



# SWDB BOARD NOTES

**Date: 8/25/25**

**Location: ZOOM**

## Minutes

### Iowa Workforce Development Board Meeting

August 25, 2025

11 am – 12:00 pm

ZOOM

#### Agenda item 1. Call to Order

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Chair Teresa Hovell called to order the meeting of the Iowa Workforce Development Board (the Board) on August 25, 2025, at approximately 11 am.

#### Agenda item 2. Roll Call

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##### Members in Attendance

1. Dawn Driscoll
2. Barb Kniff McCulla
3. Beth Townsend
4. Stacy Cervenka
5. Brandy McOmber
6. Teresa Hovell
7. Scott Naumann
8. Kelly Barrick
9. Jack Hasken
10. LuAnn Scholbrock
11. Jessica Dunker
12. Ofelia Rumbo

13. Nick Glew
14. Jason Shanks
15. Amy Gieseke

##### Members Absent

1. Laura Book
2. Brad Elliott
3. Carrie Duncan
4. Charlie Wishman
5. Tiffany O'Donnell

Shelly Evans called roll and advised Chair Teresa Hovell that quorum was established.

Chair Hovell welcomes attendees and introduces new Director of Department for the Blind, Stacy Cervenka.

Stacy Cervenka introduces herself as the new Director for the Iowa Department for the Blind. They are the vocational rehabilitation agency for people who are blind and have low vision. I'm from Lincoln, Nebraska but grew up in Chicago. I worked for five years for Kansas Senator Sam Brownback. Worked on variety of public policy issues including disability employment policy, VR, special education and a wide variety of other issues that included labor, pensions, Social Security, and aging. Started out in workforce policy early in my career. Worked for Sacramento Society for the Blind as youth program coordinator doing what today we call pre-employment transition services. Then I worked as rehab counselor for California Department of Rehabilitation. As government program analyst where I was conduit between the department and several state mandated advisory committees. Then executive officer of state rehabilitation council, federally mandated committee that advises VR departments. Worked as director of public policy for American Foundation for the Blind concentrating on education, employment, transportation, technology, and aging with vision loss. Most recently senior director of policy for responsibility which is a cross-disability organization called Divisibility Belontgs. Most of my background is in public policy and VR. Excited to be here. A little bit of work for California's workforce board. I am excited to be in Iowa and learn more today.

Chair Hovell – excited to have you here with us and look forward to what you are going to bring to the board.

### Agenda item 3. Approval of Agenda

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Chair Hovell called the next order of business which was the approval of the meeting Agenda for August 25, 2025. The agenda was previously emailed to the Members of the Board.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the Agenda for 8/25/25.

Soctt Naumann motioned to approve the Agenda and LuAnn Scholbrock seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

### Agenda item 4. Approval of 5/15/25 Minutes (Attachment 1)

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Chair Hovell called the next order of business which was the approval of the meeting Minutes for May 15, 2025. The minutes were previously emailed to the Members of the Board.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the Minutes for 5/15/25.

Kelly Barrick motioned to approve the Minutes and Barb Kniff McCulla seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

## Agenda item 5. Approval of 6/3/25 Minutes (Attachment 1)

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Chair Hovell called the next order of business which was the approval of the meeting Minutes for June 3, 2025. The minutes were previously emailed to the Members of the Board.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the Minutes for 6/3/25.

Jessica Dunker motioned to approve the Minutes and Beth Townsend seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

## Agenda item 6. Welcome by Teresa Hovell, Chair

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Chair Hovell welcomes attendees.

- Welcome.
- Special thanks to Director Cervenka for being here today.

Another busy meeting today with several items to vote on.

## Agenda item 7. Update and Timeline on PY26 WIOA Unified State Plan Modification Recommendations by Brandy McOmber, WIOA Core Partner Working Group. (Iowa WIOA Unified State Plan Modification Recommendations – Attachment 3)

