



**West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB) Meeting
Grand Rapids NW Service Center, 215 Straight Ave NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504**

The public may attend in-person or by remote participation via Teams.

[Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 283 353 001 705 6 Passcode: vs6PW6Do

Dial in by phone [+1 616-803-9815,,510909474#](#)

Monday, February 9, 2026 ▪ Meeting 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.)

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Introductions
2. Public Comment – Agenda Items
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes **Action Required**
 - a. October 13, 2025
 - b. December 8, 2025
4. Presentation: Customer Service Survey Update **Information Item**
Sara McCauley, One-Stop Operator (Strategic Policy Consultants)
5. WDB Activities **Information Item**
 - a. Board Member Vacancies
 - b. Board Member Spotlights
6. WDB Committee/Council Updates **Information Item**
 - a. Executive Committee: *Heather Daniel, WDB Chairperson*
 - b. CEAC: *Tonia Castillo, Council Chairperson*
 - c. Legislative Committee: *Jim Fisher, Committee Chairperson*
 - d. Solutions Driven Committee: *Jordan Clark, Committee Chairperson*
 - e. Bev Drake Essential Services Awards Committee: *Mark Bergsma, Committee Chairperson*
7. Success Story: [MOKU](#) **Information Item**
Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions
8. WDB Service Summary: *Angie Barksdale, Chief Operating Officer* **Information Item**
9. Solutions Driven Updates **Information Item**
Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions, Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation
10. Public Comment
11. Other Business
 - a. Recap: National Skills Coalition (NSC): February 4-6 in Washington, D.C.
 - b. Michigan Works! Association (MWA) Advocacy Day: March 11-12 in Lansing, MI
 - c. National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) 2026 Forum: March 23-26 in Las Vegas, NV
 - d. MWA Impact Awards: April 8 in Lansing, MI
12. Adjournment

Next Scheduled Workforce Development Board Meeting: Monday, April 13, 2026



Remaining Meetings:

June 8, 2026
October 12, 2026
December 7, 2026

Executive Committee

March 9, 2026
May 11, 2026
September 21, 2026
November 9, 2026 (if needed)

Solutions Driven Committee

TBD

Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC)

January 23, 2026
May 15, 2026
September 25, 2026

Legislative Committee

April 16, 2026
July 16, 2026
October 15, 2026
November 17, 2026 (if needed)



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Grand Rapids NW Service Center ▪ 215 Straight Ave NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504**

The public may attend in-person or by remote participation via Teams.

[Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 281 488 189 704 Passcode: oXCqvg

[+1 616-803-9815,,823681155#](#) Phone conference ID: 823 681 155#

Monday, October 13, 2025 ▪ 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Lunch at 11:30 a.m.)

MINUTES

Workforce Board Members Present: Heather Daniel (Chairperson), Shana Washington (virtual), Emily Babson, Nora Balgoyen (virtual), Bradley Barrick (virtual), Ryan Bennett, Mark Bergsma, Tonia Castillo, Jordan Clark, Cathy Cronick, Paul David (virtual), Maria Dennison, Jay Dunwell (virtual), Jan Harrington-Davis (virtual), Nate Henschel, Jon Hofman, TaRita Johnson, Nick Kacher, Kelly Kroll, Lindsay Maunz, Daniel Rinsema-Sybenga, Jen Schottke, Michelle Seigo, Samantha Semrau, Daniel TenHoopen, Sara Whisler (virtual)

Workforce Board Members Absent: Shana Washington, Bryce Butler, Jim Fisher, Jennifer Heinzman

Staff Present (physical location or virtually): Jacob Maas, Angie Barksdale, Kirsti Jones, Janette Monroe, Jeff Dornbos (virtual), Tasha Evans, Amy Lebednick, Chad Patton, Malinda Powers (virtual), Tawanna Wright (virtual), Carol Distel, Paul Sischo, Brad Simms

Guests/Public Present: Donata Kidd (DHHS), John VanElst (GRCC), Emily Quiggle (BCCEDA virtual), Ben Zorn (Koeze), Sarah Garner (NN Inc), Charlotte Byndas (Corewell Health)

1. Call to Order at 12:05 p.m. Madam Chairperson, Heather Daniel.

2. Public Comment- None.

3. Approval of June 9, 2025 Minutes

Action Required

Motion – Mark Bergsma

Second – Daniel TenHoopen

Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried

4. **[Presentations: Industry Talent Councils](#)** (CLICK TO VIEW)

Information Item

- a. **Agribusiness Talent Council:** Carol Distel, Industry Council Lead for the Agribusiness Talent Council, outlined four main strategies for the council which include the following: Promote, Connect to Resources, Train and Recruit & Retain. Carol reported that over the past year, the council completed eight projects, connecting over 11,700 students to agribusiness careers and training 346 workers. Carol introduced Ben Zorn at Koeze. Ben described the development of the council's scholarship program, which awarded three scholarships to students pursuing agribusiness careers.
- b. **Discover Manufacturing:** Paul Sischo, Industry Council Lead, highlighted Discover Manufacturing's focus on industry promotion, workforce training, and sharing best practices. Paul also reported that the council's manufacturing week, now a 6-week event, has an increase in scheduled tours, which will connect educators and businesses. Paul introduced Sarah Garner from NN Inc. Sarah reported that since 2018, over \$64,000 in scholarships has been awarded.
- c. **West Michigan Health Careers Council:** Brad Simms, Industry Council Lead, and Charlotte Byndas, with Corewell Health discussed the council's strategies, including community connection, funding

models, education and training, and retention. They highlighted the Health Careers Expo, which has seen significant growth in participation with expansion into rural areas.

5. WMW WDB Activities

- a. Election of WDB Officers: **Action Required**
 Janette Monroe, Executive Assistant, reviewed that WMW recently collected nominations from WDB members for the offices of WDB Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for the term dates of November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2027. Heather Daniel is being presented as the only nominee for Chairperson and Shana Washington, the only nominee for Vice-Chairperson. Both nominees have indicated that they are willing and able to serve for a second term. Each nominee's bio can be reviewed by clicking the hyperlink in the board packet. Janette called for any additional nominations on the floor for the Chairperson twice. Hearing none, Janette closed the nominations for Chairperson, with Heather Daniel being the only nominated candidate for Chairperson. Janette further requested additional nominations for Vice-Chairperson twice. After hearing none, Janette closed nominations for Vice-Chairperson. Because there were no additional nominees, Janette reported that a ballot was not needed and requested a motion for approval of the candidates.
Motion – Jon Hofman moved to close nominations and to approve Heather Daniel to serve as Chairperson and Shana Washington to serve as Vice-Chairperson of the WDB, for the term of office November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2027.
Second – Mark Bergsma
Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried
- b. Member Term of Office: November 1, 2024 – October 2026: **Action Required**
 Janette Monroe, Executive Assistant, reported that as of August 2025, the WDB has two (2) vacant seats for the term of office through October 31, 2026. In April 2025, Mark Thomas from Northview Public Schools retired and resigned from his service on the WDB. Gregory King from Greater Muskegon Economic Development (GMED) has also resigned from the WDB as he will be transitioning to a new employer outside of the WMW region. WMW has been notified that Trevor Friedeberg, the new GMED CEO, intends to apply to join the board. Although the Community Based Organization seat remains vacant, the full slate of the WDB will remain in compliance with regulations. Janette requested approval from the board to support the slate for the term of office through October 31, 2026. Formal appointments will be requested at the ACSET Governing Board meeting.
Motion – Mark Bergsma
Second – Jordan Clark
Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried
- c. Member Term of Office: November 1, 2025 – October 2027: **Action Required**
 Janette Monroe, Executive Assistant, reported that as of August 2025, the WDB has seventeen (17) current members whose terms will expire on October 31, 2025. Three of those board members (Lisa Marie Barkel-Williams, Jennifer Heinzman and Michelle Seigo) have notified WMW that they will not be seeking reappointment for another term. To fill the vacancies left by Jennifer Heinzman and Michelle Seigo, we have received applications from Emily Quiggle from Barry County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Alliance, and Donata Kidd from MI Department of Health and Human Services in Muskegon County. Additionally, the seat previously held by the President of Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) remains vacant. John VanElst, Dean of Workforce Development at GRCC has been recommended by the Interim President to fill this position. The Executive Committee will continue to work on filling the vacant seats on the WDB. Janette requested approval from the board to support the slate of members for the term of office November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2027. Formal appointments will be requested at the ACSET Governing Board meeting.
Motion – Mark Bergsma
Second – Samantha Semrau

Item Approved by Vote – Motion carriedd. 2026 Meeting Schedules:

Janette Monroe reported that the Executive Committee of the WDB met and discussed the meeting calendars for 2026 and requested approval of proposed 2026 meeting schedule.

