

Workforce Development Board (WDB)
Meeting Minutes
July 9, 2025
10:00 a.m.
Otsego County Library, Gaylord

I. CALL TO ORDER – 10:00 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. INTRODUCTIONS

WDB MEMBERS PRESENT

Todd Miner
Jason Campbell
Katrina Burtwell
Pamela Schaudt
Michele Martel
Deb Larson
Kristi Bristley
Linda Damer (Alternate)
Erine Wescoat

WDB MEMBERS ABSENT

Courtney Ryan
Doug Baum
Lisa Bolen
Whitney Dettmer
Jason Reed
Mandy Daily
Seth Reichard
Sheryl Coyne
Barbara Walden
Robert Wilson
Julie Waldron

STAFF PRESENT

Jessica Topp, Chief Executive Officer
Ashley Udell, Youth Programming Manager
Alicia Wallace, Marketing & Communications Manager
Tricia Selke, Quality Assurance Specialist
Kristina Ferguson, Clerical Support/Fiscal Dept
Mary Davis, Planning & Program Director
Mary Trudgen, Career Navigator

Nicole Welsh, Business Solutions Manager

GUEST

Kevin Klapish, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

Gary Brasseur, Michigan Dept of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MILEAP)

IV. WDB ACTION ITEM: CONSENT AGENDA

- May 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- Local Policy: Supportive Services
- Stipend Policy

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda items as listed made by Deb Larson and seconded by Jason Campbell. Voted: All Ayes. Motion Carried.

V. PARTNER PRESENTATION: MICHIGAN REHABILITATION SERVICES

Todd gave a brief presentation of what MRS does.

- **Mission:** Develop customized workforce solutions for businesses and individuals with disabilities.
- **Vision:** A diverse and inclusive workforce that unites businesses and individuals with disabilities toward a common good.

VI. CEO UPDATE

Strategic Priorities & Progress

-WIOA Funding Cut 33.5% Official PI

- Governor's Reserve \$2M+RFP
- Additional PATH money

-Grants for June & July: Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) (2), Otsego Community Foundation, Community Foundation of NE MI, PIE&G, Rural Readiness Grant Program, LEO RFP

-July 1, 2025 is a new program year, no waiting for Training list. Better able to meet strategic priorities of: Essential Skills, Occupational Skills, and Job Placement/Retention.

External Engagement & Advocacy

-Working with the Michigan Works! Association and the other Michigan Works! Agencies around the state to advocate at the state and federal levels.

- Met with Isabel Soto (Federal House Education and Workforce Committee staffer)
- Association 90-day communication & advocacy

-PATH (Partnership, Accountability, Training, Hope) and BRES (Barrier Removal Employment Services) monitoring by State- no findings/issues; showcasing our success with the programs

Operational Highlights & Challenges

-Challenge: Technology

- Partnering with local IT company to migrate systems

-Challenge: Funding

- Diversification, applying for grant opportunities, making connections

-Highlight: Strengthening partnerships and collaboration

Looking Ahead

-Continued Advocacy-state and federal
-Keeping an eye on state budget timeline and potential for state government shutdown come fall
Michigan Works! Association Board of Directors opening

VII. YOUTH UPDATE

With the school year finally ending, we were able to kick off our Career Readiness and Exploration Program, and summer academies that are in partnership with MiSTEM

29 youth participating in the MiSTEM Summer Academies

- CNC – 9
- Welding – 14
- Construction – 6

CR&E – we have 9 students participating this year. 2 have already started a summer work experience and are able to put the skills they are learning to use now.

So far, students have covered:

- Career Interest Surveys
- Career Skill Inventory Surveys
- Lessons on Soft vs Hard Skills
- Financial Literacy
- Resume Building
- Communication/Teamwork
- Hard and soft skills
- Verbal and written communication
- Professional portfolios
- Post-secondary routes – traditional and alternative routes
- Interview prep
- Mock interview will wrap up the week

Student quotes:

- "I learned how to use SMART goals in the future!"
- "I learned how to write a check properly. I found the writing the check practice helpful because I will definitely need to use that in the future!" – from an individual who ironically said that "nobody writes checks anymore, I'll never use this" earlier in the week.
- "I learned how to write out and plan a budget. Definitely in the future it will be something I use!"
- "I found all of the information about the scholarships helpful because I graduate next year so I will need to start looking at that soon!"
- "I found that I got insight into a lot of different careers and what degrees and certifications you can get for those careers."
- "One thing I think is cool is how cheap it is compared to traditional post-secondary education. I looked up the typical cost for some of those programs at college and it was over \$10,000 per year!"
- "I liked the part where she talked about the pharmacy technician course, compounding the medicines sounds interesting!"

- These programs offer stipends that are being provided by the Young Professionals and Young Professionals Plus grants. Both grants are also being used to support Youth work experience activities and classroom training assistance

JMG news

- Northeast Consortium has again reached 6-of-6 for our JMG follow up metrics – at an affiliate level, Cheb/PI, and Crawford county programs
- Follow up metric that includes graduation rate (50%), Connectivity rate (95%), employment (60%), FT employment @ 30 hr/week (60%), positive outcomes (75%) further ed (40%)
- Lead Youth CA, Erin O'Rourke, and I will be presenting at Summer Summit this year on Leveraging for New Initiatives. The presentation will outline the strategic use of the MCAN Innovative Program Grant to develop and implement a College Prep Series targeting area youth.
- Nominated Laura Percival, as Regional MiSTEM Director, for the JMG Transformational Partner Award – she was selected
- Recognizes leaders and partners who have made a meaningful regional impact by advancing the mission of JMG
- Jessica Topp shared that Ashley had been selected as 2025 Outstanding Manager of the year.

