

NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES
Microsoft Teams Meeting
September 18, 2025

Present:

Chris Beebe, George Douglas, Martina Tovar, Audra Peterson, Liz Negron-Haniford, Adrienne Carroll, Aco Sikoski, Marcelo Marcos, Mikie Stogsdill.

Proxy: Lori Tubbs, Jim Clarida, Kevin Comerford, Amy Henninfield.

Absent: Anna Ortega

Staff:

Lisa Daugherty, Kathy Neary, Becky Fry, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Ana Davidson

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.

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

A second motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Aco Sikoski to approve the financial reports. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

1. Board Business

Dashboard/Performance

Mrs. Neary presented September Board report

Goal #1 Increase skills of current workforce to align with economic development strategies and key industry clusters. Provided Industry-specific workshops to career-seeking clients with more specialized information. Facilitated in-person workshops at Michigan City WorkOne. Collaborated with Ivy Tech Community College to map the high demanded sectors for Lake County area that emphasize skill transferability. Mrs. Neary said we are trending well on the services provided to employers as well as our incumbent workers with adults.

Goal #2 Improve employer access to qualified workers and awareness of training resources: READY NWI Director has re-envisioned the Employer Advisory Council and launched new mission and vision for the Consortium to assist with tailored employer engagement strategies and best practices; preparing for the upcoming career fair hosted by the Northwest Indiana Business RoundTable. Community Engagement Team designed pilot program of resource fairs for parents aiming to connect families with supportive services and employment opportunities.

Goal #3 Ensure Youth in NWI are positioned for continued education/learning and workforce success: Connected the Michigan City Schools with South Shore INFAME Chapter which led placement opportunities of a student in the manufacturing industry with Hitachi. The goal is to place 5 students in 5 different sectors.

Completed 2024-2025 Career Coaching successfully coached over 5,000 students across 24 schools, which impacted our programming.

Department of Labor monitoring of the WIOA Youth program was finalized with no findings or areas of concern.

Goal #4- Increase quality job exposure and experience through apprenticeships, work-based learning, employer supported training programs: Placement Specialist and Career Advisors have streamlined processes, to “Fast Track” clients to appropriate jobs by connecting them with quality employers.

BNutty will join INFAME South Shore Chapter, the READY NWI Business Advisory Council and will offer internships that may lead to full-time roles and maintenance training to upskill their staff.

In partnership with Geminus, successfully relaunched an in-person workshop series, beginning with Work Ethic and Workplace Success.

Met with Gary Economic Development Director on a Gary Works project with opportunities to design training and skills pathways in alignment with key employers that are expanding operations in the city.

Goal #5 Assure compliance and efficient operations of a workforce development system: Met with the Economic Development Corporation of Michigan City (EDCMC) to update status of Elston Opportunity Hub where CWI was assigned lead.

Enhanced the Charity Tracker referral system by implementing a structured pre-screening guide and eligibility criteria to ensure intentional referrals within the public workforce network and to community partners offering complementary services.

Evaluated the client intake methodology and journey with Goodwill to better understand best practices our partnership can elevate through the Michigan City Hub.

Youth Eligibility Determination and Validation Policy, Change 1

Tammy Stump said the change to this policy is because Indiana has determined that an individual's Work Authorization (eligibility-to-work in the United States) regardless of citizenship must be validated for all WIOA Title I youth prior to receipt of any services by submission of documentation with a unique identifier

Motion: A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Audra Peterson to approve the Youth Eligibility Determination and Validation Policy, Change 1. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Local Monitoring Policy, Change 1

Becky Fry communicated the change is due to DWD having updated their policy. The only addition is that now we must include instructions about reporting any suspected fraud, program abuse or criminal conduct to Department of Labor (DOL) if we suspect it's happening.

Motion: A motion was made by Aco Sikoski and seconded by Audra Peterson to approve the Local Monitoring Policy, Change 1. All were in favor. **The motion passed**

Statement of Economic Interest

Mrs. Daugherty explained that this document needs to be filled out annually to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

DOL Monitoring Update

Department of Labor monitoring took place in August and included our administrative, fiscal and program areas. There were no findings. It was a successful monitoring of the WIOA youth program which resulted in best practices with our NextGen branding and related events as well as our partnership with Ivy Tech Community College who has representation for the Youth Employment Council. This feedback around best practices will help enhance our overall programming. They also were interested in the hubs in Michigan City and Gary and the inclusion of youth space within our Work One offices.

2. Old Business

Audra Peterson updated about the apprenticeships. She is working with the Advisory Committee for the Civil Construction to get a state approved Pre-Apprenticeship program; the process is in motion, but it's taking longer than anticipated.