Motion – Mark Bergsma

Second – Tonia Castillo

Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried

e. Board Spotlights:

WDB Members Samantha Semrau and Daniel TenHoopen shared the following board member spotlight information with the board: 1.) Name, title, organization; 2.) Years of Service on the WDB/Committee/Councils; and 3.) An explanation about how they or their organization partner with or contribute to West Michigan Works!. Each member spotlight will also be highlighted on social media and the WMW blog.

6. Policy Approval: Draft WMW 16-03c11L Welfare Reform Supportive Services **Action Required**
Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, reported the policy has been updated to remove fixed funding caps and to instead reference State guidance directly. Due to frequent changes to State guidance over time, Tasha further explained that aligning WMW's internal policy in this way will ensure greater consistency, flexibility, and compliance across programs. The proposed updates keep program delivery current with State requirements while reducing the need for frequent revisions. Discussion took place and staff answered board members' questions.
Motion – Jon Hofman
Second – Nate Henschel
Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried
7. Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) Member Approvals **Action Required**
Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation, reported that the CEAC is seeking approval of Joe Lienesch with Kent ISD and Joe Matthews from Gentex Corporation to join the CEAC. The term of office beginning July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027. Discussion took place and staff answered board members' questions.
Motion – Daniel TenHoopen
Second – Jen Schottke
Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried
8. WMW WDB Subcommittee Updates **Information Item**
- a. Executive Leadership and Strategic Engagement Committee (Executive Committee):
Heather Daniel, reported that the committee met on September 15 and reviewed today's WDB meeting agenda, terms of office, 2026 meeting schedules, appointment of a legislative committee member, recap of the MWA Annual Conference, and the WMW 10-Year Anniversary event which was held on October 1. Heather thanked those that were able to join the celebratory event.
- b. Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC): Tonia Castillo, WDB Member and CEAC Chair, reported that the council met on September 26, 2025. Tonia shared that the council discussed updates on the following: regional grants, adult education, MiSTEM, CTE, Michigan Works!, and CEAC metrics. The next meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2026.
- c. Legislative Committee: Jacob Maas, Chief Executive Officer, provided an update on behalf of Jim Fisher, WDB Member and Committee Chair. Jacob reported that when the committee last met on July 15, 2025, the members discussed State & Federal updates, legislative visits and tours, and the potential appointment of Andy Johnston from the Grand Rapids Chamber to the committee. The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025.

- d. Solutions Driven Committee: Jordan Clark, WDB Member and Committee Chair, provided a brief update on the upcoming committee meeting scheduled for next Friday, October 24, 2025 . The primary discussion topic will focus on resources and support for new Americans, aiming to identify strategies and assistance that can help individuals integrate successfully into the workforce. Jordan invited board members to join the session as a guest, noting that it will be a short, one-hour Teams call and encouraged anyone interested in the topic to participate.
- e. Bev Drake Essential Services Awards: Mark Bergsma, WDB Member and Committee Chair, reported that the Essential Service Award, named in honor of Bev Drake, whom was a dedicated advocate for frontline workers during her 30+-year tenure, continues to recognize individuals in essential roles who are critical to sustaining the economy. This award is presented annually at the GR Economic Club in late winter or early spring and serves as a meaningful celebration of these workers' contributions. Nominations for this year are currently being scored, with results expected in the coming weeks. The program has been in place for approximately ten years across all seven counties served by West Michigan Works, reinforcing its legacy of honoring dedication and hard work.

- 9. Success Story **Information Item**
Chad Patton reviewed a success story for Summer Youth Career Readiness program, which was provided in the board packet. The full story can be viewed online here: [Retention Solutions Network](#)
- 10. WDB Service Summary **Information Item**
Angie Barksdale, Chief Operating Officer, shared the Service Summary for October 2024 through August 30, 2025, with board members. Angie noted that service center traffic remains consistently higher than last year and is expected to surpass 60,000 individuals served by year-end. Employer services also continue to trend slightly upward. However, training completions by industry are down, primarily due to reduced availability of state and federal scholarship funds, a trend anticipated to persist into the next year. Aside from these areas, other metrics remain stable and aligned with expectations.
- 11. Solutions Driven Updates **Information Item**
Summaries of each initiative highlighted under solutions-driven updates include a notation identifying its alignment with strategic plan goals. These "alignment indicators" are ***Diversity and Inclusion, Enhanced Relationships, and Pipeline Development.***
Grant Updates:
 - a. Make Michigan Home: Additional information provided is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
 - b. FutureTech Careers Program (formally known as Strengthening Community Colleges Grant 4 (SCC4)): Additional information provided in board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
 - c. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeships: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
 - d. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
 - e. Michigan Career Opportunity Academies for Community Health (MiCOACH): Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, reported that this 3-year grant is slated to end in December. The academy just concluded its third cohort, with 12 individuals completing the training and 11 completing the Foundations of Behavioral Health portion. Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
 - f. The Michigan Citizen Reentry Initiative (MiCRI): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***
 - g. Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

- h. Michigan Skilled Immigration Integration Program (MISIIP): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Diversity and Inclusion, Pipeline Development***
- i. Grand Rapids Community College One Workforce Grant: Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation reported that this grant will be closing out in December. Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- j. Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES) Expansion: Tasha Evans reported that this grant has been extended through September 30, 2026. Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***
- k. MDARD Specialty Crop Grant: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- l. Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF):
Fiscal Year 2025: Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions reported approximately a 40% reduction in GPTF.

- Cycle 1: In total, 322 applications were submitted to the state. 175 employers received a total of \$11.2M. Training may occur January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.
- Cycle 2: In total, 222 applications were submitted to the state. 49 employers received a total of \$10.8M. Training may occur July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.
- Employer Led Collaborative (ELCs – formerly Industry Led Collaboratives): Applications are open for Employer-Led Collaboratives, which must include two or more employers with shared training needs. The application period opened on March 24, 2025, and will remain open until MWAs are notified that ELC funding has been exhausted. Amy noted that WMW has had two ELCs awarded recently, with 12 employers across both ELCs for a total of \$77,844.

Fiscal Year 2026: Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions, reported approximately a 40% reduction in GPTF.

A full list of grant recipients statewide is available online at Michigan.gov/TalentFund. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

- m. Sector Strategies Employer Led Collaborative (SS ELC): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- n. State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) 2025: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- o. Regional Innovation Project (RIP) Grant: Amy Lebednick reported that WMW was awarded a joint collaborative initiative involving West Michigan Works!, Capital Area Michigan Works!, Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation, and Oakland County Michigan Works!. The grant, totaling \$450,000, aims to fund career-led navigation events focused on manufacturing, healthcare, and technology across these four regions. West Michigan Works! will receive \$120,000 of the total funding to implement its portion of the project. The effort is designed to strengthen regional partnerships and provide targeted career exploration opportunities for job seekers in high-demand industries. Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Industry Talent Council Initiatives: Amy Lebednick reported that there are a variety of ways to stay connected to the innovative work taking place under each of the WMW Industry Talent Councils (ITC). ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Multi-Industry Initiatives: Amy reviewed some of the multi-industry initiatives taking place.

- **Lunch & Learn** – Amy Lebednick reported that the Industry Talent Councils continue to collaborate on hosting Lunch and Learn sessions. The most recent event was held in August,

and planning is underway for another session focused on childcare resources available to employers and job seekers. These sessions aim to share best practices and provide practical solutions to workforce challenges.

- **Workplace Well-Being Summit/Hope Certification** – Amy Lebednick reported that the Workplace Well-Being Summit, a long-planned initiative, is scheduled for October 16 at the Pine Rest Postma Center. Registration closed with approximately 100 attendees confirmed. The summit will bring together employers and council members to discuss strategies for improving workplace wellness and employee engagement.

- a. **Agribusiness Talent Council of West Michigan (ATC) Mission: The Agribusiness Talent Council is an employer-led collaborative that seeks to expand the talent pool by promoting career pathways and opportunities in West Michigan agribusiness industry.**

Amy Lebednick reported that the Agribusiness Talent Council recently secured a \$1,000 grant from the American Farm Bureau Foundation. These funds will support the council's Spotlight on Ag Readers (SOAR) program, set to launch in March 2026. Additionally, the council continues to expand outreach efforts, including spotlight programs for K–5 students and partnerships with county farm bureaus to promote careers in agribusiness.

