

**Yavapai County Workforce Development Board
Board Draft Meeting Minutes
November 6th, 2025**

Attendee	Sector	Present/ Absent	2025 Absences
Joseph Au	Private	Present	0
Garth Bascom	Private	Present	0
Alycia Botkin	Title IV	Present	1
Linda Bolyard	Title III	Present	0
Tony Gauthier	Labor	Present	0
John Heiney	Econ Dev	Present	0
Mel Ingwaldson	Labor	Absent	3
Sandy Griffis	Private	Excused	0
Chris Kawabata	Title II	Present	0
Chris Kuknyo	CEO	Present	0
Tracey McCollum	Private	Present Virtual Zoom	1
Matt Meierbachtol	Private/Labor	Absent	1
Christian Oliva del Rio	Private	Absent	2
Justin Teclaw	Private	Present	0
Matt White	Private	Present Virtual Zoom	2

Other Attendees: Craig Lefever, YCWDB Director; Kerri Gump, Yavapai County Administrative Assistant II; Dawnette Polland, Director Title I-B; Marylou Mercado, Yavapai College, VP Workforce Development and Health Services; Jason Ebersole, Yavapai College, Dean of Health Sciences & Public Services; Ty Payne, Yavapai College, Chief of Police; Ron Sauntman, Fire Chief Cottonwood Fire Department

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 pm by the Chair, Garth Bascom, and made available via Zoom. Garth welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Yavapai College for hosting the meeting today. The agenda and attachments for the meeting were both emailed in advance, posted as required, and hard copies available at the meeting.

II. Roll Call

Roll was taken. Eleven of the Fifteen members of the board were present to create a quorum for the meeting which enabled the members to discuss and vote on motions being presented today.

III. Welcome, Introductions and Remarks.

Garth welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to go around the room and introduce themselves.

IV. Approval of Previous WDB Meeting Minutes (9/11/2025)

Garth asked if everyone had the chance to look at the minutes from the last meeting and whether there were any comments or changes from the Board. There were no comments or changes

A motion to approve the September 11, 2025, meeting minutes was made by Tony Gauthier. A second was made by John Heiney. A vote was requested and all stated Yes with no opposition or abstentions. Motion carried.

V. Presentation: First Responder Workforce Readiness and Retention Initiative

- a. The Director of WIOA and Title I-B will outline a collaborative effort to raise local and regional funding to support education, employment, and retention.

Yavapai County is experiencing a critical shortage of first responders, with about 43 positions currently unfilled across fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services. Many who complete local training programs leave within just a few years—27 to 36 percent—often drawn to areas with higher pay and more affordable housing. Ambulance services are turning over entire crews every three years on average, and fire departments continue to struggle with education and hands-on training gaps.

Police agencies are also seeing a sharp decline in applicants. Where there used to be 90 candidates for just two positions, there are now only 8 to 10 applicants for up to 10 openings—and departments are being forced to adjust standards just to fill the jobs.

Meanwhile, housing costs are pushing first responders farther away from the communities they serve. The average home price in Prescott has climbed to around \$800,000, which would require an income of about \$178,000—far beyond the typical \$50,000–\$60,000 salary of a first responder. As a result, many are commuting longer distances, which can delay emergency response times.

Population growth projections suggest Yavapai County could need 40 to 55 more first responders by 2027. Local programs are stepping up to meet the demand: Yavapai College offers EMT, paramedic, fire academy and law enforcement training and will launch a new Detention Officer Academy in 2026. Granite Mountain Training also provides EMT and paramedic education, helping prepare the next generation of first responders to serve the community.

To address the growing shortage of first responders, community leaders are coming together to form a partnership uniting local board members, county officials, businesses, educators, employers, and job seekers. The group will help develop an 18-month action plan focused on recruiting and retaining first responders, expanding mental health and wellness support, and exploring creative housing solutions for essential workers. These efforts aim to ensure that Yavapai County remains a safe, well served community, supported by first responders who can afford to live, and work in their community.

Anyone interested in being part of this working group are encouraged to contact Dawnette Polland for more information.

VI. Director's Report

a. Funding Update

WIOA funding remains uncertain as federal budget negotiations continue. The Senate has proposed funding the program at approximately 90% of the previous year's level, while the House significantly reduces funding and redirects support toward block grants to state governors. Yavapai County funding has already decreased due to low unemployment rates, which do not take underemployment into account, further limiting resources.

b. Bylaws Revision Committee

The previous bylaws revision committee project was incomplete. Craig asked the board members if any of them were interested in being part of a new bylaws committee. Justin, Alycia and Craig volunteered. Craig told the board, if anyone else was interested in being part of the committee to please contact him.

c. YCWB Staffing Update

Craig is currently the only staff member for the Workforce Development Board. The additional staff member that was previously approved by the Board of Supervisors, has been put on hold. The county Board of Supervisors is currently reviewing staffing requests.

VII. County Workforce Development Board Membership Items

a. Discussion regarding a possible Post-Secondary Education Representative.

There is a candidate from Yavapai College interested in filling this position. The board will review their application at the January meeting.

b. Discussion regarding renewed terms for Christian Oliva del Rio and Matt White.

Craig announced that Christian and Matt were reappointed by the Board of Supervisors for an additional two-year term starting back to July 1st.

VIII. Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)

Craig reported that over 99% of ETPL programs are current and approved at the state level.

IX. Member Discussion, One-Stop Center contact and access process.

- a. How do community members and partner organizations get in touch with the One-Stop Centers to receive assistance or referrals?

Joseph Au raised concerns about the accessibility of information regarding ETPL programs and the process of potential students to access services. He tried contacting One-Stop and no one answered the phone. Both Linda and Tania asked Joseph if he left a message and Joseph stated that he did not. Linda and Tania said they are both having staffing issues and may not be able to answer the phones right away, but that if you leave a message, they will call you back.

Tania also said she will be updating the rack to make sure it has all the updated information for the public.

X. Youth Council Report – Mel Ingwaldson, Youth Council Chairman

No update. Mel Ingwaldson was not in attendance.

XI. One-Stop Committee Report – Alycia Botkin, One-Stop Committee Chairman

The committee met last week, no significant updates. Still having staffing issues.

XII. One-Stop Operator Update – Tania Sheldahl, Interim One-Stop Coordinator

Working on improving the referral system between partners. Continuing to work on staffing shortages. Tania will be updating the rack cards with the current One-Stop information. The new One-Stop is expected to be open and operational by March 2026.

XIII. Member Discussion, WDB Meeting Calendar for 2026

Craig presented the proposed calendar for the year 2026. The meetings will continue to be held bi-monthly. Next meeting will be held at the County Building on Fair Street on January 8, 2026. If anyone is interested in hosting a Workforce Development Board Meeting, please reach out to Craig Lefever.

XIV. Next Meeting – January 8th, 2026, Yavapai County Building, 1015 Fair Street, Prescott, AZ 86305

XV. Call to the Public

Individuals may address the Board for up to three (3) minutes on any relevant issue within the Board's jurisdiction. Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.01(H), Board members shall not discuss or take action on matters raised during the call to the public. The Board may direct staff to study the matter or direct that the matter be rescheduled for consideration at a later date.

No one spoke or commented

XVI. Adjournment – 2:58pm