

NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES
Center of Workforce Innovations
May 15, 2025

Present:

Audra Peterson, Adrienne Carrol, Lori Tubbs, Liz Negron-Haniford, Martina Tovar, Jim Clarida, Anna Ortega, Debi Baughman, Chris Bebee, Aco Sikoski, George Douglas

Absent/Proxy: Karen Kopka, Kevin Comerford, Justin Mount, Mikie Stogsdill

Staff:

Lisa Daugherty, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Kathy Neary, Nicky Rodriquez, Jen Grabowski

Guests: Tammy Jones

CALL TO ORDER

Lori Tubbs called the meeting to order.

Audra Peterson introduced Tammy Jones to the meeting.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Tubbs asked the Board Members to review the items on the consent agenda.

Motion: A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Audra Peterson to accept the consent agenda as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

1. Board Business

Dashboard/Performance

Ms. Neary presented the May 2025 Board report

Goal #1 Increase skills of current workforce to align with economic development strategies and key industry clusters Adult Education is continuing to expand their reach within the community, hosting new testing sites in both Knox and Winamac

Goal #2 Improve employer access to qualified workers and awareness of training resources:

Successfully launched weekly, pre-employment WorkKeys test for up to 20 candidates at WorkOne LaPorte for Howmet Aerospace as part of their talent recruitment strategy for 8 high impact roles.

Goal #3 Ensure Youth in NWI are positioned for continued education/learning and workforce success:

A total of 2,061 students from 24 Region 1 high schools are currently participating in the 2024-2025 Work Ethic Certificate Program, of whom 1,119 are members of the graduating class of 2025.

Goal #4- Increase quality job exposure and experience through apprenticeships, work-based learning, employer supported training programs: Collaborated with United Way to pool expertise of leveraging systems to maximize referral efficiency while providing more holistic support to clients.

Goal #5 Assure compliance and efficient operations of a workforce development system: CWI to lead a summer youth project with the City of Gary in partnership with Goodwill.

Adam Collins Resignation

Ms. Daugherty thanked Adam Collins who submitted his resignation for his dedication and service to the Board and asked the board to approve the resignations.

Motion: A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Aco Sikoski to accept the resignation of Adam Collins. All were in favor. **The motion passed**

New Members

Ms. Daugherty thanked Karen Kopka, Justin Mount, and Debi Baughman who had termed out, for their dedication and service to the Board and asked the board to approve their resignations. Also, on March 20, 2025, Ms. Daugherty asked the board to approve a change to the bylaws that would give members the opportunity to stay on board regardless of time. That bylaw change proposal passed unanimously. With the change Lori Tubbs, George Douglas, Anna Ortega, Jim Clarita and Martina Tovar agreed to renew their memberships as well as adding new member Amy Henningfield with Superior Construction

Motion: A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Audra Peterson to accept the resignations of Karen Kopka, Justin Mount, Debi Baughman. All were in favor. **The motion passed**

Motion: A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Audra Peterson to accept the renewal of Lori Tubbs, George Douglas, Anna Ortega, Jim Clarita and Martina Tovar as well as new member Amy Henningfield. All were in favor. **The motion passed**

2025 Slate of Officers

With the resignation of Board Chair Karen Kopka and the progression of roles, Lori Tubbs will be Chair, Jim Clarida, Vice Chair, Kevin Comerford, Treasurer. Ms. Daugherty did an email call out for nominees for Secretary. Chris Beebe, who was nominated, has accepted the role of Secretary.

Motion: A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Martina Tovar to accept the 2025 Officers. All were in favor. **The motion passed**

READY NWI Advocacy

Nicky Rodriguez Director of Ready NWI (Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth) which is the consortium of educators, joined the meeting to discuss some of the challenges as it relates to the program. Ready NWI has 43 school districts in 7 counties. The original mission of Ready was aligned with the Lumina Foundation to accelerate year by year progress in achieving our vision by engaging students and their parents with a wide array of educational and occupational choices that lead directly to success in employment and with post high school degree and credential attainment. Ms. Rodriguez talked about the significant changes to the Commission for higher education and the Department of Education's budgets as it relates to career coaching and Intermediary. Ms. Rodriguez is bringing this to the boards' attention in hopes to get attention and advocate with their networks of the importance of Ready NWI.

2. Old Business

No old business to report on.

3. Reports

Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump gave the Board an update on work ethics. There were 2,061 participants for the regional work ethic certificate. 258 freshman, 218 sophomores, 486 juniors and 1,119 seniors. The Next Gen Expo was held at the Dean and Barara White Center in Merrillville In. on April 9th. There were over 200 youth that attended. There was also a NextGen expo at West Central High School as part of the Bridging the Gap Initiative, they had 10 vendors, and 200 students attend.

President's Report

Ms. Daugherty talked about the JAG Program (Jobs for American Graduates) funding for that program is in jeopardy of being cut, once the decision is made CWI will be forced to start dismantling. In addition to Jag funding being cut, the Readi Northwest Indiana which we used for incumbent worker training and work-based learning has also been cut. The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act is the Federal legislation that provides parameters for the structure of the board and how the funding flows from Federal to the State down to the local regions, has been in reauthorization for a couple of years and we are expecting that to be a fraction of what it was.

Save the Dates

NWIWB meeting July 17, 2025

ADJOURN

Ms. Tubbs adjourned the meeting.

Jen Grabowski, Recording Secretary