- b. **Construction Careers Council (CCC) Mission: The Construction Careers Council creates a bright future for West Michigan's construction industry by building a diverse and qualified workforce.** Additional information is provided in the board packet.
- c. **Discover Manufacturing (DM) Mission: We Exist to Inspire and Expand Manufacturing Talent in West Michigan.** Additional information is provided in the board packet.
- d. **Explore Hospitality: We elevate one of West Michigan's leading employment sectors by developing careers, cultivating talent, and promoting a thriving, dynamic hospitality industry.** Amy Lebednick reported that the Explore Hospitality Talent Council is convening strategy workgroups to plan events for the upcoming year. The workgroups will focus on developing initiatives that strengthen the hospitality workforce pipeline and improve retention. The council also unveiled its new logo at the last meeting, signaling a refreshed approach to branding and engagement. Additional information is provided in the board packet.
- e. **West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC) Mission: The purpose of WMHCC is to provide an employer-led collaborative council of healthcare employers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan's healthcare talent needs.** Additional information is provided in the board packet.
- f. **West Michigan Tech Talent (WMTT) Mission: West Michigan Tech Talent looks to engage employers of Information Technology professionals with best practices, resources and a community to grow, develop, recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive world class IT workforce in West Michigan.** Amy Lebednick reported that the West Michigan Tech Talent is preparing to roll out the next year of its {Mi}Code experience, modeled after the Hour of Code program. With Hour of Code shifting toward AI-focused curriculum, {Mi}Code will incorporate similar elements while maintaining its credential-based learning system. This shift aims to keep programming aligned with emerging technology trends. Additional information is provided in the board packet.

Programs

- a. **West Michigan Works! Registered Apprenticeship Programs (WMW RAP):**
Amy Lebednick reported that West Michigan Works! recently announced its 10th cohort of Medical Assistant Registered Apprentices, partnering with three major hospital systems in the region, which will begin in January 2026. Interest in the program remains strong, with 800 applications received for only 20 available spots, marking the highest number of applicants since the program began. This initiative continues to address healthcare workforce shortages by creating structured career pathways and offering earn-and-learn opportunities for individuals seeking to enter the healthcare sector.

In addition, Amy reported West Michigan Works! will host a **Race to Talent** event on **October 24th** at the Kent ISD Conference Center. The event will focus on the role of **pre-apprenticeships** in addressing workforce shortages and creating career pathways for students and job seekers. It aims to engage employers and educators in discussions about how pre-apprenticeship programs can strengthen talent pipelines and support long-term workforce development. Interested participants were invited to request an official invitation to attend. Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**

- b. Ascend Youth Programming: Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**
- c. MiCareerQuest: Chad provided an update on MiCareerQuest, confirming that the steering committee approved focusing on 8th through 10th graders for the upcoming event. Exhibitor registration will open on December 1, 2025, and businesses are encouraged to participate. The event will take place at the DeVos Place Convention Center on May 20, 2026, and organizers will also reach out to secure sponsorships. Additionally, there will be opportunities for volunteers and VIP guests, with more details to follow as the event approaches. **Pipeline Development**
- d. Elevate: Chad shared updates on Elevate, an expansion of the former Rise Up model, which focuses on outside-in recruitment and inside-up career development. Two new employers—Kent County and Goodwill of Greater Grand Rapids—have joined the group. The team also participated in the Talent Learning Lab, hosted by The Right Place, which emphasized skills-based strategies for hiring, promotion, and retention. Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**
- e. Retention Solutions Network (RSN): Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion**
- f. Gain Employment. Maintain Support. (GEMS) formally known as Learn, Earn and Provide (LEAP) Pilot: Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**

Initiatives

- a. West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership (E2P): Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development**

12. Other Business

- a. Budget Updates: Jacob Maas, reviewed the memo in the board packet noting that this year's state budget faced a \$1.5 billion revenue shortfall, leading to major cuts for workforce programs. The Going PRO Talent Fund dropped by about 40% to \$31.8 million and shifted to a one-time funding model, creating uncertainty for future cycles. No new funding was allocated for apprenticeships or the Barrier Removal Employment Success Program (BRES), despite earlier proposals. A small \$5 million statewide allocation will support industry-led collaboratives, apprenticeships, support services and related initiatives, but it will be spread thin across regions. Jacob noted it's possible for a supplemental budget later this year. West Michigan Works! plans to look for new revenue sources to sustain workforce programs, given state budget reductions. This includes exploring foundation funding opportunities at both local and statewide levels and identifying other potential funding streams that align with workforce development initiatives.

13. Public Comment: Jacob Maas thanked Michelle Seigo for her service on the WDB as Director for DHHS Ionia-Montcalm counties, noting her long-term commitment and leadership. Michelle is stepping down after 10 years of service. Jacob also congratulated TaRita Johnson for completing her doctorate program. Lastly, Jacob expressed his appreciation to Heather Daniel, current board Chairperson, for her leadership and contributions, especially during recent events.

14. Adjournment at 1:25 p.m. by Madam Chairperson, Heather Daniel.

Recorded by: _____ Received by: _____



2025 Annual Meeting
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park (Huizenga Grand Room South)
1000 East Beltline NE ▪ Grand Rapids, MI 49525
Monday, December 8, 2025 ▪ Meeting 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
(Networking Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.)

MINUTES

Workforce Development Board (WDB) Members Present: Heather Daniel (Chairperson) Shana Washington (Vice-Chairperson), Emily Babson, Nora Balgoyen, Dr. Bradley Barrick, Ryan Bennett, Mark Bergsma, Tonia Castillo, Jordan Clark, Maria Dennison, Jay Dunwell, Jim Fisher, Trevor Friedeberg, Nate Henschel, Jon Hofman, Dr. TaRita Johnson, Nick Kacher, Donata Kidd, Kelly Kroll, Lindsay Maunz, Emily Quiggle, Jen Schottke, Samantha Semrau, Dan TenHoopen, John VanElst, Sara Whisler

WDB Members Absent: Bryce Butler, Cathy Cronick, Paul David, Jan Harrington-Davis, Dan Rinsema-Sybenga

Governing Board (GB) Members Present: AliciaMarie Belchak, Kim Cyr, Mark De Young, Gale Dugan, Nancy Morales, Joe Moss, Kelsey Perdue

GB Members Absent: Larry Tiejema (Chairperson), Matt Kallman (Vice-Chairperson), Nathan Alexander, Dave Hatfield, Melissa LaGrand, Darrell Paige, Doug Zylstra

Staff Present: Jacob Maas, Angie Barksdale, Kirsti Jones, Olivia Blomstrom, Kyle Brooky, Marlene Brostrom, Karrie Brown, Brittany Chase, Carol Distel, Jeffrey Dornbos, Chrissy Douglas, Mark Dumouchelle, Sadiq Edo Abdi, Tasha Evans, Liz Gensler, Amy Graham, Brittany Gray, Carla Hatton, Rosa Hernandez, Erin Kenny, Amy Lebednick, Andrika Lyons, Trevor Mier, Janette Monroe, Chad Patton, Joshua Perkins, Malinda Powers, Juan Rosario, Larry Sanders, Bradley Sims, Paul Sischo, Richelle Smith, Abby Stalker, Jennifer Summers, Kelly Tang, Tawanna Wright

Guests/Public Present: Congresswoman Hillary Scholten, William Campbell (Congressman John Moolenaar's Office), Dr. Werner Absenger, Kate Baumgardner, John Boos, Qi'Shaun Coyle, Monk Duncan, Holly Engelberg, Wendy Falb, Rich Franklin, Ryan Graham, Brian Gruber, Bill Guest, Krista Harmon, Jason Heist, Ryan Hundt, Gene Hynde, Win Irwin, Peter Kalogiros, Kimm Karrip, Carol Kendra, Marcus Little, Fladiana Lopez, Rodd Lowell, Steve Martin, Jane Newton, Michael O'Connor, Charlie Peck, Lisa Radak, Max Rydell, Holly Schroeder, Michelle Seigo, Steve Smith, Tonya Spencer, Kristen Tjalsma, Ryan Virsik, Josh Volk, Kevin Vos, Patricia Walstra, Kelly Wandel, Chad Whitton, Chauncy Williams

1. Call to Order at 12:04 p.m. by West Michigan Works! Workforce Development Board Chair, Heather Daniel.

2. Public Comment- None

3. **2025 Year in Review and Recognitions**

Information Item

Heather Daniel, WDB Chairperson welcomed attendees and noted West Michigan Works!' 10th anniversary, highlighting services provided to more than 500,000 job seekers and 10,000 businesses over the past decade. To begin the 2025 year in review, Heather introduced U.S. Congresswoman Hillary Scholten to the stage. U.S. Rep. Scholten expressed federal support for workforce development and congratulated the award recipients.

Following U.S Rep Scholten, Heather introduced Angie Barksdale, Chief Operating Officer of West Michigan Works! to the stage. Angie Barksdale reported that in past years' WMW always chose a word to define the year. But for 2025 WMW selected a quote from Amelia Earhart: *"The most difficult thing is the decision to act; the rest is merely tenacity."* She emphasized partnerships and action in advancing regional workforce efforts.