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Brandy McOmber provided an update and timelines on the PY26 WIOA Unified State Plan Modification Recommendations. PY2024-2027 – WIOA State Plan Recommendation Modification. Notifying you of areas that require modifications. Future meetings will be provided with further modifications and updated state plan. Corer partner group membership and operates on behalf of the SWDB. Working diligently on the state plan. WIOA Core partner group: Michele McNertney, DA for IWD, Carolyn Farley Bureau Chief of WIOA Titles I and III, Klye Clabby Kane, Bureau Chief of WIOA Title II, myself, DA for VR, and Sandy Ostendorf, Quality Improvement Manager for VR, and Keri Osterhaus, VR Program Administrator, Iowa Department for the Blind. This group oversees that work. Legislation requires the Governor to submit a strategy and operational plan every four years. We are two years into that process, and a modification is required. Current plan is for the program years 2024 through 2027. Currently preparing for modification. Critical we can ensure we have completed this work to have federal funding approved for the six core WIOA programs. Three are formula grant programs. Both Department for the Blind (DOB) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) both oversee disabling conditions. Plan gives Iowa's vision and strategies for implementing WIOA principles and requirements through these core partner programs. Items include vision, strategies, strategic planning, operational planning and program specific requirements. Modifications are to update things like Labor Market Information (LMI), what it looks like 2 years in. Simple language or minute changes as programs have changed over time – no major changes. Working

to obtain local stakeholder information, comments, and feedback and will provide an updated modification plan. This document gives major overview of areas that will require updates. Between August 2025 and November 2025, we will consult with local stakeholders. December 2025 – January 2026 a draft modification will be submitted to this board for review and approval. Once approved the plan will be posted for public comments and town halls will be held. January 2026 – February 2026 after end of public comment period, final adjustments will be made, and a final draft will be submitted to this board for review and approval. Goal is to submit to USDOL in March 2026.

Jessica Dunker – when talking about stakeholders are they private or public? What kind of history for town halls and public comments?

Brandy McOmber – stakeholders are all core partners that involve variety of different entities and programs. One example is VR that may involve individuals with a disability. Each partner has local stakeholders. We post on the state workforce board website, and each core partner has the ability to post. Townhalls have been virtual and in person. Regardless of location, we don't get a lot of in-person attendees. Due to time of year, often times better feedback virtually. Anyone from the public can attend.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the recommendations for PY2024-2027 WIOA Unified State Plan modifications.

Barb Kniff McCulla – what are means of communication to get public to answer or attend. How would I know as a private individual from a small community that I could give feedback?

Brandy McOmber – each core partner has channels. Website with messages. Post on public notice website.

Michelle McNertney – State of Iowa hosts an Iowa public comment website. We post here throughout the process. IWD, SWDB, VR and DOB websites. Could also do social media. Historically, I have had good interaction through the public comment period.

Barb Kniff McCulla – do you do anything about “how did you hear about us”.

Brandy McOmber – we ask for contact information from those providing public comments. Our communication team could explore other different options available.

Barb Kniff McCulla – thank you Brandy.

Barb Kniff McCulla motioned to approve the recommendations and Kelly Barrick seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

Agenda item 8. Discussion of Iowa Plains Committee recommendation to approve LWDA Policy for Transitional Jobs by Holly Espenhover, Iowa Plains Committee Chair. (Iowa Plains LWDS Transitional Jobs Policy – attachment 4)

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Holly Espenhover opened discussions on the recommendation for the LWDA Policy for Transitional Jobs.

Policy provides guidance on use of transitional jobs as a service strategy under WIOA Title I adult and dislocated worker program. Aims to support by offering paid hands-on work experience to enhance workplace skills and improve prospects of long-term employment. Guides on how programs must meet eligibility requirements; enrolled in programs, undergo assessment leading to development of individual employment plan. This justifies specific needs for and benefits of transitional job as well as a work-based learning (WBL) opportunity. May be offered to enrolled adults and dislocated workers who meet priority service requirements and then retention. Looking for successful outcomes following completion of the experience. Policy guides strategies and services for individuals who oftentimes have difficulty obtaining and keeping jobs long-term. Discusses employer eligibility and criteria, work site eligibility and discussion around length of training, which may last up to 520 hours, whether job is part-time or full-time. Training hours can be adjusted based on circumstances or disability. Iowa Plains committee has reviewed and approved.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the recommendations for LWDA Policy for Transitional Jobs.

Jack Haksen motioned to approve the recommendations and Nick Glew seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

Agenda item 9. Discussion of Requested Merger of South Central and Mississippi Valley LWDA's by Michelle McNertney, Workforce Services Division Administrator, Iowa Workforce Development. (Merger Request Letter – attachment 5; and LWDA Maps – attachment 6)

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Michelle McNertney opened discussions on the requested merger of South Central and Mississippi Valley LWDA's.