VIII. BUSINESS SERVICE UPDATE

Employer of the Day (Hiring event where we feature an employer in our office and conduct on the spot interviews. This event is shared through social media)

- Various Employer of the Day events have been held across the region, these continue to be lucrative for employers.
- Most recent one: Cedar Valley R.V. Park where 3 were offered jobs, Trillium June 25th,

Upcoming ones included:

- Choice Services
- AJD Forest Products
- Amazon-
- Higgins Lake Campground

Going Pro (Competitive Grant that helps business gain targeted high quality training for their new and existing workers)

- Cycle 2 of the Going Pro awards were announced.
- They received over 800 applications and with a total amount of Over 34 million dollars of funding requested.
- 301 applications awarded with a total of 16 million awarded
- Two employers from our region were awarded. Our Business solutions team is working closely with them regarding their training.
- Still ELC funding available- This is where 2 or more businesses can apply for the same training on application. If any businesses would like to apply for this, they can reach out to their Business Solutions Professional in their area.

On the Job training- Continuing to see interest and success with OJTs. Just completed enrolling an OJT candidate in the Cheboygan area. Business Solutions team is currently working with 8 employers for eligibility and suitability for potential new OJTs.

Talent Tours- Business Services Team is touching base with employers regarding participating in Talent Tours and Youth Work experience opportunities for the coming year. Our team will start scheduling Talent Tour opportunities for the upcoming school year with YCA's in the coming months.

Apprenticeship-

- Held our second Race to Talent event, which allowed employers to learn more about registered apprenticeship and also recognized 1 Employer; Thunder Bay Community Health Services, One Apprentice who completed the program for Cheboygan County Sheriff and 3 Partners; Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters, MI Talent Together, Michigan Manufacturers Association.
- Continuing to work with local employers to build and create their Apprenticeship programs. Currently we have 10 employers who are in various stages of developing their apprenticeship programs

Co Visits- Our Business Solutions team continues to work with various partners to conduct co-visits to local area businesses. These partners have included MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corporation), Target Alpena, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, OCEA, SBDC,

Upcoming

- Our Business team is in the beginning stages of creating a smaller pop up job fairs events- This is to help fill the need of employers looking to hire but not able to host a table at our larger job fair- more information to come

IX. FRONTLINE STAFF SUCCESS: CAREER NAVIGATOR

Mary Trudgen, Career Navigator from our Alpena office gave a presentation about her duties and the impact they bring to our participants.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today about the important work we do as Career Navigators at Michigan Works, and more specifically, the impact our Alpena office continues to make in the community.

We the Career Navigators have been helping individuals navigate the often-complex journey of employment — whether this means finding a first job, transitioning to a new career, or reentering the workforce after life-altering events. In Alpena, on average we see 120 customers per week. As numbers do increase during Unemployment season. The customers can be someone reentering society after incarceration, to a customer with a master's degree seeking a career change. No two stories are the same.

Our assistance spans across unemployment services, resume building, and job search strategies — but also includes compassionate, tailored support that helps our customers build confidence, stability, and hope.

The impact of the devastating 2025 ice storm made our services even more critical. In just April and May, our Gaylord office alone received 127 BRES (Barrier Removal Employment Services) referrals, and helping 38 individuals overcome storm-related barriers. It's a powerful reminder that career navigation isn't just about jobs — it's about helping people rebuild their lives.

Thanks to the Talent and Growth program, we've been able to assist customers in ways that go beyond the job search. In fact, 3 customers were able to purchase a vehicle in Alpena, Grayling and Cheboygan.

12 customers have received much-needed vehicle repairs — ensuring they can commute to work reliably and safely.

Alpena, is proud of our ongoing partnership with Iosco RESA, providing Integrated Education Training services at the Alpena County Jail, as well as in the adult education classroom setting. Education and training remain key pathways to long-term success, and we are seeing firsthand how these opportunities can create a real change.

Alpena will also be partnering with **Iosco RESA through the IGNITE program** to provide additional support and resources. This collaboration will enhance access to career readiness tools, training opportunities, and educational pathways, helping participants build a strong foundation for successful reentry into the workforce and the community. Looking ahead, our Alpena team is excited to expand our outreach by hosting three workshops at the Alpena County Jail in the upcoming months. The workshops will focus on **Acing the Interview, Resumes, Job Search Skills, and Continuing Education**. Due to the success of this program in Alpena, Cheboygan County has expressed interest in implementing a similar initiative within their facility to support individuals in achieving post-release success. Michigan Works! staff recently met with Cheboygan County Corrections and Law Enforcement administrators to explore potential programs and services we can provide to help foster successful reentry and long-term stability for individuals transitioning back into the community.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

None

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

XII. ROUND TABLE

- Deb Larson gave an update on their budget concerns. Also hiring challenges such as keeping and retaining employees due to temporary work situations
- Kristi discussed her positive experiences working with our Apprenticeship Specialist Jeremiah
- Michelle also shared her high accolades for Jeremiah
- Linda shared scholarship information and discussed new Grants
- Erine mentioned working with our Business Solution Professionals and looking for more programs to add
- Gary spoke regarding MiLEAP, thanked Jessica for working with him for the past months. And mentioned he had a new hire as a result

XIII. ADJOURN- 11:10 a.m.

Next meeting scheduled for October 8th @ 10:00 a.m., Location: Otsego County Library