3. REPORTS

Youth Employment Council

The group talked about expanding membership. Due to changes in youth providers and other members leaving the council, the group discussed the importance of expanding the Council. The group discussed possibly representatives from TradeWinds, Boys & Girls Club, Ken Berry from Uthiverse, COATES, the Trades, and employers. Tammy Stump and Martina Tovar will develop a list and Tammy Stump will reach out to the organizations. Tammy asked if any of the board members are interested in being part of the Youth Employment Council to let her know. Also, about the new goals for next year to make sure we are supporting the workforce board goal of ensuring youth in Northwest Indiana are positioned for continued education, learning and workforce success. The group discussed supporting Bridging the Gap and the activities such as career exploration and targeted career fair and helping secure employers. Marcelo Marcos offered to join the Youth Council; he will participate in the next meeting.

Martina Tovar commented on the importance of engaging the Youth to create a LinkedIn account to expose their skill set, connecting with people, building a network, finding an internship and preparing themselves for the future. The Council will start to engage all the youth who are seniors in high school.

President's Report

Mrs. Daugherty asked the Board members if they were receiving via email the CWI workforce media report. It contains phenomenal stories this month around some of the ways we've helped youth to get connected.

Next, she provided an update about the hub project: The IEDC was not letting Ready 2.0 funds flow until 65% of Ready 1.0 funds were spent and it took a long time for our region to get there. The Forum decided to move our hub project up to Read 1.0 because there were some projects that weren't going to spend their dollars. We will receive \$1,600,000.00 from the Forum for the Michigan City Hub. Michigan City Redevelopment already gave \$1,200,000.00 toward the project. We put out an RFP for a construction manager; we also are finalizing some of the agreements with tenants; close to completing a 40-year lease agreement with Michigan City Schools. All of this project is under NWI Works.

City of Gary and NWI Works are collaborating on an application we intend to submit by December 1st, with a budget between \$5,000,000.00 - \$7,000,000.00 to renovate 529 Washington building, which is adjacent to the parking garage that we use for WorkOne and that will entirely be a Skills Training facility. We are going to meet with key employers to understand their needs and from there create a training plan.

Mrs. Daugherty also talked about a bill that has moved through the House of Representative much further than expected and tomorrow they will vote of this bill. If this passes, we have to inform legislators, because this bill eliminates Youth, Adult and Reentry funding. The Appropriations Committee rescinded adult funding; therefore, if all goes forward as planned and gets approved at the Senate or if the government shuts down we won't know what is going to happen. If CWI didn't have already some carry-over from the previous year we would have to shut down on October 1st because; at this point all our funding is at risk.

1. **No Adult Formula Funds for PY2025** States and local boards will receive zero Adult formula dollars for July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, eliminating the primary federal funding stream for adult workforce services.
2. **Immediate Service Disruption.** Workforce boards would be forced to lay off staff, close career centers, end Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), and suspend training, case management, and supportive services for adults with barriers to employment.
3. **State Budget and Cash Flow Crises.** Most states lack reserves to bridge this gap. Without federal funds, local boards risk insolvency, creating severe operational instability across the national workforce system.
4. **Collateral Damage to Partnerships.** Employers lose training pipelines, community colleges and providers lose contracts, and braided programs like apprenticeships and reentry initiatives would collapse.
5. **Equity and Access Impacts.** WIOA Adult uniquely serves low-income and underrepresented workers. Funding loss means fewer reskilling opportunities, less access for reentry populations, older workers, and English learners, and worsened inequities in the labor market.
6. **Federal-State Tensions.** Governors and workforce leaders will likely demand emergency supplemental funding. Absent a fix, PY2025 could become a 'lost year' for federally funded adult workforce services, with negative effects on WIOA performance metrics nationwide

If the bill is passed tomorrow, Mrs. Daugherty will send emails asking to please contact the federal legislators. She will provide additional data and some talking points.

Mr. Douglas said it would be better to have the details today and he will contact the mayor of his city; Mrs. Stogsdill and Mr. Sikoski offered to call some of the legislators. Mrs. Daugherty agreed to send the information she has available at this time and provide updates tomorrow as soon as she receives from Midwest Urban Strategies, the consortium of workforce development in Midwest, entity that keeps us informed on the status of these things.

Finally, Mr. Douglas advised Mrs. Daugherty to make sure the Chief elected officials are aware of this; also reassure staff that the Board will deal with this challenging situation.

GOOD NEWS

Mr. Sikoski mentioned last month they had the ribbon cutting ceremony for Ivy Tech at Health Linc. Mr. Douglas said that during the summer they took advantage of the Readi grant through the internship program reimbursement through CWI.

Save the Dates

NWIWB meeting November 13, 2025

ADJOURN

Mr. Beebe adjourned the meeting.

Ana Davidson, Recording Secretary