Request to merge and become one local area. Local workforce areas consist of chief elected officials (CLEOs), and the county board of supervisors. That area has fiscal liability. Title I funding provided to local areas and local boards. Merger requires South Central and Mississippi Valley to take effect July 1, 2026. It gives them about nine months to do merger and complete it. October 1, 2026, Mississippi Valley takes over as designated grant sub recipient for South Central. South Central will no longer have a local fiscal agent or staff to support their work. Jason Roudabush, CLEO from South Central, is on the phone and Jim Irvin, CLEO from Mississippi Valley is here in person. Working closely with them and my team has assisted. They have worked hard to work through the options, and this merger will help you maintain that local control. Turn over the CLEOs. Worked through options and this merger will give Mississippi Valley chance to maintain local control and move forward with support.

Jason Roudabush – in May got funding cut by 19%. Executive on the board stepped down on July 1. Still have staff and fiscal agent for board. Consulted with Mississippi Valley, East Central, Northeast, about combining. South Central and Mississippi Valley are 100% on board. Leaving door open for Northeast. Biggest thing is funding. It makes it hard to pay for staff. We want to keep control, and this should help us do that and continue to provide services for constituents and that's why we are asking to join.

Jim Irwin – thank you for allowing me to attend. Jason and I are supervisors that have been here from the beginning of the merger process. It was a heavy lift last time. We wanted local control to keep moving forward. When Jason reached out it was an easy conversation to have. Miranda Swafford is executive director and does a phenomenal job. We presented to all counties. See the writing on the wall. Seen 17 –18% cuts locally. We said back in 2018 that the State of Iowa should be at 3 or 4 workforce areas. We were at 15 in the beginning. Currently at 6 and this would take us to 5. Potential other counties for further discussion. Jason and I got county approval. Hoping this goes through today so we can start working on how this will work for us.

Jessica Dunker – well done.

Barb Kniff McCulla – fantastic idea that you are doing this. It could be a model that can work and share services with counties. Thank you for being proactive in this. Making notes to bring back to other fellow other legislators. This is a model that can work.

Nick Glew – new board member question. Context on funding decline. Federal government, state government, population decline. What is driving reduction?

Michelle McNertney – funding passed down from IWD to local boards is 100% federal funds. WIOA Title I adult dislocated worker and youth programs. State is allowed to keep 5% for admin and 10% for Governor's reserve funds. 85% of funding is required to be passed to local boards. Formula is established by federal law. PY24 received \$13.4 million and for PY25, starting July 1, had \$1.2 million cut across the board. Drastically reduces amount of funding available for local areas. Each program has own formula based on things like unemployment rates and number of disadvantaged youths, and many different factors. South Central is smaller local area and typically has smaller budget. Most of those counties are rural. Funding cut hit South Central pretty hard.

Nick Glew – heard wanting to maintain local control. True boards may not exist if they did not join. Would it then become SWDB?

Michelle McNertney – Iowa Plains is a great example. Holly is chair of this area. Northern border from I35 to Missouri River one local area, Iowa Plains. CEO decided to refuse to have fiscal liability for those funds and removed themselves. Not allowed to create local board and the SWDB becomes the board for that part of the state. We have appointed a committee that is made up of members of Iowa Plains in those counties so they can still have local input on their needs. Board decides what happens in Iowa Plains. It happens to other local areas; we would be in the same position.

Jack Hasken – I had the same question about the funding. Is there an appetite from Northeast Iowa area? Jason mentioned is there a possible merger? 19% reduction is

significant. I think we currently have six going down to five but is there an appetite for NE Iowa since this is where I am from?

Jason Roudabush – we talked to all four regions on the east side of the state because it's a good region. Good reason to join and started off with all four regions to see if we could join. Couple of counties hesitant this year. Because of administration dollars given to support staff and decisions for the workforce. Couple decided no. Couple others positive towards it. Left door open to join down the road.

Jim Irwin – learned last week after conversations with some CEOs from NE region and surprised that had 22 counties very against it. With process it has to be 100% or it does not go through. They are open to having discussions. I will be working with Jason and Miranda to engage NE. Understand now Mississippi Valley board will be working hand in hand with South Central board. Our employees / staff will be taking over day-to-day operations and monitoring and will become fiscal agent. If it happens, we need to have it happen in the next few months. Has to be on this board's agenda in December if going to move forward in the spring.

Michelle McNertney – another meeting in the spring of 2026.

