

MINUTES

NORTHWEST WISCONSIN WORKFORCE INVESTMENT
BOARD, INC. MEETING
March 26, 2025



Attendees:

☒ Judy Aspling	☒ Michelle Johnson	☒ Crystal Rohde
☒ Steve Bitzer	☒ Dale Kelm	☒ Cindy Rouzer
☒ Andrea Chartier	☒ Mary McPhetridge	☐ Jennifer Shearer
☒ Skyler Dural-Eder	☒ Jenice Meyer	☒ (MJ) Sills
☒ Tami Follet	☒ Ashley Moore	☒ Gene Stanchfield
☒ Brad Gast	☐ Elaine Ogilvie	☒ Carl Svendsen
☒ Edward Gruhl	☒ Brian Pelon	☒ Kerri Trubachik
☒ Brent Harju	☐ PC Rasmussen (excused)	
☒ Ashley Hinke		

Staff & Guests Present: Ryce Davis, Matthew Filipek, Mari Kay-Nabozny, Dawn Knapp, Kazdion Mount, Bella Potack-Rettler, Melissa Rabska, Eric Faber, Jake Koval, Ethan Compton, Sara Weiland, Layne Brackeen, and Ana Minski.

☒ Thomas Michels ☒ Katey Perkkio

Call to Order - Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM. Bella Potack-Rettler conducted the roll call.

Report on Public Meeting Notice

Bella Potack-Rettler reported that the public meeting notice was published on the NWWIB social media, website, and distributed to the regional library systems and Class A newspapers within the WDA.

Pledge of Allegiance

Judy Aspling led the NWWIB Board into the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome/Introduction of Guests

Michelle Johnson gave a welcome and brief safety presentation to the NWWIB Board for holding the meeting at the Enbridge Ashland Office.

Judy Aspling introduced the new board member, Jenice Meyer from the Development Association.

Judy Aspling introduced and greeted the new NWWIB Staff Member, Kazdion Mount. He is the NWWIB's Manager of Workforce and Innovation.

5. Approval of the 12/18/2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Gene Stanchfield

Second: Carl Svendsen

The Board voted to approve the Meeting Minutes unanimously.

6. Consent Agenda (NWWIB, Inc. Sub-Committee Reports)

- a) NWWIB Executive Committee Report – *Judy Aspling, Chair*
- b) Future Talent and Strategy Committee (meet on 1/20/26)

Thomas shared that FTSC had their first meeting on December 20th. Shared that he was elected the chair and shared that at this committee that they discussed the Youth RFP. Summarize

Motion to approve: Skyler Dural-Eder

Second: Crystal Rhode

The Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda unanimously.

7. Organizational Updates and Compliance (10:15 AM) - Mari Kay-Nabozny

- a. Monitoring
 - i. PY25 WIOA/ FORWD/ WAL2 Monitoring Report

Mari Kay-Nabozny shared the PY25 WIOA/FORWD/WAL2 Monitoring Report with the NWWIB Board. Monitoring closed out in February 2026. She shared that this closed out very quickly, there were no major issues. Only thing outstanding is that a restroom grab bar needs to be moved.

- b. Grant Opportunities

Mari Kay-Nabozny shared the following grant opportunities that the NWWIB has applied/will apply for to the NWWIB Board. Shared there is a synopsis in the packet for each.

- i. Fast Forward (Healthcare)

Written to DWD for Fast Forward to train 6 dental assistants in their mobile lab. NWTC actually filled the 2026 fall classes. NWWIB must figure out and change the scope of the grant to train the dental assistants at a different location.

UW Whitewater has an online course. Northcentral is an option, but employers in on the grant are in the Chequamegon Bay area. NWWIB will be researching.

- ii. Fast Forward Teaching partnership

Mari Kay-Nabozny shared with the NWWIB Board that this grant will not be submitted per CESA 11.

- iii. Fulcrum Foundation

Still waiting. Expand digital services in southern Price and Taylor counties.

- iv. DOT- HCST

Mari shared that this one has been brought to the board before. DOT wants to run two cohorts, one tribal specific and one in Superior. We are waiting for more information.

- v. HLUW

Head of the Lakes United Way is a Youth project. Still waiting to hear on this one. Grant would work with the unions to expose youth to career pathways to feed bridge project pipeline. Hopefully it can implement in the Fall.

