
**Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER: Workforce Development Board Chair Brian O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. at the Clemens Food Group Welcome Center, 285 N. Michigan Ave, Coldwater, MI 49036.

WDB Members Present:

Darrin Adair (Educ)*
Jill Bland (Econ Dev)
Bobby Beauchamp^V
(alt for Dr. Paul Watson)
John Fiore (RA)
Randall Hazelbaker (PS)*
Jared Hoffmaster (PS)

Al Ives (PS)
Lisa Johansen (OTH)^V
Karen Marcath (PAA)
Brian O'Donnell (PS)*
Jose Orozco (CBO)^V
David Prellwitz (Labor)^V
Sabrina Radenovic (PS)^V

Dr. Paul Watson (EDU)^V

^V Virtual

*Exec Committee

WDB Members Absent

Jonathan Current (Labor)
Ross Daniels (PS)
Jessica Eyster (PS)
Jeff Heppler (PS)
Derek King (PS)

Dave Maurer (PS)*
David Pawloski (Labor)
Windy Rea (PS)
David Stafford (PS)
Frank Tecumseh (PS)*

Liz Van Dussen (PS)
Ken Willcutt (PS)

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

Kelli Adams
Jakki Bungart-Bibb
Debbie Horn

Ashley Iovieno
Amy Meyers

Angie O'Bryant^V
Amanda Rosenberg
Jennifer Teske^V

Guests Present

Paige Daniels (KRESA)
Blaine Farr (WDI)
Michael Hamilton
(Firekeepers Casino)

Peter Kalogiros^V
for Representative
Slotkin
Eric Pschigoda (GOCC)

Don Reed (USA Today)
Mya Schulz (KRESA)
Amanda Sutherland
(KRESA)

INTRODUCTIONS

All attendees introduced themselves and the entities they represent.

RECOGNITION

Michigan Works! Southwest Shining Star Awards

February 2026 – Mya Schulz was recognized for her positivity, encouragement, and compassion toward every young person she works with, and her impact goes far beyond the expectations of her role. Her passion for empowering youth shines through in everything she does, and the MWS team is incredibly fortunate to have her.

Mya expressed gratitude for the award, sharing that the recognition reflects not only her work but also the support and collaboration of her team. She thanked everyone for the honor.

April 2026 – Angie O'Bryant was recognized for her outstanding performance, specifically her excellent customer service, supportive approach, and ability to build meaningful relationships that help customers gain confidence in pursuing employment opportunities. Angie regularly provides services at the Douglas Community Association, strengthening community partnerships and expanding support for job seekers in Kalamazoo. Angie thanked the group for the award.

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 Darrin Adair and supported by Al Ives to approve the February 19, 2026, WDB Quarterly meeting minutes. Motion carried

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – John Fiore reported on the March 12, 2026, DART Meeting. MRC Industries presented to the group on the summer work experience program. This program helps students gain real-world job skills and explore career opportunities through partnerships with local employers and community organizations. The group also discussed application timelines, referrals, available support, and communication related to summer work experiences. Agency updates included: KRESA is preparing for summer programming through outreach and partnerships, with Industry Tours, and continued expansion of CTE programs at the Career Connect Center (CCC). Veterans Employment Services hosted a military-friendly job fair on March 23, 2026, along with updates on veteran form renewals and ADA compliance efforts through LEO. Michigan Rehabilitation Services began hosting First Friday events in April. MRC Industries shared updates on its growing social enterprise efforts, including the opening of a new thrift store on Gull Road in Kalamazoo. Recovery Institute plans to relocate to Crosstown Parkway in mid-summer 2026.

Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) – Darin Adair reported on the March 16, 2026, and May 11, 2026, meetings combined. Regional leaders discussed major challenges facing Career and Technical Education (CTE), including student readiness, attendance and transportation issues, staffing shortages, and gaps in workforce alignment. Both Regions 20 and 2 emphasized improving math achievement, attendance, and support for special populations while expanding high-demand programs such as advanced manufacturing, EV technologies, and skilled trades. Several districts received Perkins and expansion grant funding to launch or grow CTE programs, including new middle school career exploration initiatives. Schools and career centers reported strong student engagement through job fairs, internships, mock interviews, competitions, credential programs, and career exploration events. Business leaders noted continued demand for skilled workers and stressed the importance of soft skills and technical training over AI-focused skills at this time. Workforce updates included ongoing hiring in technical industries alongside some regional layoffs. Postsecondary and STEM partners highlighted expanded credentialing opportunities, workforce training programs, and concerns about long-term MiSTEM funding and staffing sustainability. Staffing and leadership changes include James Berry as Superintendent of St. Joseph County ISD. Cindy Goss accepted a new role with the Gull Lake School District. Tim Staffen was recognized as Michigan Administrator of the Year for 2026. Overall, the focus remains on strengthening CTE pathways, increasing workforce partnerships, improving student outcomes, and preparing students for high-demand careers, and many districts continue hiring for CTE teaching and paraprofessionals.

