies in providing job search, training, and placement services, and \$5 million would support Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

In conclusion, Ms. Bungart-Bibb shared that the Legislative priority documents will be shared with board members as part of the annual budget and advocacy season. The upcoming Advocacy Day in Lansing on March 11 will focus on promoting Michigan Works! programs and advocating for continued workforce funding. Board members were invited to participate.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **PUBLIC TIME**

Eric Pschigoda from Glen Oaks Community College introduced himself and mentioned his role in the Workforce Development Office. He highlighted the upcoming launch of short-term training programs, including CDLA, and expressed gratitude for the support he has received since joining. The conversation also touched on the implementation of short-term health training opportunities set for July 2026, with funding being announced for community colleges to assist in this effort.

### **MEMBERS' TIME**

Jose Orozco thanked the MWSW team in Battle Creek for their efforts in assisting community members who

are facing challenges in securing employment and making connections. They have begun to address these issues and are currently focusing on soft skills; he believes they are heading in the right direction.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- Full Workforce Development Board – Thursday, May 21, 2026 (9:00-10:30 am)  
At a location in Branch County
- Executive Committee – Thursday, April 16, 2026 (9:00-10:30 am)  
At the Michigan Works! Service Center, 1601 S. Burdick Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49001
- Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) – Monday, March 16, 2026 (1:00-3:00 pm)  
At the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007
- Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – Tuesday, March 12, 2026 (2:00-4:00 pm)  
At the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no additional reports or business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m. by Brian O'Donnell.

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Debbie Horn Date

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Brian O'Donnell Date

**APPROVED**

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