
Meeting Minutes (Approved)

WDB Members Present: Kyle Alters (via Teams), Janessa Brickner-Ress, Al Chaney (via Teams), Stephanie Downs, Jodi Gruhn (via Teams), Sara Guild, Paul Herold, Jeremy Higgins, Ronald Karl, Dan Kinsella (via Teams), Tim Norlin (via Teams), Patty Noland (Via Teams @10:11am), Casey Nye, Matthew Rice (via Teams), Mitch Rupp, Brandy Thorne, and Amy Yessa.

WDB Members Excused: Bradley Berglund, Thad Brockman, Dave Eckmann, Anthony Negani, Diane Sennholz, Amber Stancher, and Amanda Weber.

WDB Staff Present: John Cokl, Peter Gelhar, Rob Golla, Libby Heidmann, Amy Hoppa, Brian Kalish, Ginger Keymer, and Stephany Tatro.

Others Present: Michael Tautges (Oneida County), Bill Leichtnam (Wood County), Colt Nicklaus, Kathy Kloes, and Brian Wolfe (via Teams) (FSC).

1. **Call to Order-** Herold called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There was quorum.
2. **Guest Speakers: Mike Ruminski DWD** – Presentation focused on the Wisconsin Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs in Wisconsin with existing and emerging programs as of 2026. Currently, over two dozen registered apprenticeships in the state, in five sectors (IT, Transportation, Health Care, Agriculture, and Service), with on the job training time ranging from 12-48 months. Ruminski outlined the benefits to the employer as well as benefits to the apprentice/employee.
3. **Approval of March 12, 2026, Meeting Minutes** – Nye made a motion to approve the Minutes; seconded by Higgins. Motion carried.
4. **Approval of Forward Service Corporation as Service Provider** – Brickner Ress made a motion to approve FSC as Service Provider; it was seconded by Chaney. Motion carried.
5. **Approval of PY26 Budget** - Brickner Ress made a motion to approve the PY26 Budget; seconded by Rupp. Motion carried.
6. **Approval of Treasurer's Report** - Yessa made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report; seconded by Chaney. Motion carried.
7. **Approval of Annual Audit** – Norlin made a motion to approve the Annual Audit; it was seconded by Chaney. Motion carried.
8. **Approval of Amendments to Articles of Incorporation & Bylaws** – Higgins made a motion to approve amendments to Articles and Bylaws; seconded by Nye. Motion carried.

9. **Announcements from the Chair & Vice Chair** – Chaney expressed strong satisfaction with Brian's performance in his first year as Executive Director, highlighting the successful organizational rebrand and the advancement of the new contract with LifeWorks. The committee thanked both Brian and his staff for their continued good work. Herold welcomed **two new Board Members: Brandy Thorne**, from North Central Healthcare, where she serves as HR Director of Communications & Learning Development. **Sarah Guild**, Executive Director of Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, returns to the Board (previously served with WATEA). Herold reminded Board Members of the **Wausau Woodchucks Game on June 25**: Attendees will receive a meal/beverage voucher; seating reserved in the Leinie's Party Area. First pitch at 6:30 PM; gates open one hour prior. **New meeting calendar** included in board packet. **Conflict of interest forms** due before leaving today's meeting.
10. **Announcements from the Chief Elected Officials** – Tautges reported the winter's weather boosted sales tax revenue for many northern counties. In Onieda, housing development is progressing well, including hundreds of new units and the first multifamily housing construction in over two decades. Small businesses (Main Street shops) are reportedly fully staffed for the first time in memory, with owners now turning away qualified applicants. However, schools, manufacturing, and hospitals continue to face significant staffing needs.
11. **Announcements from Executive Director** – Kalish highlighted **TDCON 26**, the statewide Talent Development Conference in Green Bay in April. The conference was well attended and considered a great success. Attendees reported that the sessions were valuable and provided useful insights.
Job Center MOU Update: Following Marathon County Job Center's relocation to a new building at 11 Scott Street, a new Memorandum of Understanding was required with all Job Center partners. Libby and Ginger, in her role as OSO, have been leading this effort. The MOU process is nearing completion.
Rebranding & Website Launch: Greenleaf, the Madison-based marketing firm assisting with the organization's rebranding, is finalizing the new website. The remaining task is completing the Board Member page, which will feature headshots and short biographies for each board member.
LifeWork\$: Significant focus by AWE staff on the new LifeWorks program, as a strategy for future organizational growth and sustainability. Kalish sees potential to expand the program beyond Marathon County. The long-term goal is to diversify revenue streams and reduce reliance on federal WIOA funding while continuing to provide workforce development services. Referrals for the first Marathon County cohort will begin in July. First cohort is scheduled to begin on Aug 17. A second cohort targeting DVR participants planned for October. Success of the first cohort is considered critical for future expansion and funding opportunities. Staff are currently working through funding and logistical planning. Abbey Bank expressed interest in funding computers for participants, creating a technology resource that could be reused for future cohorts. Classroom space will be provided at the new Marathon County Job Center at no cost. The goal is to demonstrate measurable success from the first cohort, including positive employment outcomes, wages, and employer satisfaction. Kalish hopes to use these results to build support for expansion into additional counties and generate sufficient revenue to offset anticipated reductions in federal workforce development funding.
12. **Business Services Summary** – Gelhar's Business Services report can be found on pages 29-31 of the meeting packet. The Report includes labor market dynamics and economic health for the north central region of Wisconsin, description of two dislocation and layoff events at Ahlstrom Paper Mill in Mosinee and Blue Thunder Logistics in Weston. Unemployment rates remain stable with a low of 3% in Marathon County and high of 5 and 5.7% in Adams and Vilas respectively. These quarterly Business Services reports will be posted on our new website, when launched later this summer.

