



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

Thursday, February 19, 2026 | 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Albert Blanco, Anna Yap, Anne Landers, Brittany Holmes, Chris Richardson, Che' Collins, Danielle Lertique, Elias Medina, Gregg Ghelfi, Jacob Evenson, JakinDee Kosaka, Loren Granger, Minky Kernacs, Noelle Trinder, Scott Holman, Tim Willenborg, Tina Drews, Tom Saxon, Wallin Gustin

**Members Absent:**

Danielle Goodman, Kathryn Ybarra, Michael Vazquez, Shawn Hutchinson

**Call to Order.**

Chair Tim Willenborg called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

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**Roll Call.**

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

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**Welcome, Chair Opening Remarks.**

Chair Willenborg welcomed everyone to the meeting. Chair Willenborg introduced the new board members, Minky Kernacs, Chris Richardson, Tom Saxon, and Wallin Gustin. Minky Kernacs, Chris Richardson, and Tom Saxon briefly introduced themselves.

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**WDD Service Provider Update.**

Jared Beard, WDD Assistant Director, presented highlights on Occupational Skills Training (OST), registered apprenticeships, job fairs, and upcoming initiatives. OST programs provide short-term credential training for youth, adults, dislocated workers, and Smart Justice participants. Transportation remains the most utilized training area for adults and dislocated workers, while healthcare is now the leading industry for youth participants. Jared reviewed funding allocations by industry, average training costs, and noted the \$4,000 per-participant cap for most OST programs. Construction-related training is lower under OST due to an emphasis on registered apprenticeships. The majority of apprenticeship funding discussed is supported by \$12.5 million in ARPA funds awarded in late 2022 to serve 3,000 apprentices, with funding set to sunset this year. Staff recently met with the state unemployment team, where they were notified that the state will be adding 35 adjudicators and outsourcing its contact center to improve claims processing and reduce wait times.

Jared also highlighted significant growth in quarterly job fairs. In PY22, 337 employers and just over 1,000 job seekers participated; in the first half of PY25 alone, 543 employers and more than 6,300 job seekers participated, despite operating fewer sites. Upcoming events include an Apprenticeship Fair during National Apprenticeship Week (April 26-May 2), a Second Chance Job Fair in partnership with the City of Phoenix and Reform Alliance, and the inaugural Exceptional Workers Summit at ASU West during Autism Awareness Month.

**Discussion:**

Board members discussed training cost caps, ETPL requirements, and funding flexibility. Jared Beard clarified that all OST providers must be ETPL-approved, while apprenticeship and some pre-apprenticeship programs may be

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funded without the same cap structure. Staff work with participants to ensure training costs are fully covered upfront to prevent credential delays.

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### **Consent Agenda.**

Chair Willenborg introduced the consent agenda. The consent Agenda included: (a) Meeting Minutes: November 20, 2025, (b) One Stop Operator Quarter 2 Performance Assessment, (c) Needs Additional Assistance Policy, (d) Selective Service Policy, (e) Youth Program Eligibility Policy, (f) Title 1B Quarterly Report and the (g) Youth Committee Membership Update.

Chair Willenborg asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

JakinDee Kosaka moved to approve the consent agenda. Che' Collins seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

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### **Community Impact Statement.**

#### **Success Story.**

Career Advisor Angelica Dabrowski shared a success story of Abelardo. After more than ten years of incarceration, Abelardo felt overwhelmed reentering the community and unsure how to navigate employment with a felony background. He enrolled in the Smart Justice Program after learning about it from his parole officer and quickly found strong support from his Career Advisor. Through personalized career guidance and job search assistance, Abelardo secured full-time employment with Reddy Ice at \$22 per hour and received supportive services to help him start his new role. Grateful for the encouragement he received, he is excited about future growth opportunities and hopes to share the program with others.

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### **Information/Discussion/Possible Action.**

#### **Targeted In-Demand Industries**

Policy and Compliance Manager, Laura Malhoit, presented recommendations for updated Targeted In-Demand Industries and outlined the methodology used to develop them. A focus group composed of board staff, Workforce Development Division (WDD) leadership, and Business Services representatives met over multiple sessions to review labor market data and validate findings. The group analyzed labor market information from the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), regional economic priorities, participant outcomes, and existing board and state priorities. Selection criteria included projected job growth, competitive wages, training availability, realistic educational requirements for WIOA participants, and alignment with regional employer demand.

The focus group developed two lists: (1) Targeted In-Demand Industries (presented for board approval) and (2) a Targeted Occupations list (to be presented to the Executive Committee in March and the Full Board in April). The current industry list includes Construction; Finance and Insurance; Health Care and Social Assistance; Information; Manufacturing; and Transportation and Warehousing. Based on data review and Executive Committee feedback, staff recommended retaining Construction, Finance and Insurance, and Health Care and Social Assistance; renaming Information to Emerging Technologies; renaming Transportation and Warehousing to Transportation and Logistics; and updating Advanced Manufacturing to Manufacturing and Semiconductor. These updated industries will guide training investment eligibility, strengthen case management and service alignment, enhance employer engagement, and improve participant outcomes. Staff plan to review targeted in-demand industries annually to ensure continued alignment with labor market trends.