Jim Irwin – my goal is to get NE on board. Makes better sense in my opinion. Will be a heavy lift for our staff for the next 6-9 months. In long run it would be better for NE to join us. Working with Jason and Miranda to further conversations and work with their boards.

Michelle McNertney – some of the CEOs in NE Iowa wanted additional information about potential funding and what that looks like. My team is working to get them that additional information.

Jack – thank you Michelle.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Motion to Approve the requested merger of South Central and Mississippi Valley LWDAs.

Barb Kniff McCulla motioned to approve the merger and LuAnn Scholbrock seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

Agenda item 10. Discussion on Committees for State Workforce Development Board by Michelle McNertney, Workforce Services Division Administrator, Iowa Workforce Development. (Summary of Standing Committees – attachment 7)

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Michelle McNertney opened discussions on the standing committees.

This past legislative session SF603 was signed into law on 3/28/25 by Governor Reynolds. Section of that bill that updated 84A1 section 6 which previously required specific committees on SWDB. Working on making language within code a bit more generic as it is very WIOA specific now. WIOA is currently up for reauthorization at federal level. Trying to make our code more generic so that when federal law changes, we don't need

to push code changes every session. One change was to remove specific language that requires certain committees and allows the board to create additional committees as they wish. Simply this board has ability to create committees via Bylaws. More flexibility.

Jessica Dunker – we can ditch everything, and we have legislation that says we can do that, modify anything we want.

Michelle – that's correct. Law is effective and you can change the committees as you wish.

Teresa Hovell – Currently eight committees and want board to decide changes moving forward. Executive Committee will meet pre-post meeting if there's anything that needs to be voted on or discussed immediately. Systems Committee with Jack Haskins. Has been working diligently on balance of the meetings. Need to have specific committees, committed to support and adding items of value. Conversation and recommendations for change and future committees.

Beth Townsend – if board wanted to, they could they decide to go to 4 committees instead of 8. Could they also consolidate committees in addition to eliminating them as well.

Michelle McNertney – this does not have to be a one-time change. We can add a committee at any time.

Teresa Hovell - could come back in six months and decide there is something you want to form a committee on. No forced conversations or decisions today just want to start those conversations. Open up to strong support or strong committee that we should not have on the board.

Jessica Dunker – wonderful this passed. Committees previously forward with no urgent task at hand. Consider putting policies and practices together with systems committee. Love to see cohesive approach to youth, minority, ex-offender, essentially folks with barriers. Don't feel that way about disabilities. That's a whole set of systems with different laws, requirements, etc. Don't want to fold disability into that. Look at barrier to entry as a committee could be a little more comprehensive because a lot of time is a young minority, minority ex-offender, multiple barriers. I think people's passions kid of lean towards barrier to entry. I would not put disability and would leave as own committee. Understand thoughts and recommendations are systems and policies and practices are consolidated into one committee.

Teresa Hovell – A barriers committee. I think that's great.

Jack Hasken – as chair of the systems committee. Jessica suggests that we merge with the policies and practices. I am looking at five goals that we did and getting momentum was difficult and difficult tasks. Like the idea that they work together. Making sure internal parts were working. Feeling like this makes total sense marrying that with policies and practices makes total sense. SWDB needs to make sure that the internal parts are working to ensure we are doing our job. Like the idea and have eight maybe going to four. We



all have to agree to go that route.

Nick Glew – only been on the board for a couple of years. Appreciate this conversation because I questioned what the committees are for, should I be on a committee but never have been asked. I don't know what they do. Board needs to do a deeper dive, refer that to a committee, subset of the board and staff working collaboratively to chew on whatever it might be. I recall we have reports on the agent, reports from the system committee but really like this back and forward from the board. Assuming there's a workload that a certain committee is working on and working by itself. As a board member and I missing out on getting the information. What work is it that has to be done, do we as a board need to do a better job. Kind of delineating what those tasks are. From staff perspective, do we even need committees like, we are empowered to reduce them and have the conversation. I failed to really grasp why we need them to begin with and that's me just not doing a good enough job asking where I can plug in and help. I think combining them is a great idea but understanding even more why we need them is maybe a bigger question. I agree completely.

Michelle McNertney – some of the committees have been around since before I started at IWD, eight years ago. I'm not sure we remember why for some of these. It's we should not form a committee unless there is a purpose and goal. Suggestions you are making are great. Can add what this committee is going to achieve, end goal. It doesn't have to be permanent. It could be year-long purpose to achieve. We want to make a recommendation for the next legislative session or along those lines about certain types of policy. I will say the Iowa Plains committee needs to stay. Great function for that and they are doing an awesome job to help represent that area. We establish a committee putting together not just a description but what the goal is. Very important part of the puzzle.