13. Workgroup/Program Summaries

- **Q3 Performance** – Heidmann reviewed our WDA6 performance across WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Performance is measured against negotiated state targets, with green indicating targets are exceeded, yellow indicating targets are being met, and red indicating risk of falling short. Detailed state reports allow comparison with other workforce development areas, but our focus remains on local performance. Current results should be viewed as preliminary, as many participants are still completing training, earning credentials, obtaining employment, and meeting program goals. Performance outcomes typically improve by the fourth quarter as more participants complete their programs and outcomes are fully captured. Overall, results remain in progress.
- **Grants Update - WAI 2.0:** With 12 days remaining, the program exceeded its enrollment goal, serving 160 participants against a target of 85. Training Highlights: four (4) participants completed the Auto Collision partnership with WATEA. Twelve (12) graduated from the Massage Therapy cohort at the Wellness School in Stevens Point. Remaining grant funds primarily directed toward CDL training, with 21 CDL enrollments and 4 crane operator/heavy equipment certifications. **FORWD:** Currently 27 participants enrolled, exceeding the goal of 24. Disaster Relief Employment: Expanded to 8 recovery coaches at Three Bridges Recovery Center. **Wisconsin Pathways Grants:** Pathways 4 to close at the end of this year, with final performance tracking and reporting. Pathways 6 currently has 9 participants enrolled toward a goal of 55 by the end of next year.
- **Forward Service Corporation** – In Quarter 3 (January–March), 18 new participants enrolled, bringing total program-year enrollments to 106 and 309 individuals served. 175 participants have entered training, with 88 earning credentials by the end of March. The highest reported hourly wage was \$38.50/hour (RN at Marshfield Clinic), while average wages remained in the \$20/hour range. A planned layoff at Ahlstrom Paper Mill was reduced from over 200 employees to 66 through negotiations. FSC partnered with Ahlstrom and local organizations to host a successful onsite job fair, reaching nearly 100 individuals. FSC has partnered with United Way's Techquity Program to provide free refurbished laptops to eligible individuals without computer access. The program is available through FSC offices across the nine-county region through fall 2026.

14. Partner Reports

- **CWIMA** – Weber submitted a written report included in the meeting packet.
- **WATEA** - Yessa reported they have been awarded a Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant to provide training for entry level automotive technicians. Training begins Sept 2026 through June 2028, in partnership with NAPA Auto Tech. The previous Fast Forward Grant, with Power Quest Technical Institute, successfully trained 140 unique individuals over two years. Fundraising continues for the WATE Transportation Exhibit in partnership with the Children's Imaginarium. WATEA is \$5,000 short of the funding needed to sign the contract and MOU to begin exhibit design. WATEA's annual Golf Outing will be held July 31 at Greenwood Hills Country Club.
- **OSO** – The last **One Stop Operator meeting** held on June 4, 2026, where the OSO budget, request and approval process for Job Fair funds, process for documenting complaints, and compliance with “A Proud Partner of the Job Service network” were reviewed and discussed. The date for the All Staff Training has been set for Tuesday, October 6th. Speaker possibilities include the UWSP Small Business Office or agents from probation and parole. In May, we submitted the MOU to DWD for review. On Tuesday, we received minor edit requests. Plan to resubmit the end of this week. The next OSO meeting will be in September, prior to our next Board meeting.

15. Adjournment - Yessa made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Rupp. Meeting adjourned at 12:16 p.m.