

**PHOENIX BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
INSTILL HOPE STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**April 2, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**

**Members Present:**

Daniel Barajas  
Karen Carter  
Lorraine Field

Ginger Lane  
Jason Schaffner  
Sam Wolo

**Members Absent:**

Christian Bearden

**Public Attendees:**

Erica Bennett  
Elissa Black  
Dominic Cota  
Diana Figueroa  
Thomas Flynn  
LaSetta Hogans  
Hayden Maynard  
James Montoya

Jovanna Parkhouse  
Angie Parra  
Demitria Robles  
Stephen Sparks  
Rebecca Tierney  
Ariadna Valentin  
Laura Whitehead

Action items taken are noted in **bold** print.

**1) Call to Order / Roll Call/Introductions:**

The Phoenix Business and Workforce Development Board (Board) Instill Hope Steering Committee (IHSC) Chair Karen Carter called the April 2, 2026, meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Roll call was completed, and there was a quorum of five members.

**2) Approval of the January 22, 2026 IHSC Meeting Minutes:**

**IHSC Vice Chair Jason Schaffner motioned to approve the January 22, 2026 IHSC Meeting Minutes, IHSC Member Sam Wolo seconded the motion.**

**Approved: Daniel Barajas, Karen Carter and Lorraine Field**

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

**Motion passed unanimously**

**IHSC Member Ginger Lane joined the meeting at 9:07.**

**3) Advanced Business Services Community of Practice Update**

IHSC Chair Karen Carter recognized IHSC Member Daniel Barajas as the committee champion of February 26, 2026 Community of Practice meeting focused on Advanced Business Services. ARIZONA@WORK City of Phoenix Project Manager James Montoya shared information related to the meeting hosted at Paradise Valley Community Colleges, including employer insights and hiring trends. Workforce development trends including the importance of life skills and workplace readiness. There is a need for social and emotional wellness support to encourage employee retention. Barriers identified during the meeting include high entry-level turnover, rapid technological change, a need to align training with industry needs, and employer culture.

James shared participant survey information and the topics of interest from participants for upcoming meetings.

## SURVEY FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK	SCALE (1-5)
Venue	4.7
Content relevant to work	4.75
Information was valuable	4.7
I can apply what I learned in my work	4.55
Good use of time	4.8

# TOPICS OF INTEREST

Topic	Number Interested
Data, Evaluation, and Performance Measures	12
Best Practices and Success Stories	11
Tools and Resources for Implementation	11
Employer Engagement Strategies	11
Collaboration and Partnerships Models	10
Training and Professional Development	6
Policy and Compliance Updates	5

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Daniel shared that Board Chair Patrick Fitzhugh moderated a panel focused on Advanced Business Services needs. He shared that on the panel, participants encouraged community members to remember which companies are headquartered in Phoenix. Companies that are not headquartered in the Phoenix area have other places to go, if they cannot connect with the Phoenix talent pipeline. It made him think about how workforce and training partners need to work with employers to support the talent pipeline and connecting more potential talent with hiring employers. IHSC Vice-Chair Jason Schaffner shared that it's a valid point on how the Board gets employers, service providers, and training providers to the table and to have direct conversations. IHSC Member Sam Wolo shared that the Board staff does a strong job connecting with employers in the Mobile Career Unit (MCU) program and encouraged the Board to consider how the Board continues engaging with employers to have them attend events, beyond their participation in MCU. Lorraine said her company is thinking now about the employees in positions that will be affected by Artificial Intelligence (AI), to prepare them for their next role in the company when their current job is taken over by automated processes.

IHSC Chair Karen Carter shared that it was nice to see the updated Labor Market Information was shared and that the information was valuable. IHSC Member Lorraine Field asked if the employers talked at all about retention strategies as they see high turnover among entry-level participation. She suggested that the Board could support employers by encouraging those conversations and sharing best practices. Sam asked if the Business Services team could help employers identify reasonable recruitment areas and barriers faced by potential talent in those areas and help employers develop strategies to recruit in those areas. Board Executive Director LaSetta Hogans shared that the Business Services teams works with the colleges in the area and through

Bureau of Labor Statistics data to offer that information to employers moving into the area. She asked if Sam was asking how the Board could share with employers that might not relate to the Board can learn about the availability of that information. LaSetta asked the IHSC would be interested in a cross-sector event based on retention and programs available that support retention and developing career paths. Karen said that she knew that the committee was interested in a cross-sector event but did not want to plan out past the end of the current strategic plan. LaSetta encouraged the Chair and Vice-Chair to share that information at their next Executive Leadership Committee Meeting.

**4) Artificial Intelligence Training Update**

ARIZONA@WORK City of Phoenix Project Manager James Montoya shared an update on the Community of Practice’s Artificial Intelligence (AI) training sessions. The five-part AI training series, was developed in collaboration with Grand Canyon University, based on feedback received from attendees who participated in the “Building for an AI-Enabled Workforce” convening held in June 2025. The five-part series is focused on training workforce service providers and community partners by equipping them with AI tools that will enable them to better assist participants and students. The goals of the training series include establishing a strong understanding of AI, safe usage of AI, applicable AI tools to improve, streamline and enhance productivity. James shared there were fifteen participants from 6 different organizations.

DATES	SESSIONS
December 19, 2025	Understanding and Exploring GenAI
January 9, 2026	Prompting for Professionals
January 16, 2026	AI for Workforce Productivity
February 6, 2026	AI Safety, Privacy, Accuracy and Equity
February 20, 2026	Bringing GenAI Back into your organization.

James shared that the overall feedback was that the training session was relevant and helpful and that the trainer was a strong leader and offered valuable support.

James introduced Stephen Sparks from Arizona Career Pathways, a workforce service provider who participated in the AI training series. Stephen shared that training is important for his organization as they try to understand how AI is changing the workforce. Their organization helps people to get two-year associate degrees, and they want to train people for positions that are going to be there. He said the key takeaways were that Dr. Loy was a great teacher. He shared that people were able to use the tools in real time and learned about how to prompt AI correctly and what to watch out for when using AI. He also shared that the participant learned that it is important to check AI's work. He appreciated the focus on safety, ensuring people are protecting privacy and data into AI, because it gets entered into Large Language Models. He shared that they did practical studies to help with workforce services in refining resumes, applications, ensuring LinkedIn profiles are polished. The training gave the broad scope of AI and encouraged responsible use.

**5) Upcoming Community of Practice Events**

ARIZONA@WORK City of Phoenix Project Manager James Montoya shared he has been collaborating with IHSC Member Christian Bearden with coordinating the next convening scheduled for April 30 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. focused on skilled trades and apprenticeships. IHSC Chair shared that members attend, even if it is not their sector, because there's still so much valuable information shared.

**6) Strategic Tracker Review**

IHSC Chair Karen Carter reviewed and shared the strategic plan tracker. She informed the committee that Goal 4.3 that was pending completion, is changed to green with the updates of the labor market information.

**7) Call the Public/Open Discussion:**

None

**8) Future Agenda Items:**

None

**8) Adjournment:**

IHSC Chair Karen Carter adjourned the meeting at **9:58 a.m.**