Chair Willenborg asked for a motion to approve the Targeted In-Demand Industries.

Albert Blanco moved to approve the consent agenda. JakinDee Kosaka seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

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## **Information/Discussion Only.**

### **Arizona State University – AI Presentation.**

Brittany Holmes of Arizona State University (ASU), joined by colleagues from the Fulton Schools of Engineering, Ed Plus, and the W. P. Carey School of Business, presented an overview of ASU’s artificial intelligence (AI) strategy, programs, and workforce-focused initiatives. ASU approaches AI as a long-term, emerging technology centered on responsible, equitable, and principled innovation. The university emphasized using AI to augment—not replace—human work, with a focus on improving learning outcomes, operational efficiency, and real-world impact. ASU has built an internal AI ecosystem, including enterprise-level tools and a “My AI Builder” platform that allows staff to create customized AI applications.

Presenters highlighted student-focused innovations, including “Degree Me,” an AI-powered degree exploration tool designed to help students align interests with career pathways using labor market data. ASU is also expanding scenario-based and experiential learning through AI simulations, including applications in healthcare training and military flight simulations, while rethinking assessment methods in response to AI use in education. Academic offerings include new AI-focused degree programs—such as a PhD in Artificial Intelligence—and workforce-oriented programs through the W. P. Carey School of Business, including a Master of Science and Bachelor of Science in AI and Business, as well as certificate programs and short executive workshops. Additional upcoming offerings include AI-focused leadership sessions, industry-specific workshops (e.g., manufacturing, service industries, digital futures), and a Partner Day event featuring AI discussions in supply chain management and marketing. ASU emphasized collaboration with employers to ensure curriculum alignment with evolving workforce needs.

### **Boilermakers Local 627 – Post BuildItAZ Grant Summary Report.**

Jacob Evenson, Business Manager at Boilermakers Local 627, provided an overview of the Boilermakers union, its apprenticeship program, and outcomes from the Round 2 BuildItAZ grant. The Boilermakers operate in heavy industrial sectors including power generation, mining, tank construction, and large-scale industrial welding and rigging. Local 627 covers Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii, with approximately 450 members. The union’s 6,000-hour, multi-employer apprenticeship program is funded through contractor contributions and includes on-the-job training, classroom instruction, welding certifications, and college credit opportunities.

Jacob highlighted the transient nature of boilermaker work, noting that large outage projects may require hundreds of workers for short durations before scaling back significantly. As Arizona transitions from coal-fired power plants, the union is seeking to redeploy its skilled workforce into emerging sectors such as hydrogen, carbon capture, geothermal, pumped hydro storage, semiconductor facilities, data centers, and water treatment projects. He emphasized that the primary barrier is not recruitment, but connecting union contractors with developers and project owners to secure bid opportunities and place workers on job sites.

Through the Round 2 BuildItAZ grant the union hired a recruiter, expanded outreach efforts, attended more than 20 career fairs, invested in digital marketing, and increased apprenticeship applications from fewer than 100 to approximately 458 applicants. While the Round 3 grant request—focused on hiring a full-time instructor and expanding pre-apprenticeship training—was not awarded, the union remains prepared to train and deploy workers if stronger connections can be established with developers and construction projects across Arizona.

### **Strategic Plan Progress Update.**

Madison Ginsberg, MCWDB Management Analyst/Board Liaison, presented the Strategic Plan FY26 mid-year update.

#### **Goal 1: Identify In-Demand Industries and Occupations**

Progress includes the formation of a targeted industries and occupations focus group, which developed updated

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industry recommendations and a workforce needs framework. The Board has also increased its focus on artificial intelligence (AI), adding two AI professionals to the Board, hosting AI presentations, conducting research on AI training opportunities, and attending an AI Summit. Next steps include continued AI research and development of a summary one-pager outlining accomplishments under this goal.

Goal 2: Establish Sustainable Funding Strategies

MCWDB staff developed a centralized funding tracker documenting grants pursued and awarded over the past five years, including funding sources, award status, amounts, and program impact. The tool supports data-driven decision-making and evaluation of funding trends. Next steps include analyzing success rates and strengthening alignment of future grant applications with workforce priorities.

Goal 3: Improve System Alignment and Partnerships

Two regional workgroups—Manufacturing and Regional Workforce & Economic Development—were established to strengthen coordination among industry, education, and workforce partners. Efforts include mapping semiconductor and advanced manufacturing workforce assets and improving employer engagement strategies. Next steps include hosting the Central Arizona Workforce Forum Series.

Goal 4: Establish Common Industry Terminology

The MCWDB staff are partnering with SciTech and industry professionals to develop a shared terminology template to align employers, educators, and workforce partners. The template aims to reduce confusion and duplication and will be presented to workgroups for feedback, and the final product will be presented to the Board for approval.

Goal 5: Define Career Pathway Entry Points

This goal is largely addressed through the Targeted Industries and Occupations Focus Group, which developed pathway inventories aligned with in-demand industries.

**MCWDB Workgroup Updates.**

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

**MCWDB Committee Reports.**

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

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**Call to the Public.**

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

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**Adjourn.**

There being no further business, Chair Willenborg thanked all attendees and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Greg Ghelfi made a motion to adjourn. Che' Collins seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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