Beth Townsend – Since 2015 several committees were required by law, and we were required to do reports. A lot of times there was nothing to report because there was no work to be done. We created a couple new committees since I started at IWD including Minority Unemployment and Outreach as well as the Ex-Offender Reentry because of discovered needs to address particular barriers for returning citizens and employment. This was pre-pandemic and then the pandemic happened and the committees kind of fell off the table and we haven't done a great job of kicking them off again. Not a big interest primarily because we didn't identify something that each committee could work on with specific goals. We met the pre-pandemic goals. If we are going to have committees moving forward, we need to have defined purposes for the committee and commitment from board members to participate. Participation has been a challenge because everybody's busy. When we have committee meetings in addition to the quarterly board meetings, people get a little overwhelmed. If you don't have strong membership on the committees, then the work of the committees will not be as productive. I would give kudos to Jack Haskins because the Systems Committee has really proved that committee work can be done and can be effective. They came in and created Bylaws because there was no organized way or structure. This was desperately needed. Jack came in and took that work on and we had committed members of that committee, and they did really great work. Committees are an effective way to get work done, The SWDB doesn't necessarily have the time or ability to do deeper dives into particular issues. We need to be pretty intentional about what issues we want

to dive into and not just have committees for the sake of having committees.

Stacy Cervenka – I want to understand more about why disabilities wouldn't be included in the barriers committee for youth, ex-offenders, and dislocated workers. We have all those populations within our community. We serve youth. This week we were talking about a plan for someone who's an ex-offender. One thing that is important to me is that we are not siloed but integrated into the greater work this board is doing. The needs of people with disabilities are considered in every committee and not necessarily just kind of our own little committee over here in the corner.

Jessica Dunker – I had opportunity to be part of youth, minority, and ex-offender. Pre-pandemic we did board outreach. I got opportunity to travel to Council Bluffs and Waterloo be part of town halls. We were trying to understand barriers for this population. Pandemic hit. Came back to the board with what we listened to and potential recommendations. Only reason I suggested different on disabilities, but would defer 100% to you, there are very specific federal and state laws related to this.

Ofelia Rumbo – I'm the chair of the Minority unemployment and Outreach Committee. I experienced a lot of really energized members of the committee looking to make improvements and we had a goal. We kept up with looking at the trends and how the state was doing. It's just hard for us to influence. In 2024 we did four different town halls around different cities in the state. A lot of the minority populations experience a lot of the similar issues that our youth and ex-offenders are experiencing. I agree with your suggestion of combining those and agree with your comments on disabilities.

Michelle McNertney – The Disability Access Committee has been extremely active. There is a network of local disability access committees associated with the local workforce development boards (LWDB) that do a really great job. So that might be why you were thinking not to separate but to continue the good work that that group has been doing.

Teresa Hovell – Any additional thoughts?

Barb Kniff McCulla - how many board members are on each of these boards, like minority, ex-offender, Iowa Plains? Like 5 members, 2 members?

Teresa Hovell – There is not a requirement. It does not have to be a SWDB member. Could be someone in the community who has a passion to serve.

Barb Kniff McCulla – I wondered if it does require 10 people since you were having trouble with people showing up at the meetings. Is it more like 5 people or 10 people on a board?

Teresa Hovell – so there is no requirement, no maximum, I would say 4-5.

Barb Kniff McCulla – I understand there is no requirement but just curious to know how many roughly there were on the current boards. Okay, thank you.

Teresa Hovell – Given the common theme of purpose and output, I am wondering, and I don't believe this is in place right now. I was on a committee for about 2 months and then it was just kind of a circle. With each committee, however we decide to organize

or what to keep, what not to keep, has to present maybe annually to the board what they propose for the next year. Not a long conversation but see if it fits with what the board agrees with. I heard we just kind of did our thing and there wasn't a lot of guidance, boundaries, or guardrails on what we were supposed to do so we just figured it out. If the new committee comes back to the board the board then can decide if that fits with what the board wants to do and fits with other things we are working on. It is something we are willing to support. That type of support and guidance goes a long way for those participating, doing the work and not having anyone talking about it after. After discussion the board can decide if that's the direction

Beth Townsend – I would revise Jessica's recommendation a little bit. Can have members from barriers to reentry committee we could invite members to be representatives from VR and DOB but have separate disability access committee continue doing the work the local groups are doing and be supportive of that as well. If barriers to workforce committee that broad could identify what barrier it is you want to work on. That will change over time and focus depending on membership. A lot of community members felt strongly about the work we were doing, especially for the minority outreach. Wayne Ford was a big proponent and active participant pre-pandemic. We call upon community members or stakeholders that have passion and invite them to join. Maybe with a broader approach to the barriers committee members could come on and off that committee depending on the work that we are doing.