Angie also reviewed key program updates which included the following: (1) Business Solutions served 3,361 employers, filled 9,094 jobs, and invested over \$15M through the Going Pro Talent Fund (GPTF); (2) apprenticeships participation reached 205 individuals with \$444,833 invested; and (3) the Industry Talent Councils connected with nearly 19,924 students, 797 educators, and over 400 employers. Angie further noted that the Talent Solutions department assisted 57,737 job seekers, removed over 8,531 barriers, and invested \$14M in training dollars. The Development and Innovation department, including the Ascend program, served 471 youth, resulting in 159 work experiences and 115 credentials. The MiCareerQuest event hosted 8,500 students from 89 schools with 104 employers to explore over 280 careers. Angie then introduced Jacob Maas, Chief Executive Officer of West Michigan Works! to the stage.

4. Employer of the Year Recognition

Jacob Maas recognized Bradford White as the 2025 Employer of the Year for its strong commitment to developing talent and supporting meaningful career opportunities across West Michigan. Kelly Kroll, HR Business Partner accepted the award on the company's behalf.

5. Partner of the Year Recognition

Jacob Maas recognized the Literacy Center of West Michigan as the 2025 Partner of the Year, noting the organization's longstanding commitment to strengthening the region's talent pipeline and expanding opportunities for adult learners. Jacob highlighted the Literacy Center's nearly 40 years of service supporting individuals in building critical reading, language, and learning skills, as well as its close collaboration with West Michigan Works! through co-enrollment, referrals, hiring events, and services for English learners and immigrant professionals. Wendy Falb, Executive Director of the Literacy Center, accepted the award on the company's behalf.

6. 2025 Impact Award Recognition

Jacob Maas reported that with the tens of thousands of individuals served through our career and training services, WMW continues to amass countless success stories that demonstrate the profound impact of the work being done in West Michigan. Jacob explained that West Michigan Works! submits annual nominations for the Michigan Works! Association Impact Awards, which recognizes outstanding contributions to workforce development, with the 2026 ceremony scheduled for April. Jacob presented the award to Hilite International for helping fuel the regional economy through job creation and talent development, followed by the showing of the award video. John Boos accepted the award on the company's behalf.

7. Looking Ahead

Jacob Maas outlined key issues shaping the year ahead, including national workforce challenges, federal advocacy efforts, and the overdue reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), noting that rising costs and stalled legislation continue to strain essential workforce programs. Jacob emphasized that significant budget reductions in 2025, such as a nearly 40% cut to the Going Pro Talent Fund (GPTF) and even elimination of other programs, have created instability for both businesses and job seekers, making sustained advocacy critical as planning begins for the 2026 budget cycle and the 2027 administration transitions. Jacob also highlighted economic shifts and the accelerating impacts of AI, pointing to an increase in plant closures and consolidations across the region. Jacob encouraged attendees to review the annual report using the QR code on the meeting agenda and thanked partners, staff, and those in room for their continued engagement and support. Jacob introduced Shana Washington, WDB Vice-Chairperson, to the stage.

8. Shana Washington provided closing remarks, noting that West Michigan Works! will continue its programs, councils, and committee efforts in 2026 while building relationships in the legislature to support funding, local control, and program continuity. Shana emphasized the need for the incoming administration to recognize the value of a fully funded budget and thanked board members, elected officials, and staff.

9. Shana Washington adjourned the meeting at 12:44 p.m.

Recorded by: _____

Received by: _____

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Area Community Services
Employment & Training Council
215 Straight Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
(616) 336-4100

SERVICE CENTERS

Allegan County

Allegan Service Center
3255 122nd Ave
Allegan, MI 49010
(269) 686-5079

Barry County

Hastings Service Center
130 E State St
Hastings, MI 49058
(616) 649-9850

Ionia County

Ionia Service Center
603 W Adams St
Ionia, MI 48846
(616) 389-8525

Kent County

Grand Rapids NW Service Center
215 Straight Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
(616) 336-4460

Grand Rapids SE Service Center
121 Martin Luther King Jr St SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
(616) 336-4040

Rockford Service Center
10075 Northland Dr NE
Rockford, MI 49341
(616) 228-6724

Montcalm County

Greenville Service Center
114 S Greenville W Dr
Greenville, MI 48838
(616) 754-3611

Muskegon County

Muskegon Service Center
316 Morris Ave
Muskegon, MI 49440
(231) 724-6381

Ottawa County

Holland Service Center
12331 James St, Suite 130
Holland, MI 49424
(616) 396-2154

West Michigan Works! is a division of ACSET, an equal opportunity employer/program and a proud partner of the American Job Center network. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. West Michigan Works! is supported by state and federal funds; more details at westmiworks.org/about. TTY 711

MEMORANDUM

TO: West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB)
FROM: WMW Staff
DATE: February 9, 2026
RE: WMW Member Vacancies

Background

Currently, West Michigan Works! Workforce Development Board has a few vacancies on the board as listed below. Most recently, WMW was notified that Cathy Cronick who has served on the WDB for the past ten years and in Ottawa County prior to regionalization, is retiring. Cathy has made a candidate recommendation and staff will work with the Executive Committee on filling this seat.

Term of Office: November 1, 2024 through October 31, 2026
Community Based Organization (1): vacancy
Vocational Rehabilitation (1): vacancy

Term of Office: November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2027
Business/Private Sector (1): vacancy (preferably Ionia/Montcalm Counties)

Interested applicants can complete an applications can be submitted here: <https://www.westmiworks.org/about-us/leadership/workforce-development-board-application/>.

As a reminder, those members whose office terms expire this year, we will be accepting applications beginning in June.



BEV DRAKE
ESSENTIAL SERVICE AWARDS
 Commitment • Integrity • Passion

2025-26 Essential Service Awards Overview

The Bev Drake Essential Service Awards, established by the West Michigan Works! Workforce Development Board, recognize frontline employees whose work strengthens our communities and regional economy.

This year, 18 individuals from across West Michigan Works!' seven-county region were nominated by employers and community members, with six award recipients selected by West Michigan Works!' Executive Leadership and Strategic Engagement Committees.

Thank you to everyone who helped spread the word and submit nominations. We encourage you to explore our recent social media posts to congratulate this year's winners and follow along for a recap of the February awards event.

Awardees:

- Melissa Thatcher, Paraprofessional, Hackley Public Library, Muskegon County
- Dan Vandermarkt, Driver, Health Care Associates Transport (HCAT), Kent County
- Leemon Johncock, Lead Cook, Bay Pointe Inn, Barry County
- Grace Clark, Operations Specialist, STEM Greenhouse, Kent County
- Paula Holm, Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Optalis Health and Rehabilitation – Whitehall, Muskegon County
- Cole Marschall, Assistant Project Superintendent, Owen-Aimes-Kimball Co., Kent County

Timeline

- Nomination period ended September 30
- Awards Committee Scoring, October 3 - 17
- On-site celebrations, November 14-25
- Awards ceremony at The Economic Club of Grand Rapids, February 23, 2026

Subcommittee

Adam Russo, COM 616

Mark Bergsma, BHS Insurance

Jon Hofman, Holland Board of Public Works

Emily Babson, Plascore

Malinda Powers, West Michigan Works!

Brooke Thomas, West Michigan Works!

WEST MICHIGAN EMPLOYERS SECURE \$6.4M TO TRAIN AND ADVANCE WORKFORCE



West Michigan Works! announced that 100 employers across the region have been awarded \$6,417,692.49 in Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) training dollars for Cycle 1 2026. This is 26% of the statewide allocation and 22% of the number of total awards.

The grants will help train, develop and retain more than 2,968 workers, including 880 new hires, 778 apprentices, and 1,310 incumbent workers. An additional nine businesses have pending awards totaling \$767,535.

The awards will provide critical training resources across various industries, including agribusiness, healthcare, manufacturing and construction, which also includes mobility, energy and infrastructure.

In total, 55 manufacturing companies received awards, alongside 31 construction firms, 11 healthcare organizations, one tech company, and two hospitality businesses.

Geographically, the awards impact businesses across the region, with Kent County having 35 recipients, followed by Ottawa County with 26. Allegan County has 11, while Muskegon, Ionia and Montcalm counties each have four businesses that are benefiting. Additionally, 16 awardees represent businesses with site locations both inside and outside of our seven-county region who will work with West Michigan Works! for all locations awarded.

More than 840 companies expressed interest in the GPTF. West Michigan Works! business solutions representatives worked directly with employers to submit 336 individual applications on their behalf.

“We are proud to support the State of Michigan’s Going PRO Talent Fund, which brings crucial training dollars to help businesses across West Michigan invest in their workforce, equipping employees with the skills to grow their careers and achieve long-term success,” said Jacob Maas, chief executive officer, West Michigan Works!. “The Going PRO Talent Fund empowers both new hires and current employees to build in-demand skills, while helping employers of all sizes remain competitive through skilled trades, technical skills, and leadership training.”

