

Minutes: Minnesota Governor's Workforce Development Board Meeting

Agenda Time: Quarter 1, Feb. 11, 2026, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Location: Minnesota Humanities Center, Saint Paul

Meeting Type: Regular

Meeting Facilitators: Surya Iyer, GWDB Chair, DeLinda Washington, GWDB Vice Chair

Quorum Present: Yes

Meeting Goals

- **Alignment:** Strengthening shared understanding around Minnesota's workforce priorities.
- **Momentum:** Highlighting progress underway, reinforcing what's working and focusing attention on where the board can have the greatest impact this year and beyond.
- **Building Relationships:** Continuing to strengthen connections among GWDB members.

Updates

- The GWDB chair shared a new proclamation from Governor Walz that recognizes February as Shop Local Month, encouraging Minnesotans to prioritize small, local businesses in their areas. Related, the Minneapolis Foundation has announced a new \$3.3 million fund to provide immediate assistance to businesses that are facing negative economic impacts.
- Staff notified the board that the Attorney's General Office has provided an update on final GWDB bylaw revisions and they are now ready for approval and adoption.
- Staff provided updates on the statutorily required WIOA State Plan modification process, which addresses shifts in labor market conditions and provides clarification on performance measurement outcomes. Upon board approval, the plan will be released for a 30-day commentary period. A final combined state plan modification will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor by March 31.
- The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) Board is recruiting two GWDB business members and one GWDB labor representative to serve on the board.
- During the GWDB committee panel, the following themes were emphasized: the interdependence of statewide workforce efforts, the need for cross-sector collaboration beyond the GWDB, and the importance of balancing rapid responsiveness within established system parameters.
- The next GWDB meeting is May 13, 2026, in Rochester. The meeting will focus on review and vote of Workforce Pell Grant eligibility criteria and the role of the GWDB and local workforce boards in identifying, outlining, and aligning workforce development priorities.

Statewide Workforce Development Strategy

Staff presented the statewide workforce strategy for Board review, which will be used as a policy framework recommendation to the Legislature and Governor's Office. Following the Board's November 12 approval, some strategy metrics were further refined to reflect newly released data. After discussing the updated draft, the Board proposed the following:

- Update the implementation timeline for Pillar 1, Subgoal 1, from Q2 2026 to Q4 2026.
- Update Pillar 2, Subgoal 2, to establish a baseline number by Q1 2027 and by 2028 increase the number of regional, active sector partnerships across the Drive for 5 Sectors by 20%.
- Consider opportunities to expand the Governor's definition of "overlooked workers" to reflect current gaps in the labor market.

GWDB Committee Updates

- The Sector Partnerships Committee focus areas are creating program determination policies for Workforce Pell implementation, advancing sector partnerships and job quality through shared resources and technical assistance, and building a common framework for work-based learning definitions and standardized metrics.
- The State and Local Coordination Committee has finalized its charter, with a focus on removing silos, improving data sharing, and strengthening accountability measures. The committee is exploring potential funding strategies.
- The Innovative Service Delivery Committee is focusing on access and navigation, modernizing service delivery, and improving how workforce data is used and generated. The committee has identified six policy development areas.

IWA Taskforce

- Nicole Blissenbach, DLI Commissioner and co-chair of the IWA Task Force, reported that the Task Force, in partnership with the GWDB, finalized its 2026 priorities. The priorities will focus on healthcare, education, labor force participation, and workforce outcomes.
- In 2026, the IWA will develop an enterprise workforce system map and provide agency-specific recommendations, including strategies to strengthen the long-term care workforce.
- The Education Committee, in partnership with MNP20, continues to advance education-to-workforce pipelines.

Task Force on Workforce Development System Reform

- The Workforce Task Force, established by legislation to evaluate the effectiveness of Minnesota's workforce system for employers and job seekers, met in December at Inver Hills and online in February. The Task Force is pausing formal meetings during the legislative session to gather stakeholder feedback and will reconvene in June.

Voting Items

WIOA State Plan

Motion: To release the Minnesota PYs 2024–2027 WIOA Combined State Plan for public comment and conditionally approve the plan pending Executive Committee review of changes from public comment, ensuring changes are not substantive enough to require full board reconsideration.