Teresa Hovell – any additional thoughts? This has been an amazing conversation. I actually enjoyed it quite a bit. I know people get very passionate about the things they love and support. This has been a great conversation.

Jack Hasken – I want to thank Director Townsend for those nice comments. I enjoy chairing the Systems Committee because I really wanted to do what I could to help the system and identify issues. That's our main goal. Our group was excellent. I thought it had merit, and the committee needs to continue to make sure the system is effectively working. Michelle and Wendy Greenman were very instrumental in educating me as chair. We broke it down into five priorities. Getting people to show up for the meetings, everyone is busy with these committees, just hopefully the commitment is there, and we can keep going.

Teresa Hovell – Jack, thank you for all your work on the Systems Committee and leading that group because you did come back and did a lot of work. A lot of output was made, and a lot of deliverables were made. Thank you very much.

Jack Hasken – glad to do it.

Nick Glew – Would there ever be a strategy where, you know, if we look back at like we were just voting on some of these, you know, revisions two years into the Unified State Plan Should there be any correlation to whatever committees we might have to kind of an overarching, I guess call it strategic plan that we as a board should be responsible for. Should there be some intentionality of connecting some specific components of that plan to the work of a committee? I'm just trying to create some unified alignment with the work that the board is doing that's then delegated down to committee work. Right

now, I don't feel like that bigger picture connection with kind of strategic work of the board. Does that make sense to anyone?

Jessica Dunker – I believe that's the role of an Executive Committee to really be looking at the overarching strategy and then bringing that to the board. They meet more often than we do as a larger board, and that's normally the function. We haven't discussed the Executive Committee as part of this conversation, but really that is, I believe, probably by definition what that group should be doing.

Teresa Hovell - I would tell you that's not the case Jessica. We don't meet more than this board. The position of the Executive Committee since I've been on it for the last two years has been when there is something that needs to be reviewed and voted on in between. To your point, I don't think that's the wrong purpose of that committee is to have a little more guidance over what the other committees are doing and how it feeds back into the bigger board.

Jessica – unintelligible.

Teresa Hovell – with the conversation today there was a lot of good that we all have about how this should go forward. A few givens that won't go away. The Executive Committee, which may look different, needs to be there. Iowa Plains needs to remain intact. We want to continue with the Disability Access Committee. At this point we need to wrap our heads around what we want the additional committees to look like. My recommendation would be to come back to the December meeting and make our final recommendations. After we have all had this conversation and understanding what the go forward should be to make those final recommendations. The barriers reentry committee and how we would work with the SWDB policies and what do we want to do moving forward with the process and how they report back to the board.

Jessica Dunker – could we Director Michelle to draft something for consideration based upon the conversations we had today.

Beth Townsend – I would also recommend that we have the SWDB members to send input to Michelle on what you feel should be the purposes, what committees, so she has feedback to work with.

Michelle McNertney – I could do a Doodle poll to gather some feedback from everyone with a deadline and then come together with our recommendations.

Nick Glew – I could see a committee that is just focused on being the liaison with our local workforce board. Not being any more specific than that. That may be the first comment that I heard. That makes sense beyond the Executive Committee. I think there is a great opportunity here to be more effective. I think with the local boards that could make a lot of sense.

Teresa Hovell – additional comments?

Unintelligible comment.

Teresa Hovell – 100%.

Jessica Dunker – because I did show up at one of the local board meetings because I'm automatically invited to it. So, I went and they couldn't believe they were so excited that I had shown up. That would be a great outreach opportunity. I'm giving you an affirmation Nick.

Teresa Hovell – I would make a motion that Michelle will write up a proposal from input from all board members. She will distribute to us in some form and include a deadline. Please make sure the deadline is met. We will bring this conversation back at our next board meeting. Committees that will stay standing or executive committee, although it may look different. The Iowa Plains Local Workforce Committee and then the Disability Access Committee. That's the motion.