NEW BUSINESS

WDB Plans (Exhibits B-F)

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

- FY2026 GF/GP Funding for YPP (*Exhibit B*)
- FY2026 GPTF Program Admin Cycle 1 (*Exhibit C*)
- FY2026 Workforce and Employer Expansion: Sector Strategies and Related Activities (*Exhibit D*)
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) Under the WIOA (*Exhibit E*)
- Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) Under the WIOA (*Exhibit F*)

Motion made by Al Ives and supported by Jill Bland to approve the plans as presented. Motion carried.

WDB Plan Ratification (*Exhibits G*)

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

- AY2025 WIOA Statewide Activities Funding for the Young Professionals 2026 Initiative (*Exhibit F*)

Motion made by Randall Hazelbaker and supported by Jared Hoffmaster to approve the plan as presented. Motion carried.

Workforce Development Board (WDB) Executive Member (*Exhibit H*)

Debbie Horn requested Board consideration and approval for the appointment of Alan Ives, Vice President, Technology and Operations, Kadant Johnson, LLC, as an Executive Committee member for the WDB for Michigan Works! Southwest. This appointment is for the balance of a two-year term that began October 1, 2025, and ends September 30, 2027.

Motion made by Jill Bland and supported by John Fiore to approve the WDB Executive Committee appointment as presented. Motion carried.

Workforce Development Board Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) Membership changes/Renewals (*Exhibits L1-L2*)

Debbie Horn requested Board consideration and approval for the renewal of the WDB Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) for Michigan Works! Southwest for members and the renewal of the Chair and Vice-Chair whose terms expire on June 30, 2026.

The new term for the individuals listed below is for the two-year period beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2028.

- Chair – Tim Staffen
- Vice Chair- James Berry
- Bobby Beauchamp, Dean of Workforce Development, Kellogg Community College
- Dr. Mark Dunneback, Associate Vice President for Workforce and Community Innovation, Instructional Dean, Kalamazoo Valley Community College
- LaToy Green, Public School Parent
- Rebecca Murphy, CTE Academy Coach, Battle Creek Public Schools
- Sue Quiter, Math Consultant, Branch Area Career Center
- Tammy Schiller, Student Services Academic Consultant, Calhoun Area Career Center, Calhoun Intermediate School District

Debbie Horn also requested WDB consideration and approval for the appointment of Kristine Stevens, Director of Workforce Development and Community Education, Glen Oaks Community College, to the Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) for Michigan Works! Southwest for the two-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2028.

Motion made by Darrin Adair and supported by John Fiore to approve the WDB CEAC membership renewal and appointments as presented. Motion carried.

Request for Proposal (RFP) Announcements

Amanda Rosenberg reported that following the procurement schedule, two RFPs were released on Friday, March 13, 2026, as listed below:

- **RFP2026_1 – Outreach and Communications Services**
- **RFP2026_2 – One Stop Operator**

A review committee consisting of WDB members met in April to review proposals. MWSW administrative and fiscal staff also reviewed these submissions. The Outreach and Communication Services were awarded to LKF Marketing. One Stop Operator services were awarded to Janet Bloomfield Consulting. Both providers have previously worked with MWSW to provide these services, and their new contracts will begin July 1, 2026.

PROGRAM

Employer Resource Network (ERN)

Kelli Adams gave a presentation on behalf of the Employer Resource Network (ERN), which launched in southwest Michigan in 2012. The ERN helps employers support and retain their workforce by placing Success Coaches directly at member companies. Today, the ERN serves 22 employers across four counties, giving more than 20,000 employees access to personalized support.

Success Coaches work one-on-one with employees to help address real-life challenges like housing, transportation, childcare, and financial stress. ERN also connects employees to training and career growth opportunities, while providing a safe and confidential space for support.

By helping employees navigate barriers before they become crises, the ERN has helped companies improve retention, reduce absenteeism, and create a more stable, supported workforce.

A brief discussion took place regarding housing resources, and success stories were shared.

STAFF REPORTS (Exhibits J & L1-L2)

Business Solutions - Ashley Iovieno reported that the Dashboard (Exhibit J) was included in the agenda packet and contains the updated numbers of employers served and services provided through April of 2026. Ms. Iovieno also stated that in March 2026, unemployment rates for the four-county region ranged from 3.9% to 5.2%. The state unemployment rate is currently 5%, and the national rate is 4.3%.

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 three occupations remain within the healthcare sector, but there was a rise in demand for cashiers. There are 186 unique job postings in the MWSW area, which is below the average of 200-300.

Ms. Iovieno also reported that the Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) FY26 Cycle 2 applications were submitted to the state for review in the first week of May. There were 31 applications submitted for a total of \$1,323,515. The awards announcement is expected sometime in mid to late June for a July 1 training start date.

Additionally, Ms. Iovieno reported that, in collaboration with Michigan Works! Association, an AI survey has been distributed to employers to gauge their experience and knowledge of AI. The statewide survey seeks to gather information on their current use of AI and identify any support needed from Michigan Works! agencies.