One of the organizations benefiting from a 2024 award is MOKA Corporation, a Muskegon-based nonprofit serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Muskegon, Ottawa, Kent and Allegan counties.

Through a Going PRO Talent Fund award and a partnership with Davenport University, MOKA team members enrolled both new and experienced supervisors in the Certificate of Management program to build practical leadership skills and reduce turnover. The course provided essential tools for managing people, including strategies for communication, conflict resolution, motivation, and team building.



When Lowanda Hogg was promoted to the role of Home Supervisor at MOKA’s Emma Court home, she quickly realized that leadership would demand more than just a strong work ethic; it would require new skills and fresh tools. Like many employees promoted from within, Hogg saw the Certificate of Management course as an opportunity to build confidence and become a more effective team leader.

The training helped her approach challenges collaboratively and empowered her team, leading to stronger communication and accountability across shifts.

One tool that stood out to Lowanda was the Fishbone Method, which she used to resolve an ongoing team conflict over cleaning duties. By involving the team in a root-cause analysis, she helped them co-create a new schedule and accountability system.

“Instead of just hitting them with policy, I wanted to get their input and work through it together,” Hogg said. “They talk to each other now across shifts. They hold each other accountable. It’s made my job lighter and they love it.”

MOKA Supervisor of Community Supports, Jenny Shumard, enrolled in the same cohort, driven by a desire to grow in her role and better support her team. Shumard said learning the DiSC behavioral profile helped her better understand team communication styles.

“It’s important to learn how people think and communicate outside of yourself,” she said. “That’s a huge part of working with people.”

The Going PRO Talent Fund provides competitive awards to employers to support training, development, and retention of current and newly hired employees. Training must lead to a transferrable or industry-recognized credential and take place between January 1 and December 31, 2026.

Cycle 2 of the 2026 GPTF is expected to open in spring 2026. Employers interested in applying are encouraged to work with a Business Solutions Representative at West Michigan Works!. More information is available at our dedicated Going PRO Talent Fund page below.

Service Summary Explanation

October 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

Management Observations and Highlights

- *Service Center Traffic:* The higher traffic reported in November 2024 reflects a change in how activity was recorded rather than an increase in in-person visits. During that time, frontline staff logged a higher number of phone calls and other general inquiries, including questions about hours of operation and UIA communication. In November 2025, reported traffic declined due to UIA being temporarily closed during the second week of the month to complete system updates. As a result, some individuals who typically would have been referred in November were instead referred in December.
- *Businesses Served:* The business solutions team consistently aids a higher number of returning businesses compared to new businesses each month. We persistently seek opportunities to engage with new businesses while prioritizing quality service for existing customers. This quarter we remained consistent with returning businesses we have served, and we noticed an increase in new businesses introduced to West Michigan Works! Through Going PRO Talent Fund inquiries.
- *Jobs Filled by Industry:* Jobs filled numbers saw an increase this quarter in October particularly within the Manufacturing and Healthcare industries. Some of this increase is from businesses that were awarded Ging PRO FY25 Cycle 2 were closing out their awards to permit them to apply for FY26 Cycle 1.
- *Training by Industry:* Nursing and transportation related training remain highly sought after classroom training.
- *Going Pro Talent Fund:* Total number of trainings completed *and* paid out each month. Training is not always paid out the same month the training was completed due to delays in businesses reporting and documentation collection. Data is reflective of multiple fiscal years and/or cycles within a fiscal year. Current billing includes training authorized to take place under the FY25 Cycle 1 and 2, and FY25 Employer-Led Collaborative funding. Due to program changes at the state level, beginning with FY25 Cycle 1, business reimbursement will be processed when all training on the approved training plan has concluded. This will result in the bulk of completions being recorded closer to the end of the training period for any given cycle.
- *Hiring Events:* During this quarter, hiring events were scheduled based on business demand for individual hiring events or Employer of The Day events. Since converting back to in person hiring events in March of 2025, we are seeing more businesses engage with our team to utilize space at the Service Centers to meet with job seekers.
- *Retention Solutions Network:* A new member business, a healthcare provider, joined the Retention Solutions Network on October 1. That brought the total shares purchased to 24. The numbers of employees served, barriers addressed, and barriers successfully resolved have increased proportionally.
- *WorkReady Certificates Earned:* After rolling out a new WorkReady process in the summer of 2025, we continue to assess and actively make updates for continuous improvement, including marketing, job seeker access and community partner outreach. These updates will impact the number of individuals earning certificates.



Service Summary Oct. 1, 2025 to Dec. 31, 2025

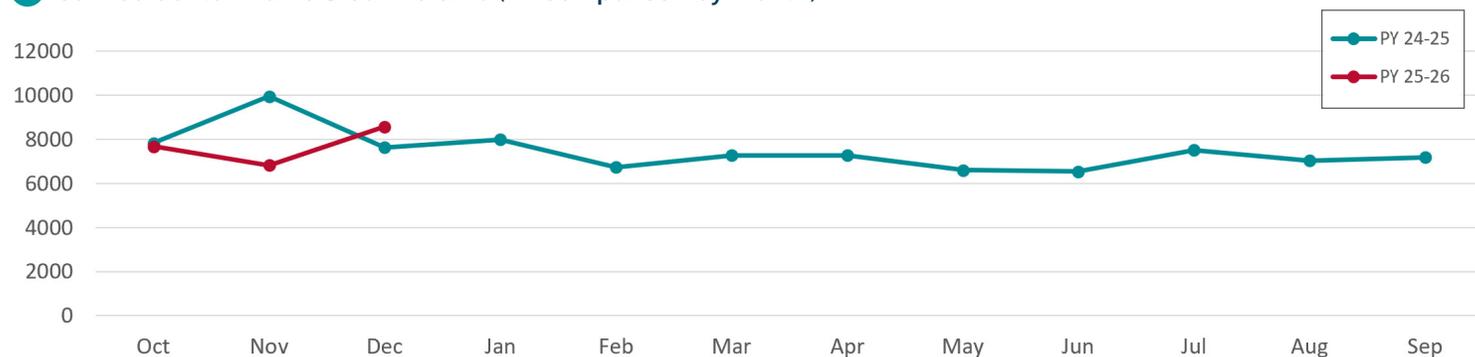
The data shown on this Service Summary indicates the organization's progress toward fulfilling of its services-based strategic priorities, as developed in the 2020 Strategic Plan: Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development and Diversity and Inclusion. Each indicator is a reflection of the work conducted on an operational level to ensure robust service delivery and strategic plan alignment.

Additional information and explanation about the data presented are included the narrative.

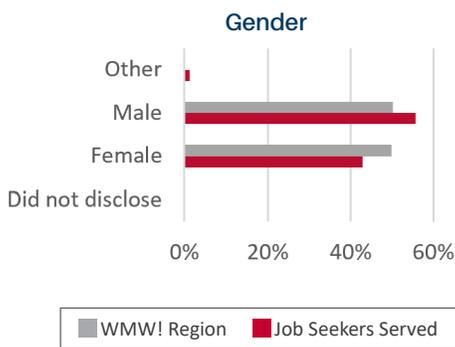
Strategic Plan Alignment

- Enhanced Relationships
- Pipeline Development
- Diversity and Inclusion

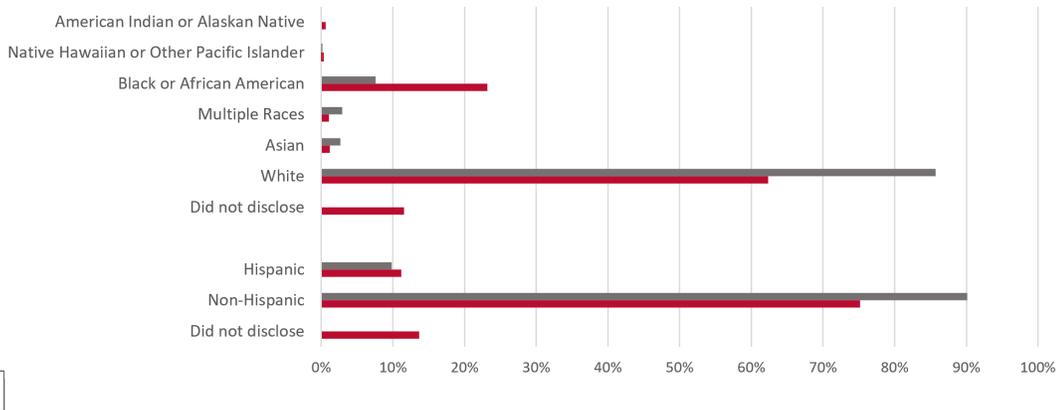
Service Center Traffic & Call Volume (PY comparison by month)