- vi. RESTART

5.1 million. Working with five or six other workforce board. 15-24 year old youth who have been in the justice system. Connecting them into careers in high wage and high growth areas like ship building and manufacturing.

vii. Appropriation Request

Submitted in the middle of March to Senator Baldwin's office. Expansion of the CLICK project. Expanding it out to all the counties and incorporating a more healthcare aspect to it.

8. Regional Data Review (10:35 AM)

a. WIOA Dashboard

i. Quarter 2 WIOA Contracted Performance – *Melissa Rabska*

Melissa Rabska shared the Quarter 2 WIOA Contracted Performance. Everything is reported on a cumulative basis. Two measures are lower than negotiated contracted rates. Melissa shared that typically for youth, that at the end of the year, we will see credentials and measurable skills gains increase. This snapshot of performance should improve hopefully. Carl asked if it does not, Does that put us at risk for future funding?

Mari responded that for the first year- no, but after two years, DWD will be more aggressive with technical assistance and wanting a remediation plan. Ed asked besides credentials, what is measurable skills?

An example, an individual wants to be an EMT, learns CPR = measurable skills gain. Youth, can be working towards career + doing extracurriculars and it is a bit subjective what the measurable skills gains are. State won't give a list of what exactly the measurable skills gains. Carl asked if we are being a bit conservative on measurable skills gains. Mari replied that probably yes.

Skyler noted that CEP is focusing on increasing the measure. CEP has been working on taking notes and weekly career planner meetings to talk through work and sometimes there can be moments that are captured there, where we classify a measurable skills gains. Skyler shared that career planners are also working with other career planners.

ii. Quarter 2 WIOA Performance- *Melissa Rabska*

End of quarter 3 is next week. Sitting at contract and actual. Right now, numbers for Dislocated Worker, trending behind.

Skyler noted that CEP has hired Mason Weber. He had an eleven enrollments between Adult and DW programs. Trying to do a little bit of partnership building with CEP. Working with Bad River on multi-generational workshops. Bringing together all generations together. April 8th is the first event for this, hopefully get enrollments from that.

iii. Current WIOA Enrollment – *Melissa Rabska*

Mari shared that in the WIOA demographics that there has been an increased in females served which is a new data point to see.

iv. Bi-annual Job Center Sign-In Survey Results – *Melissa Rabska*

Melissa Rabska shared the Bi-annual Job Center Sign-In survey results. Overall, there were 26 respondents, most of them were from Ashland and Price counties.

Job assistance and unemployment insurance were top reasons to stop in.
Overall, looks like staff are doing good.

- b. WDA 7 Regional Employment Data - *Thomas Michels*
Thomas Michels share

9. **12.31.25 Financials Review (10:50AM)** – *Mari Kay-Nabozny*

- a. **Action Item: Review and approve 2025 audit** (emailed and hard copies will be available)

Mari shared that she sent out the financial review by email. No findings, a clean audit. Got it in on time this year. Cost \$22k for the audit.

Motion: Dale Kelm

Second: Mary McPhetridge

The Board voted to approve the Financials unanimously.

10. **Initiatives & Project Review (10:55 AM)**

- a. **NWWIB By the Numbers** - *Mari Kay-Nabozny*

Mari Kay-Nabozny shared the NWWIB By the Numbers sheet in the packet. She reviewed each of the current program enrollment numbers with the NWWIB Board.

- b. **NWWIB Social Media Report** – *Bella Potack-Rettler*

Bella provided the social media report for January – March. Key takeaways are we have audience of 1,738 followers across all platforms; as a reminder, this is all organic and not from paid ads or follows. This quarter, overall, social media outreach analytics have been trending upwards

Website Analytics:

Bella shared a report done by North of Eight. They send her a monthly report, the google analytics report is new though. They used a different platform before, that wasn't so in-depth.

Top Traffic Sources: Here the Board can see 54% of user sessions are direct session sources – which means, they are typing URL and going straight to our site. About 20% are getting to our website through Google. And the rest, are referrals from social media – particularly, Facebook.

- c. **Public Relations Report** – *Melissa Rabska*

Melissa Rabska shared the Public Relations Report with the NWWIB Board.

The Public Relations report is included in the NWWIB packet. Melissa gave kudos to the staff for these PR moments.