- **Moved by:** Jennifer Thiesen and seconded by: Linda Sloan
- **Outcome:** Approved

Statewide Workforce Strategy Goals

- **Motion:** To adopt the statewide workforce strategy goals as amended during meeting discussion.
- **Moved by:** Jeff Rainey and seconded by: David Dively
- **Outcome:** Approved

GWDB Bylaw Revisions

Motion: To adopt the revised GWDB bylaws.

- **Moved by:** Gail Cruikshank and seconded by: Carol Anderson
- **Outcome:** Approved

2025 – 2026 GWDB Legislative Report

Motion: To adopt the 2025-2026 GWDB Legislative Report with amended language to reflect the revisions made for the statewide workforce strategy goals.

- **Moved by:** Linda Sloan and seconded by: Hannah Alstead
- **Outcome:** Approved

Q4 2025 Minutes

Motion: To adopt Quarter 4 2025 GWDB meeting minutes.

- **Moved by:** Jennifer Thiesen and seconded by: Rep. Bernie Perryman
- **Outcome:** Approved

Q4 2025 Staff Report

Motion: To adopt Quarter 4 2025 staff report to the GWDB.

- **Moved by:** Gail Cruikshank and seconded by: Scott Cummings
- **Outcome:** Approved

Attendance

Voting

Name	Voting Role
1. Barry Davies	Labor Organization Rep #2
2. Bernie Burnham	Labor Organization Rep #6
3. Bernie Perryman	State Elected — House Minority Rep (Ex-Officio)
4. Brian Zirbes	Business Rep #9
5. Carol Anderson	Business Rep #15
6. Cate Duin	MN Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB)
7. Deb Broberg	Business Rep #8
8. Deborah Gleason	Business Rep #20
9. DeLinda Washington	Business Rep #22 — Vice Chair
10. Gail Cruikshank	Business Rep #21
11. Hannah Alstead	Labor Organization Rep #1
12. Jeffrey Rainey	Business Rep #17
13. Jennifer Thiesen	Business Rep #2
14. Jeremy Andrist	Labor Organization Rep #5
15. Matt Varilek	Commissioner, MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development
16. Melissa McLean	Business Rep #3
17. Michael Berndt	Career and Technical Education Representative
18. Misun Bormann	Business Rep #13
19. Mor Vue (designee for Shireen Gandhi)	Commissioner, MN Dept of Human Services
20. Nola Slagter-Johnson (designee for Irene Fernando)	Local Elected Official — County
21. Pete Johnson	State Elected — House (Ex-Officio)
22. Robert Stark	Business Rep #1

Name	Voting Role
23. Samuel Heimlich	Labor Organization Rep #3
24. Sandy Pulles	Community-based Org. Rep #1
25. Scott Cummings	Business Rep #16
26. Shannon Bryant (designee for Scott Olson)	Chancellor, MN State Colleges and Universities
27. Steven Kalina	Business Rep #23
28. Surya Iyer	Business Rep #5 — Chair
29. Troy Haugen	Business Rep #10

Non-Voting

Name	Role
30. Erica Lester	Community-based Org. Rep #2 (Non-Voting)
31. Linda Sloan	Executive Director — Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
32. Mary Niedermeyer	Community-based Org. Rep #3 (Non-Voting)
33. Nicole Blissenbach	Dept of Labor & Industry Rep (Non-Voting)
34. Shannon Geshick	Executive Director — Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

State of Minnesota Staff

1. Abdiwahab Mohamed	2. James Whirlwind Soldier	3. Mukutar Kariye
4. Ann Meyer	5. Jeanna Fortney	6. Nolan Thomas
7. Cameron Macht	8. Katie McClelland	9. Rebecca Zoubek
10. Colleen Harris	11. Kevion Ellis	12. Rita Beatty
13. Cory Schmid	14. Laura Oliven	15. Shayla Drake
16. Della Ludwig	17. Liz Jennings	
18. Emily Lefholz	19. Liz McLoone	
20. Marc Majors	21. Mike Lang	