Jack Hasken – I second.

Teresa Hovell – any additional comments or inputs?

- ACTION ITEM: Motion for approval of Michelle McNertney preparing a proposal for committees of the SWDB.

Teresa Hovell motioned to approve Michelle McNertney preparing a proposal for committees of the SWDB and Jack Hasken seconded the motion. Members of the Board in attendance voted on the motion by voice vote, which carried unanimously.

Teresa Hovell – those are fun. I love those conversations.

### Agenda item 11. Director's Report

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Director Townsend provided her report.

- Moves made recently. Fort Dodge will be moving off the campus of Iowa central Community College because they wanted their building back. Getting a new space on 9/1 and transitioning to that space in the month of August. End of June moved out of the mall in Cedar Rapids and onto the campus of Kirkwood Community College. It opened on 8/1 and it has been very exciting, and we have gotten great feedback from staff. President fisher of ICCC was also very excited to have us on campus and it's a great working opportunity for our staff. Great working partnership, better parking and easier access for individuals in the area.
- Another successful state fair. Had a booth in Varied Industries building and the mobile unit was present. Saw thousands of lowans and children wrote their dream jobs or what they wanted to be when they grew up on our chalkboard. If you want to see the trend for the future, you should come by. I recommend it. Appears YouTube influe3nces are big aspiration for young people. A dad watching his son write on the board told me this was the best booth at the fair. You've got the best job watching these kids write their aspirations on the board. Great turnout. Always good to interact with public and good for staff to get out and meet the public in those situations.

- Modernization launch of UI benefits platform at the beginning of June. Very successful. No disruption in payment of claims. Fewer and fewer calls and more lowans are learning how to use the new system. It is easier for us to make changes to this new system, pull reports, and talk to workforce services side of the house, since we were on two different systems. Working on updating case management for VR and will have cohesive case management system with access so our case managers are no longer navigating between several different systems. Can immediately review a client's work history and record. Helps with the security and integrity of the system. Eliminates lots of manual processes to free us unemployment staff to do other things and get rid of some mundane manual processes that lead to backlogs. Manual processes used to get shoved to the end of the process. Not without hiccups when you implement a big new system. Each claim is different and unique. Rules that apply have eligibility criteria and how that's applied to each individual situation. We have 10,000 claims in a week; you have to remember all are unique claims. Not surprising we have had some situations we hadn't planned for. Making adjustments to make sure that we account for particular events or incidents. Those are low and we are working out way through those. Want to make sure we can always respond to our customers and stakeholders. Going to be able to access more than we have before with the tap of a finger as opposed to taking hours to pull data from an antiquated system built in 1973. Very excited about it.
- July UI rate came out last Friday and state 67.4% labor force participation and 3.7% UI rate. UI rate has gone up, and we are tied for 21<sup>st</sup>. Keep in mind there are very few states that have a higher labor force participation rate than Iowa. Only 5 states in country that have lower UI and higher labor force participation rates than Iowa. Of the 17 states who have lower UI rate but have significantly lower labor force participation rates. Hawaii has UI rate of 2.7% but 60.5% labor force participation rate. Labor force participation rate is basically 7 points higher than Hawaii. Alabama has a 3% UI rate but 57.9% labor force participation rate, almost ten points lower. If you are going to have challenges, you would rather have a higher unemployment number than lower labor force participation rate. State on the list that have similar UI rates but low 50s in terms of labor force participation rate. We are intentionally focused on increasing the labor force participation rate.
- Iowa has experienced a number of layoffs and WARN notices have increased in 2025. A number of WARNs in manufacturing. John Deere and a number of businesses connected to manufacturing – a cascading event. WARNs are up at about 1,000 in the last quarter compared to the prior year. Good news is the re-employment case management program continues to help lowans get back to work faster. Prior to this program our average duration of UI was 13 weeks. Down to 9 weeks last year. At 9.9 weeks in July 2025. Those that are getting laid off, haven't been laid off before, haven't looked for a new some in quite some time, are getting benefits of this new system and able to find employment on average in 10 weeks or less. That average includes seasonal layoffs who probably take the entire 16 weeks of benefits because of the weather. Program has been pretty effective and thankful to have this program in place and the ability to help lowans find that next job as quickly as possible and help employers find new workforce they need. There is tightening in the labor market. Employers are not hiring at previous rates. About 51,000 open jobs posed on IowaWORKS.gov. Numbers are down since coming out of pandemic with 89,000 jobs at that time. 40,000 lowans

are unemployed. Still more opportunities than we have for all the people who are unemployed. Rather be in this position than the opposite. We are well positioned to handle layoffs, that national economy will improve in the next year and lead to kind of revival of our own economy and get people back into the workforce. I think we will continue to see WARN notices through 2025 but work of re-employment case management program helps us position and transition these people as quickly and smoothly as possible.

