NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES
Center of Workforce Innovations
September 17, 2026

Present:
Chris Bebee, George Douglas, Audra Peterson, Aco Sikoski, Natalie Aponte, Marcelo Marocos and Jim Campbell

Proxy: Audra Peterson

***Absent*:** Lori Tubbs, Kevin Comerford, Anna Ortega, Adrienne Carroll, Jim Clarida, and Andrew Francis

Staff:
Lisa Daugherty, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, and Becky Fry

Guests: Denise Wright

CALL TO ORDER
Chris Beebe called the meeting to order.

Consent Agenda
Mr. Beebe asked the Board Members to review the items on the consent agenda.

a. Minutes & Financial Report

Motion: A motion was made to accept the meeting minutes by George Douglas and seconded by Audra Peterson. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Motion: A motion was made to accept the financial reports as presented by George Douglas and seconded by Aco Sikoski. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

b. Board Membership

Ms. Daugherty explained that there were three Board members who should have had a vote for extension of their term, but due to change in staffing, it was left off of a previous meeting agenda. The Board were to vote on the extension of term of office for Audra Peterson, Chris Beebe and Kevin Comerford. Election of officers will be moved to the next agenda as it is unclear if all officers are willing to continue in their current capacity.

Motion: A motion was made to extend the Board Membership terms for Audra Peterson, Chris Beebe and Kevin Comerford with members abstaining from their own election by George Douglas and seconded by Aco Sikoski. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

1. Board Business

<u>Youth Program Policy Update</u>
Ms. Stump explained the new youth policy to allow stipends for WIOA enrolled youth who participate and complete the required elements of a workshop, conference or work readiness class/program. This is similar to the stipend policy that was used in previous years under WIA.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the Youth Program Policy update by Audra Peterson and seconded by George Douglas. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Dashboard/Performance

Ms. Wright reviewed the dashboard performance and NWIWB Goals. The data indicates that we are ahead of goal for this time of the year. A request was made for some specific changes to the report to make the data more clear. These will be implemented for the next Board meeting.

Additional conversation surrounding the Fast Track to Top Jobs Bootcamps linked the work at CWI to overcoming employment barriers for new job seekers and those who may not have learned soft skills to be ready for employment in the many open positions in NWI. Input from employers is crucial to making these bootcamps successful by identifying training needs for career pathways. These boot camps could potentially be a training resource for employers with staff that need these skills as well.

2. Old Business

No old business to report on.

3. Reports

Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump reported that the Youth Employment Council met on August 26, 2026. The group talked about one way to re-engage employers is to re-survey them on what key skills and expectations they look for in employees. The group discussed surveying employers electronically and asking the chambers to send out the survey to their members. Once the survey results are in, a new poster can be created for distribution and Youth Employment Council members can use the poster to engage in the work ethic certification program and the importance of providing work-based learning opportunities to youth and young adults. The group also discussed how to further assist students as they prepare for the future including an activity similar to the reality store that has been utilized in some schools.

OSO Monitoring Report

Our region is required by the Department of Workforce Development to have an outside entity come in and monitor us as the one-stop operator. Rob King, CEO and EO Officer from Region 8 served in that capacity for us again this year. The only issue that was noted was the elevator in the Gary WorkOne that has been inoperable for most of the year. We have made it possible for clients to receive services on the first floor when the elevator is not working, but the situation with this landlord is not improving. We are actively seeking a new location for the Gary office, preferably downtown.

President's Report

Ms. Daugherty gave an update on the CWI growth plan. There are 84 strategies that will be addressed over three years that are divided across five goals: Funding Diversification & Financial Resilience, Workforce Ecosystem Powerhouse Integrator, Operational Excellence & Scalable Outcomes, Talent, Culture & Leadership Alignment and Brand Clarity, Communication & Perceived Value.

CWI & NWI Works will be focusing on employer needs to guide programming for job seekers. This will ultimately help CWI, NWI Works and training providers to align work with students/ clients to meet employer demands and increase job placement.

ADJOURN

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn by Audra Peterson and seconded by Jim Campbell. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Mr. Beebe adjourned the meeting.

Save the Date
NWIWB meeting November 19, 2026

Becky Fry, Recording Secretary