- d. **Success Stories**- *Melissa Rabska*

NWWIB Board gave kudos to Sara Weiland and Ryce Davis for their success story. This success story is for WAI 2.0 and FORWD.

- e. **Regional JobPods**- *Mari Kay-Nabozny*

- i. *Webster, Iron River*

Mari Kay-Nabozny shared that the JobPod is now open in Iron River. This job pod is a bit smaller than the one in Medford. This job pod has not had an official opening. Another one will be installed in Webster that will be even smaller. Crystal asked How are they being

promoted? Mari shared that the libraries and NWWIB are promoting it. The resource guides are updated quarterly.

11. Action Item: Approve Pathways Home 6 Incentive & Stipend Policy Change

Melissa shared that since PH2 and PH4 are now concluded, have updated the PH6 incentive and stipend to make it more - need Melissa to help with this. (just copy the verbiage on the flyer?)

Motion: Carl Svendsen

Second: Ed Gruhl

The Board voted to approve the policy change unanimously.

12. Board Discussion (11:30 AM)-

Are you struggling more with finding applicants or keeping employees?

Labor Market and Workforce Discussion

Board members and partners discussed current workforce challenges across industries. Several employers reported ongoing difficulties recruiting for specialized positions, including commercial drivers, night-shift workers, and banking positions. Participants noted a limited applicant pool in some sectors and changing expectations among job seekers regarding wages and compensation.

Discussion included the importance of realistic wage expectations and transparency in job postings. Members shared observations regarding the value of posting salary ranges and the need to better align student and job seeker expectations with regional labor market realities. Career pathway tools and regional workforce information were highlighted as resources to help students and job seekers understand available career opportunities.

Housing availability was identified as a continuing workforce barrier, particularly during large-scale projects that bring temporary workers into the region. Members discussed ongoing local efforts and creative approaches to expanding housing options, noting that no single solution exists to address the issue. The group also discussed emerging technology and artificial intelligence (AI), including opportunities to improve efficiency in reporting, data analysis, and administrative functions.

Soft Skills and Workforce Readiness

Members engaged in a discussion regarding workforce readiness and the soft skills most frequently identified as lacking among job applicants and employees. Key themes included:

- Teamwork and collaboration in workplace settings.
- Communication skills, including responsiveness to emails and phone calls.
- Professionalism, manners, and workplace etiquette.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
- Leadership development for employees promoted into supervisory roles.
- Personal accountability and workplace expectations.
- Eye contact and interpersonal communication skills.
- Avoiding behaviors that limit employment opportunities, including substance use.

Participants also discussed the impact of social media on workplace relationships and conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a positive personal and professional reputation.

Several members noted the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on social development and workplace readiness among younger workers. The discussion highlighted the importance of patience, relationship-building, mentoring, and meeting individuals where they are while helping them develop the skills necessary for long-term success in the workforce.

This discussion was informational, and no formal action was taken.

13. State & Federal Updates (11:50 AM) - Mari Kay-Nabozny

a. Coordinated Appropriation Request

Multiple associations of workforce boards, have coordinated appropriation requests.

b. Comprehensive Job Center Waiver Request

NWWIB along with two other WI Boards requested a DOL waiver that would waive the necessary comprehensive Job Center in rural areas. Ours is in Superior, WI. Costs about \$900 per visitor for the job center. That's about 10 visitors per week. There is unused space everywhere in that location.

c. WIOA State Plan open for comments

Mari shared that comments are open.

d. TEN 06-05 | U.S. Department of Labor

Employment notice, Pathways couldn't enroll participants unless they had all their documents to prove they can employable. They have revoked this guidance change which is a positive when working with individuals who are incarcerated.

14. Comments & Announcements

NAWB Conference is happening in Vegas this week. No new news.

Discussion took place on local proposals for a four-day school week.

15. Next Meeting Date & Location – June 25th or at the call of the Chair.

16. Adjourn (12:00 PM)

The Board requests the presence of Mari Kay-Nabozny, Melissa Rabska, Matthew Filipek, Dawn Knapp, Ryce Davis, Eric Faber, Sara Wieland, Bella Potack-Rettler, Ethan Compton, Jake Koval, Kazdion Mount, Ana Minski, Layne Brackeen