Ms. Iovieno reported that National Apprenticeship Week took place April 26 – May 2 and included information for job seekers interested in learning more about apprenticeships and local opportunities. The week was also recognized through proclamations by employers, nonprofits, and the State. A recently published apprenticeship

report will be linked to the meeting minutes for members to review. [LINK](#) - Key highlights include Michigan ranking fourth in the nation for active registered apprentices, reaching a record 23,200 apprentices in 2025. In addition, seven Michigan prosperity regions, including the Southwest region, recorded their highest levels of active registered apprentices. Additionally, Ms. Iovieno invited the group to save the date following the August 20, 2026, WDB Executive Committee meeting for a planned Race to Talent event. The event is expected to include a special dedication to apprenticeships, followed by a panel discussion.

Lastly, Ms. Iovieno reported that on May 5, 2026, approximately 700 students attended MiCareerQuest™ in St. Joseph County at the Doyle Center in Sturgis. It featured over 50 employer booths and was another great success. She also thanked the partnership with St. Joseph County ISD for that event.

Operations

Amy Meyers reported that a group of MWSW representatives attended an AI conference hosted by the Michigan Works! Association, where a partnership with Grow with Google was announced. This partnership will allow all 16 MWAs to have access to free licenses for both customers and staff to earn AI certifications. These courses range from eight hours to six months in length, and the targeted launch date is the first week of June.

Ms. Meyers further reported that the MWSW staff attended their 2nd annual peer-led full professional development day on May 1, 2026. Highlights from the day will be shared on social media.

Additionally, Ms. Meyers reported that the attached dashboard report contains more detailed outcomes on the work of the Employer Resource Network (ERN). It was also noted that WIOA and Wagner Peyser performance outcomes related to Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) and credential attainment are expected to increase as we approach the program year end on June 30th. It was further stated that an error has been identified in the state database affecting performance reporting. While the scope is currently unknown, the state has reported that they are working on addressing the issue and will provide an update when it becomes available.

Lastly, Ms. Meyers reported that due to the previous changes in the WDB bylaws, monitoring is now incorporated into the operations reports provided, and staff presentations that typically happened at separate monitoring meetings will now occur throughout the year at the executive meetings. The next executive meeting in August will feature both WIOA service providers. WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services, as well as Wagner Peyser (WP) services, received their annual programmatic monitoring, with great results.

Directors Report

Ms. Bungart-Bibb reported that last year, Congress introduced a major policy shift regarding work requirements for Medicaid eligibility, a significant change from the traditional income and category-based criteria. Beginning January 2027, recipients will need to provide proof of engagement in work, community service, or job training to maintain their benefits, with redeterminations shifting from annually to every six months. Exemptions remain for those who are disabled or medically frail. Michigan Works! agencies are set to support recipients with activity tracking and reporting, with a potential 700,000 referrals statewide. Detailed federal guidance is slated for release in June, with public communication strategies rolling out over the summer ahead of the early 2027 launch. Ms. Bungart-Bibb encouraged advocacy to fund this initiative, as it is crucial to ensure all potential recipients' needs are met.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb reported an update on the Federal fiscal year 2027 budget process, sharing an advocacy document highlighting concerns over a proposed block grant that would consolidate twelve workforce programs under state control while cutting overall funding by 26 percent. Members were urged to share successes with lawmakers to push back against these reductions and advocate for the current formula funding model.

Regarding WIOA reauthorization, efforts are currently stalled; however, there remains a shared commitment across parties to move the reauthorization forward eventually.

Ms. Bungart-Bibb shared that the governor, the House, and the Senate have all released their recommendations for the 2027 budget cycle. A flyer was provided, showing the comparison of some key workforce development-related items.

In conclusion, Ms. Bungart-Bibb reported that the House and the Senate have all released their recommendations for the 2027 budget cycle. A flyer was provided, showing the comparison of key workforce development-related items.

OLD BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC TIME

None

MEMBERS' TIME

Jill Bland, Southwest Michigan First, reported a regional shift among manufacturers prioritizing equipment and automation over job creation, leading to concerns regarding job retention and shrinking small businesses. While regional investments remain, economic developers are seeing limited hiring and increased risks from smaller companies. Ms. Bland announced that on June 4, 2026, Southwest Michigan First is hosting a mixer at the Career Connect Center (CCC) to connect local design and manufacturing sectors with regional educational institutions.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Full Workforce Development Board – Thursday, September 17, 2026 (9:00-10:30 am)
At a location in St. Joseph County
- Executive Committee – Thursday, August 20, 2026 (9:00-10:30 am)
At the Michigan Works! Service Center, 200 W. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, MI, 49017
- Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) – Monday, September 14, 2026 (1:00-3:00 pm)
At the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007
- Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) – Tuesday, October 20, 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 10:15 a.m. by Brian O'Donnell.

Debbie Horn

Date

Brian O'Donnell

Date

APPROVED

These minutes were approved on _____