Diversity of Job Seekers Served



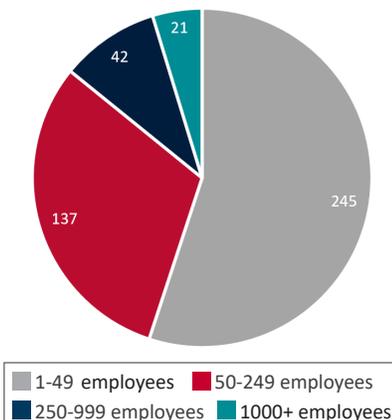
Race & Ethnicity



Employers Served (unique count)



Diversity of Employers Served (by size)



Jobs Filled: by Industry

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Agribusiness	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	19	25	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Healthcare	482	70	63	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	1,021	91	109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	121	71	393	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,648	260	587	0								

Training: by Industry

	New Hire	Classroom	Apprenticeship	Credentials Earned
Construction	1	6	14	3
Health Care	24	173	24	60
Information Technology	1	8	1	1
Manufacturing	9	11	42	11
Other	27	132	100	0
Total	62	330	181	122

Active grants supporting new hire, classroom and apprenticeship training this reporting period:

- Sector Strategies Employer-Led Collaborative
- MDARD Specialty Crop Grant
- MiSTAIRS
- Early Childhood Investment Corporation
- One Workforce
- WIOA Individual Training Accounts
- WIOA On-the-Job Training
- WIOA Youth Work Experience

Training (completed): Going PRO Training Fund

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
New Hire	271	298	329	423	696	0	0	0	0
Classroom	336	250	452	472	348	0	0	0	0
Apprenticeship	183	35	74	116	172	0	0	0	0
Total	790	583	855	1,011	1,216	0	0	0	0

Hiring Events

	Events	Employers	Job Seekers
Q1	5	10	39
Q2	0	0	0
Q3	0	0	0
Q4	0	0	0
TOTAL	5	10	39

Retention Solutions Network

Members

11

Success coach hours

(cumulative, reported quarterly)

379



Talent Development Metrics (cumulative, reported quarterly)

647 Workshops Offered

2,643 Workshop Attendance

91 WorkReady Certificates

Service Summary: Strategic Plan Alignment and Indicator Descriptions

<p>Pipeline Development: Expand the local pipeline of work-ready talent to meet the needs of the workforce and of West Michigan employers.</p>	<p>Enhanced Relationships: Foster widespread networks to collaboratively address workforce needs in the region.</p>	<p>Diversity and Inclusion: Enable a culture that honors the worth and dignity of all people, where staff and customers have equitable access to opportunities.</p>
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The indicators shown on the Service Summary are provided to inform the board about the impact of services provided through a variety of workforce development programs. Each represents the implementation of goals in the Strategic Plan.

Indicator	Strategic Plan Alignment	Narrative
<i>Service Center Traffic & Call Volume</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the funnel of job seekers entering our system through the service centers and virtual appointments, giving us an opportunity to expand the talent pipeline. In October 2021, we began implementing a new tracking system. During this period, UIA reinstated the Register to Work requirement, which brought more people into the centers. The data does not include attendance at workshops, focused job search, or coaching sessions. This will be added as the tracking system is expanded.
<i>Diversity of Job Seekers</i>	Diversity and Inclusion	This indicator shows the variety of job seekers we work with compared to the region. With the implementation of the new tracking system, we resumed tracking demographic data. Although we are in the early stages of collecting this data, management regularly observes and monitors this information.
<i>Businesses Served</i>	Enhanced Relationships	This indicator shows unique businesses served each month, and reflects the widespread networks developed by staff. A business is counted once per program year as unique; they likely received multiple services throughout the year. A new business is one that has never engaged with WMW. A returning business is one that has received services from WMW in a prior program year(s).
<i>Diversity of Businesses</i>	Diversity and Inclusion; Enhanced Relationships	This indicator shows a comprehensive picture of our business customers based on size (total number of employees). This data is helpful in planning initiatives and for identifying specific business groups. Although we work with any size company, we target those most in need of our services which are often smaller companies without internal HR capacity.
<i>Jobs Filled by Industry</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the number of jobs filled with business customers of WMW and with our assistance. The variation in month-to-month numbers may reflect delays in reporting WMW, as well as unique needs within a variety of businesses. Spikes in the numbers may also reflect hiring events supported by WMW.

Indicator	Strategic Plan Alignment	Narrative
<i>Training: by Industry</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows WMW efforts to expand the local pipeline of work-ready talent by supporting training and skill upgrading. The data is presented by industries most in demand in the region. Food Processors, as part of Agribusiness, are currently reported under manufacturing. On-the-Job Training provided to New Hires results in advancement of skills and wages but does not provide a credential. This data does not include training funded by Going Pro Talent Fund.
<i>Training (completed): GoingPro</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	As one of our largest funding sources for business-driven training, Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) is reported separately. Allowable training funded by GPTF includes new hire, incumbent, and registered apprenticeships.
<i>Hiring Events</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows hiring events that bring businesses and job seekers together, requiring coordination across multiple departments and programs. We continue to look for new and innovative ways to conduct outreach to job seekers, including greater collaboration with community partners.
<i>Retention Solutions Network</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows how we leverage networks among community partners to provide services to member businesses. Data reflects services provided by Success Coaches via dedicated on-site hours as well as virtual. Services provided to each employee does not consider the high number of touchpoints with the coach. Barriers addressed can include needs for transportation, housing, medical bills, utilities, and many more, all so that workers can successfully engage and fulfill their role for the business.
<i>WorkReady Certificate Earned</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the delivery of employability skills training, the highest need for skillsets expressed by the region's business. Job Seekers take a pre-assessment to determine areas of readiness and areas for improvement; they only attend workshops for areas identified as needing improvement. A post-assessment determines their skill attainment and if successful, earns a certificate. This conveys to businesses that they are "work ready." Workshops are offered at service center locations and at partner locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Area Community Services
Employment & Training Council
215 Straight Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
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MEMORANDUM

TO: West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB)
FROM: West Michigan Works! Staff
DATE: February 9, 2026
RE: Solutions Driven Update

Enhanced Relationships:

Foster widespread networks to collaboratively address workforce needs in the region.

Pipeline Development:

Expand the local pipeline of work-ready talent to meet the needs of the workforce and of West Michigan employers.

Diversity and Inclusion:

Enable a culture that honors the worth and dignity of all people, where staff and customers have equitable access to opportunities.

Grant Updates

Make Michigan Home: WMW has been awarded a \$91,250 *Make MI Home* grant (rebranded as West Michigan Rooted) from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The funds will support training, employment, and retention efforts for Michigan residents. The grant period runs from March 18, 2025, through February 2, 2026 with a six month no cost extension through July 31, 2026. In partnership with the Michigan Office of Growth, WMW will promote an attraction and retention package through *Make My Move*. Make My Move is a national online platform that helps communities attract new residents by offering customized incentive packages to individuals considering relocation. Applications are now live. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

FutureTech Careers Program (formerly known as Strengthening Community Colleges Grant 4): This grant program, awarded to Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), is designed to enhance the capacity of community colleges to meet the skill development needs of employers and equitably support students in securing good jobs in high-demand industries. The grant program is centered on sector-based career pathways, which have been proven to improve employment outcomes. West Michigan Works! will collaborate with GRCC with the goal of developing targeted programs and curriculum. This grant will serve 622 participants between May 1, 2024, and April 30, 2028. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeships: WMW received a second round of funding from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) totaling \$373,000 to continue supporting childcare providers in developing registered apprenticeship opportunities for early childhood educators. The grant's performance period has been extended from February 2026 to July 2026 and an additional \$40,000 was awarded to continue and expand the work of the grant. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

The Michigan Citizen Reentry Initiative (MiCRI): A cooperative grant opportunity with the US Department of Labor and the Department of Justice with a state award of \$7.6 million to launch the new initiative designed to reduce recidivism among justice involved citizens and increase their successful participation in employment and training opportunities. This includes individuals incarcerated in the Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) and Residential Reentry Centers (RRC). WMW will provide services in stage 2 -post release for participants in the RRC and Home Confinement (HC). ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD): The PROWD program, funded by the Joint First Step Act, intends to expand on the methodology of the MiCRI program to establish a statewide network of support for Justice-Involved Citizens to provide Stage 1, 2, and 3 pre-employment training services accessible at Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs) and to individuals in home confinement (HC) throughout the state. This grant will serve 250 participants statewide over a 37-month period of performance from September 1, 2024, to September 30, 2027. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