- Trying to navigate changing landscape with Trump administration. Number of things that have come out that will affect our day-to-day operations. Still working through how that's going to be administered and as things come up we post or communicate out. Have not seen anything that has had a significant impact so far. This is the 5 or 6 Secretary of Labor since 2015 but not a lot of change on how USDOL operates regardless of who is in the Whitehouse. Despite angst and anxiety around changes being made, no significant change to day-to-day operations. I don't foresee other than desire by Trump administration to align and create efficiencies in workforce programs. Previous recommendations did not pass for current year and I don't believe it will for FY26. Recommended consolidating workforce programs at the federal level into a single workforce program. Giving block grants for state to decide on how the money is used and what their priorities are. Not big appetite for it in Congress. It depends on changes at Department of Education. Some agreements between USDOL and USDOE to work together. Interesting to see what happens in the future and will keep you posted.

#### Agenda item 12. Update from Iowa Plains Committee by Committee Chair, Holly Espenhover.

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Holly Espenhover provided an update for Iowa Plains Committee.

Quarterly update. Phenomenal One-Stop Operator. Core partner meetings have fostered strong sense of collaboration. Focused on co-enrollments enhancing both partnership relationships and participant outcomes. Doing weekly training sessions with all staff collaboratively and partners actually engage in development of that education. Getting to the next level of collaboration between them helps directly with participant enrollment.

- Impact. End of June had over 5,000 individuals served through AJCs. 7 occasions to extend employment services across the region and team successfully completed the one-stop certification training. The mobile unit supported the Job Corps transition for staff registration during their transition.
- Title I funding – contract extended to include oversight of the WBL programs and responsibility as the EEO official. Started performance dashboard and taking a look at it monthly on how we are performing across the 42 counties and reviewing metrics. Sharing success stories. A dislocated worker enrolled in the program completed truck driver training, successfully graduated and secured a really

stable, well-paying job. Fantastic example of programs helping people solidify really good work.

- Center traffic and customer satisfaction – tracking how frequent and how many people are being served. Surveys with what people are saying. Through July 2025 4,473 people served. Surveys are not always the easiest to complete. Average satisfaction rate on scale of 1 to 4 was 3.9. People who are showing up are getting great service from our people.
- WARN notifications – have been addressed. Outreach events spending time in the communities and creating really good connections. Getting people connected to the services they need.
- Mobile Unit – deployed across the area at 8 different locations in July. Meeting people where they are and can help on the spot.
- Referrals and Co-Enrollments - 97 different referrals across receiving partners.
- OSO Service Delivery Report – number of center visits, weekly trainings, and partner meetings. Doing incredible work.

Jack Hasken – excellent data, this is what we want to see. This is done nicely.

Holly Espenhover - Thanks Jack I appreciate it. Stood up this committee about 2 ½ years ago. Meet monthly and talk about objectives and specific metrics dashboard. How we impact, how we are serving communities. IWD partners and how to serve our communities. Follow metrics over time to see what's making the best impact, how we are serving our communities. Huge collaborative effort between our IWD partners and the committee in trying to serve our communities in the best way possible.

Nick Glew – this is really good data. Good to see. Great model on best practice ideas to share with other boards to compare work and trends. Great work.

Holly Espenhover – happy to share. Not intended to hold tight but want to share so we can learn from one another.



### Agenda item 13. Public Comments.

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Jim Irwin – County CLEO IWD. Commend great conversation about the committees. I would suggest that our workforce area not to combine disability and youth. 2 different issues. Youth is very distinct. It is difficult to get traction. When passionate you drive deeper but suggest not combining that. Is there a way to include committee chairs from the local boards across the state in the SWDB committees or have SWDB members join the boards. Good to have that perspective. We are all facing the same issues just different of why we want to keep that local control. What is good in one area not good in another. I appreciate time to comment.

Jack Haksen motioned to adjourn.

### Adjournment.

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Chair Hovell adjourned the meeting of the Board at 12:41 pm.



Shelly Evans - Executive Assistant to the SWDB