



DRAFT

MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING OF THE  
MARICOPA COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD YOUTH COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 5, 2026 – 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

---

**Members Present:**

Anne Landers, Brittany Holmes, Danielle Lertique, Eric Cultum, Che' Collins, JakinDee Kosaka, Jessica Rivera-Garcia, Marie Raymond, Robert Garcia, Tina Drews, Tiffany Bellows, Yvonda Shelton

**Members Absent:**

Anna Yap, Barbara Coakley, Dr. Meredith Critchfield, Jessica Ruiz

**Call to Order.**

Executive Director, Steve Clark, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and requested roll call.

**Roll Call.**

Roll call was conducted by Management Analyst, Madison Ginsberg. Quorum was confirmed.

---

**Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Meeting Objectives.**

Chair Landers welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the objectives and goals for the committee.

---

**Consent Agenda.**

**Meeting Minutes:** January 13, 2026

Chair Landers asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Che' Collins moved to approve the consent agenda. Marie Raymond seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

---

**Information/Discussion Only.**

**MCWDB Youth Success Story**

Workforce Development Career Advisor, Helena Durrenberger, shared the youth success story.

**Youth Workforce Services Update**

Workforce Development Program Supervisor, Zach Lynch, provided an update on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program. As of February 23, the program had 270 active youth participants, with 60 participating in occupational skills training and 40 engaged in work experience placements. In total, youth participants have received 2,480 services, including labor market information, supportive services such as transportation and work supplies, and postsecondary preparation. Healthcare remains the largest training area, representing 60% of current occupational skills training enrollments,

---

followed by transportation, construction, and information technology. The program has also exceeded the Department of Labor requirement to spend 20% of funds on work experience, reaching 23%.

Zach Lynch also highlighted improvements to the program's pre-enrollment and enrollment process, which were implemented in October to reduce barriers for youth. Changes included removing the joint orientation with the adult program, introducing one-on-one pre-qualification "meet and greet" sessions, and rebranding onboarding and assessments as a more youth-friendly "Youth Lab." These adjustments significantly increased participation, with 95 scheduled enrollments between October and January compared to 36 during the same period last year, demonstrating improved access and engagement.

#### Discussion:

Questions were raised regarding geographic trends of youth participants and whether in-school youth were involved in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Lynch noted that while some youth participate in CTE, it is not a program requirement, and staff continue to partner with schools to provide workshops and career readiness support. The group also discussed opportunities to increase awareness of emerging industries through enhanced career pathway presentations and labor market information resources.

#### **Youth Build - CPLC**

Itzel Barajas, Program Manager for YouthBuild, presented an overview of the YouthBuild program, a partnership between Habitat for Humanity Central Arizona and Chicanos Por La Causa. YouthBuild is a workforce development program designed for young adults ages 18–24 who face barriers to employment. The program provides education, construction training, leadership development, and supportive services to help participants gain skills and credentials for careers in the construction industry. Habitat for Humanity provides hands-on construction training and educational services, including GED preparation, while Chicanos Por La Causa leads recruitment, case management, and leadership development.

The program operates in person Monday through Friday and typically takes about six months to complete. Participants may earn their high school equivalency diploma while receiving hands-on construction experience and industry-recognized certifications such as OSHA 10, CPR, NCCER Core, and traffic control certifications. Participants also receive stipends, personal protective equipment, tools, and supportive services. Program time is divided between classroom education, construction pre-apprenticeship training, and leadership development activities such as job fairs, mock interviews, and connections to apprenticeship programs and construction employers. Currently, the program has 22 enrolled participants, with 19 participants having exited the program, 13 of whom have obtained employment, and 13 participants earning industry credentials.

#### Discussion:

Board members discussed potential opportunities to connect youth who may not qualify for other workforce programs to initiatives like YouthBuild. It was suggested that YouthBuild could serve as a potential referral or "off-ramp" for youth seeking workforce training and employment pathways in the construction industry.

#### **Agua Fria Union High School District – CTE Program Overview**

Phillip Nowlin, Deputy Superintendent of Academics for Agua Fria Union High School District, presented an overview of the Academies of the Southwest Valley, a district-wide transformation designed to better align

---

high school education with workforce needs and student career interests. The initiative was developed through the district's strategic planning process, which engaged more than 200 stakeholders including students, parents, educators, community members, and local municipalities.

The academy model allows students to select a career-focused academy and pathway within their high school, similar to choosing a college major. Each school offers three primary academies—Creative Arts and Media, Business Design and Technology, and Science, Service and Innovation—with pathways such as medical assisting, construction technology, and film/television production. All freshmen participate in a career exploration course that introduces them to multiple industries through guest speakers, career expos, and post-secondary campus visits. Students select their academy during their freshman year and progress through pathway coursework in grades 10–12, culminating in capstone projects or internship experiences. Core academic courses remain required, but instruction is integrated with students' chosen career pathways through academy-based learning projects.

The district partners with employers and community organizations to ensure pathways reflect current and future workforce needs. Local industry partners are invited to participate in classroom presentations, career exploration events, and work-based learning opportunities. Early results from the program's first year show positive outcomes, including increased credential attainment, improved attendance, improved academic performance, and reductions in student behavior incidents. The district plans to continue expanding partnerships and pathways to reflect emerging industry opportunities in the Southwest Valley.

Discussion:

Participants discussed the importance of exposing students to a variety of career pathways early in their education, particularly in emerging industries where awareness may be limited.

---

**Call to Public.**

Chair Landers called for public comment. No public comments were made.

---

**Adjourn.**

Chair Landers asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Yvonda Shelton moved to adjourn. Brittany Holmes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

---