Michigan Skilled Immigration Integration Program (MISIIP): The Michigan Skilled Immigrant Integration Program is part of a \$1M allocation for the Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) initiative as part of an overall \$5M appropriation received by Global Detroit. This program connects professional, college-degreed, internationally-trained job seekers with Michigan-based careers in their profession. Eligible participants will also receive assistance with job search, Networking coaching, Credential evaluation and Professional licensing resources. This program has been extended through September 30, 2026. ***Diversity and Inclusion, Pipeline Development***

Grand Rapids Community College One Workforce Grant: WMW has partnered with GRCC on a \$9.8 million H1-B One Workforce Grant, focusing on advanced manufacturing, received by GRCC. The One Workforce Grant ended on December 31, 2025. Since the start of the grant on February 1, 2021, the grant team accomplished the following:

- 1,942 jobseekers served by the grant
- 1,592 jobseekers enrolled in training
- 1,282 jobseekers received credentials
- 639 jobseekers employed
- 346 incumbent workers who advanced their careers

We appreciate GRCC and their continued partnership both on this grant and myriad other initiatives. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES) Expansion: The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) has awarded a total of \$14.6 million in Barrier Removal and Employment Success grant funds. West Michigan Works! Partnered with seven community-based organizations (CBOs) and received the maximum allocation of \$1 million. These funds will help remove barriers directly related to employment such as childcare, transportation, and housing. The CBOs

include Grand Rapids Center for Community Transformation, Grand Rapids Women's Resource Center, GoodWill of Greater Grand Rapids, Steepletown Neighborhood Services, The Source, Treetops Collective, and United Way of Montcalm & Ionia. West Michigan Works! (WMW) received a no-cost extension for this grant through September 30, 2026. WMW made the decision not to extend Steepletown and The Women's Resource Center due to separate organizational and programmatic considerations. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

MDARD Specialty Crop Grant: West Michigan Works! was awarded a USDA grant for \$83,470 to support specialty crop grower training in agribusiness and career exploration at MiCareerQuest. We will begin accepting applications from growers by end of February 2026. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Going PRO Talent Fund:

Fiscal Year 2025:

- Cycle 1: 322 applications were submitted to the state. 175 were awarded a total of \$11.2M. Training may occur January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.
- Cycle 2: In total, 222 applications were submitted to the state. 49 were awarded for a total of \$10.8 million. Training may occur July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

Fiscal Year 2026:

- Cycle 1: 336 applications were submitted to the state. 100 were awarded a total of \$6.4M, with the possibility of 9 additional awards totaling \$767,535. Training may occur January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.
- Employer Led Collaborative (ELC) Applications: Applications are tentatively scheduled to open in March 2026.

A full list of grant recipients statewide is available online at Michigan.gov/TalentFund. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) 2025: West Michigan Works! is one of five organizations selected to receive State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant funding from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO). Awarded organizations had to demonstrate prior success with grant programs, a proven track record of performance, effective utilization of grant funds, and the expertise to monitor progress and meet performance targets. WMW will receive \$212,360 to support 32 registered apprentices in non-infrastructure occupations. The SAE grant program is designed to assist organizations that currently sponsor or partner with sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Regional Innovation Project (RIP) Grant: West Michigan Works! was awarded a joint project grant along with Capital Area Michigan Works!, Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation, and Oakland County Michigan Works! for the Regional Innovation Project (RIP) grant through the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. The proposed initiative aims to enhance and expand immersive, employer-led career navigation events in manufacturing, healthcare,

and technology across the four regions. These events will help expose students and jobseekers to career pathways and promote awareness of postsecondary training opportunities aligned with employer demand. The total request was \$450,000, with WMW requesting \$120,000 to support implementation in our region.

Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development

Industry Talent Councils

There are various ways to stay connected to the innovative work taking place under each of the West Michigan Works! Industry Talent Councils (ITC). Each council has expanded its outreach through dedicated LinkedIn accounts and bimonthly newsletters. The increased online presence enables each ITC to provide employers and partners in their respective industries with pertinent information such as workforce trends, council initiatives, and opportunities to participate in future projects. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Multi-Industry Talent Council Initiatives:

Lunch & Learn Series – The Industry Talent Councils are jointly funding a quarterly Lunch & Learn series designed to connect employers with inclusive hiring strategies and job seeker support services offered through West Michigan Works! and its network of community partners. The next event will feature child care resources to support hiring and retaining working care givers – a key barrier identified by council businesses.

Agribusiness Talent Council of West Michigan (ATC)

Mission: The Agribusiness Talent Council is an employer-led collaborative that seeks to expand the talent pool by promoting care pathways and opportunities in West Michigan agribusiness industry.

The Agribusiness Talent Council (ATC) partnered with Discover Manufacturing to provide student tours of food processing facilities as part of Manufacturing Week 2025. Seven area food processors welcomed 235 students, offering hands-on exposure to careers in food processing and highlighting the essential role of this industry within the broader manufacturing sector.

The Spotlight on Ag Readers program continues to grow in impact. Over 60 classrooms have registered to participate this year, including more than 20 classrooms from Allegan County, the highest level of engagement from the county since the program's inception. Volunteer reader registration remains open through the end of February, with the program aiming to reach over 1,600 students across the region with engaging, agriculture-focused literacy activities.

The ATC Scholarship is now accepting applications for three \$1,000 awards. The scholarships are available to graduating high school seniors or current college students pursuing degrees related to agribusiness. Applications will be accepted through March 20, 2026.

In support of workforce training and industry awareness, the ATC was awarded \$83,470 through the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Michigan Department of

Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Specialty Crop Block Grant. The funding will support training for specialty crop growers and career exploration activities at MiCareerQuest, helping to build a stronger pipeline of talent in the agribusiness sector.

[Construction Careers Council \(CCC\)](#)

Mission: The Construction Careers Council creates a bright future for West Michigan's construction industry by building a diverse and qualified workforce.

In late October, Josh Perkins, formerly a Career Navigator with West Michigan Works!, was promoted to Industry Council Lead (ICL) for the Construction Careers Council. His background in career pathway development will bring strong leadership as the council expands its programs and strengthens employer engagement.

Rachel Austin of Barton Mallow was elected Council Chair, and Carroll Burgess (Burgess Concrete Construction), Rachell Holiday (Fabcon Precast), and Chris Smith (EV Construction) joined the council in late 2025. The council is currently accepting applications to fill the open seat for a Trade Labor Organization representative.

The CCC continues to grow student engagement through its Construction Career Pathways initiative. Nine classroom visit sessions have been filled by volunteers from EV Construction, IBEW Local 275, Williams Kitchen and Bath, and Fabcon Precast. Registration is now open for spring jobsite tours, offering students hands-on exposure to construction careers.

The council has also launched the 2026 Women Who Build West Michigan initiative, recognizing and honoring women across all areas of the construction industry — including skilled trades, project management, engineering, architecture, safety, and leadership roles. Aligned with national Women in Construction Week, this initiative highlights the achievements of women in construction while inspiring the next generation of talent. Honorees will be featured on the Construction Careers Council website and in a newsletter series, showcasing contributions and career pathways. Nominations are open through February 13.

[Discover Manufacturing \(DM\)](#)

Mission: We exist to inspire and expand manufacturing talent in West Michigan.

The Discover Manufacturing Scholarship Program remains a key investment in the region's future workforce. The 2026 application cycle opened on October 13 and will close on March 15. To date, 12 applications have been received, and outreach efforts will continue through the application deadline to encourage broad participation.

DM strategy workgroups are active and aligned around the council's three strategic pillars: Training, Promoting the Industry, and Sharing Best Practices. Early discussions have focused on identifying Discover Manufacturing's unique value proposition, targeting high-impact opportunities, and promoting stronger employer-led collaboration.

Post-event evaluations of Discover Manufacturing Week surfaced opportunities for improvement, particularly around registration processes, transportation logistics, tour customization, and the potential integration of job shadow opportunities. These insights will guide future planning efforts.

Explore Hospitality (ExH):

Mission: We elevate one of West Michigan’s leading employment sectors by developing careers, cultivating talent, and promoting a thriving, dynamic hospitality industry.

The Explore Hospitality Council continues to build momentum by expanding partnerships and launching workforce initiatives. The Explore Hospitality website is now live (linked above), with the council’s first newsletter and blog launching in February. Since the last WDB meeting, the council has more than doubled its LinkedIn following.

The ExH strategy workgroups meet during even-numbered months and align with the council’s strategic focus areas: Elevate (promote industry/careers), Train, and Retain.

- The Elevate Workgroup has selected MiCareerQuest 2026 as its first official project. Discussions are ongoing to determine additional initiatives aligned with student and public engagement. In addition, we continue to present at ISD schools to promote hospitality career pathways.
- The Train Workgroup selected an Event Management Apprenticeship Program to support skills development and career advancement within the industry. The council approved the project, and we have started conversations with the apprenticeship team.
- The Retain Workgroup selected a Retention Lunch & Learn series to address barriers and identify best practices specific to the hospitality sector. The council approved the project, and we are beginning conversations on sponsorship, location, and presentation topics.

Two council seats remain open, one for an Employer representative and one for an Economic Development representative. The council is currently discussing opportunities to recruit members from outside Kent County to ensure broader representation and alignment with regional workforce needs across West Michigan.

West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC)

MISSION: The purpose of WMHCC is to provide an employer-led collaborative council of healthcare employers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan’s healthcare talent needs.

WMHCC continues to implement its strategic planning process, having recently reviewed and approved a new Mission Statement and Guiding Principles to guide its long- and short-term objectives. The council is actively advancing several key student engagement initiatives:

- MiCareerQuest 2026: The West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC) has approved participation in this regional career exploration event and is supporting that through active engagement.
- Future Rounds – Health Career Expo 2026: builds on last year’s success with new, hands-on enhancements designed to boost student engagement. Open to 7th–12th grade students and their families, the Expo offers interactive, real-world health scenarios, direct conversations with healthcare professionals and educators, and insights into career roles, hiring processes, tuition assistance, and healthcare career pathways.
- Michigan HOSA: The council has established a planning team to implement the presence and growth of HOSA chapters in each of our seven West Michigan counties.
- Healthcare Hiring Events: WMHCC is exploring hosting healthcare hiring events at shopping malls in Kent and Muskegon counties.

In alignment with workforce development priorities, partnerships with the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute, Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), Trinity Health, and WMHCC continue progression toward the creation of a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Registered Apprenticeship program. This initiative will establish equitable, local pathways into nursing careers, particularly for underrepresented populations.

The council currently has one employer seat vacancy following a transition at Forest View Hospital. Council is currently accepting nominations for membership.

[West Michigan Tech Talent \(WMTT\)](#)

Mission: West Michigan Tech Talent looks to engage employers of Information Technology professionals with best practices, resources and a community to grow, develop, recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive world class IT workforce in West Michigan.

Virginia Berger joined West Michigan Works! in January as the new Industry Council Lead (ICL). Her background is in advanced manufacturing and custom automation, where she spent time honing skills in sales, marketing, communications, and community engagement. New council members include, Dr. Kristi Haik from GRCC, Kristy Loughin-Vance from Kent Career Tech Center, and Casey Horner from Corewell Health Office of the CIO.

The 2025 {Mi}Code Experience included over 1,700 3-5 grade students engaging in a one-hour coding lesson with the help of more than 30 industry professionals. One educator from Mulick Park in Grand Rapids shared, “One of my students who is shy and reserved really broke out and started communicating with peers and is so eager to learn to code.”

The council continues its collaboration with Grand Rapids Community College through the FutureTech Careers initiative, which aligns educational programming with in-demand career pathways and facilitates joint events that connect students to local employers and postsecondary opportunities.

The Develop strategy workgroup began meeting this fall to explore workforce upskilling strategies, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence literacy, the creation of resource guides, and the development of awareness campaigns to strengthen the regional tech talent pipeline. Upcoming meetings will identify specific trainings to recommend to the full council for Going PRO Talent Fund Employer Led Collaborative applications.

Programs

West Michigan Works! Registered Apprenticeship Programs (WMW RAP):

West Michigan Works! currently administers 63 U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Registered Apprenticeship programs, serving 403 active apprentices across 125 participating employers. West Michigan Works! continues to engage regional employers in exploring registered apprenticeships as a solution to workforce challenges. In the last quarter, the apprenticeship team received 13 referrals from interested employers, 25 meetings were held to explore registered apprenticeship, and 5 new programs were registered with the USDOL. Efforts also continue to promote Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in alignment with the Michigan Apprenticeship Readiness Certificate (MARC), a pilot initiative of the State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) Team.

On October 24, 2025, West Michigan Works! hosted the Race to Talent event at Kent ISD Conference Center, featuring a panel discussion and award presentation spotlighting Fox Motors, Royal Technologies, and Kent Career Tech Center for their leadership in apprenticeship and MARC. Over 50 attendees, including educators, business leaders, apprentices, and workforce professionals, participated.

West Michigan Works! continues to expand registered apprenticeship opportunities across the region through targeted promotion, intermediary consulting, and workforce development training. During the reporting period, the Apprenticeship Team conducted outreach and engagement activities by presenting at the Montcalm Community College Industrial Trades Advisory Committee meeting and the Allegan Area Educational Service Agency (AESAs) Tech Center Manufacturing Program Advisory Committee meeting. These presentations strengthened connections with education and training partners and supported alignment with regional workforce needs. In addition, a team representative attended the Michigan College Access Network Annual Conference in Lansing to engage with educators and training providers, share program successes, and exchange best practices related to registered apprenticeship and career pathways. To further increase awareness, the team participated in a radio interview on Newsradio WOOD 1300 and 106.9 FM following the Race to Talent event, highlighting West Michigan Works!' role in advancing registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs across the region.

In December, West Michigan Works! submitted a response to a Request for Information (RFI) issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) regarding the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Industry Intermediary Initiative. This initiative seeks to inform the design of the next phase of national intermediary grants, with a particular emphasis on expanding existing RA programs, launching new apprenticeships, and advancing a pay-for-performance funding model. USDOL is

expected to open the application process for national RA Intermediaries in the near future. West Michigan Works! is monitoring updates closely to evaluate potential alignment and opportunities for participation. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

Ascend Youth Programming: The Ascend team provides programming for eligible out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24. Ascend continues to grow referral partnerships throughout the region. Ascend continues to provide its core WIOA services to youth across the community. In addition to this work, the Ascend program has established strategic partnerships with various schools to provide MiCareerLaunch programming as well as career coaching and short-term trainings to youth in alternative education programs. The Ascend program is also in the beginning stages of planning the 2026 Summer Career Readiness Program. If you work for a company that might be interested in hosting youth through a work experience, please let us know. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

MiCareerQuest: MiCareerQuest is a Career Exploration Experience for middle and high school students. Exhibitor registration is now OPEN. If your business is interested in exhibiting, please let us know and we will connect you with the appropriate Industry Council Leads to support you in developing an exhibit. We are also looking for volunteers as well as gathering interest from anyone who would like to attend a VIP tour. You can sign up to volunteer [here](#). You can also sign up for a VIP tour [here](#). ***Pipeline Development***

Elevate: Elevate is an expansion to Rise Up, a model of outside-in recruitment and inside-up career development that began in partnership with West Michigan Works!, The Source, and Trinity Health. Elevate uses Career Coaching, Resource Navigation, and employer coordination to reduce the friction of hiring and promotion. The Elevate team has been hard at work finding opportunities to engage with CBO partners; we are actively working on an innovation that would bring Elevate-focused workshops to community partners and their jobseekers. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

Retention Solutions Network: Retention Solutions Network (RSN) is a fee-based business resource network focused on navigating resources and providing support services to member employees, thus helping them to stay in their job and advance within their business. RSN began the new year with an influx of new members including Ags, Almond Products, Celia Corp, Mission Design and Automation, Railside ALC, and Seminole Shores ALC. We are excited to welcome these new companies this year. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

Gain Employment. Maintain Support (GEMS) formally known as Learn, Earn and Provide (LEAP) Pilot: GEMS launched in Muskegon as a pilot program at the end of January of 2022. It is a program aimed to assist non-custodial parents in obtaining and maintaining employment and gets back on track with child support payments. This program is in close partnership with Friend of the Court and includes both voluntary referrals and mandated participation in Allegan, Ionia, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

Initiatives

West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership (E2P): E2P is a Talent First initiative that brings together employers, education and training providers, and community-based organizations to help individuals who are un- or underemployed access skills-based pathways into high-demand jobs requiring postsecondary training. E2P aims to develop a regional opportunity marketplace that offers shared coaching, resources, and wraparound support to generate more talent, increase the efficiency of credential attainment, and retain graduates in West Michigan. West Michigan Works! supports the collaborations and actively participates in this initiative but is not a sponsor of the platform. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

Section 107a: This grant opportunity stems from the State School Aid Act (Public Act 320 of 2023), which earmarks \$15 million for innovative adult education programs aimed at boosting enrollment, retention, and completion, especially among individuals without a high school credential or with limited English proficiency. The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Workforce Development (LEO WD) is administering the program in partnership with Talent First to support the development and implementation of innovative, regionally unique initiatives. As part of a West Michigan Adult Education consortium, West Michigan Works! actively participates in micro credential planning and the development of key project deliverables, with all micro credentials vetted through industry councils. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***