

MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL
Local-Elected Officials Special Meeting
MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL – NEWAYGO SERVICE CENTER
Wednesday, December 3, 2025
MINUTES

Members Present

Gregory, Mark
Guenther, Fred
Hren, Allitta
Russell, Jamie
Tubbergen Clark, Lori

Members Absent

Bulger, Jack
McCormick, Joel
Hartley, Jody
Mellema, Paul

Michigan Works! Staff

Keene, Shelly

Roll Call

LEO Special Meeting brought to order at 11:50 a.m. by Vice. Chair Fred Guenther at Michigan Works! West Central-Newaygo Service Center located at 9075 S. Mason Drive. Roll call indicates a quorum is present.

Minutes of June 5, 2025, LEO Special Meeting

M. Gregory moved to accept the minutes of June 5, 2025, meeting as printed; supported by J. Russell; motion approved.

Approval of Public Assistance Agency, DHHS – Lindsey Lassanske

Tubbergen Clark moved to approve the Lake, Newaygo and Oceana DHHS Director Lindsey Lassanske as the Public Assistance Agency to the Workforce Development Board; supported by M.Gregory; motion approved.

Approval of Oceana County, Private Sector – Patrick Tiedt, Consumers Energy

Tubbergen Clark moved to approve the Oceana County private sector representative, Patrick Tiedt, of Consumers Energy, to the Workforce Development Board; supported by M. Gregory; motion approved.

Other Business

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.



WDB/LEO Joint Meeting
Michigan Works! West Central
 Newaygo Service Center
 9075 Mason Rd. Newaygo, MI 49337

MINUTES

LEO Board Members (5 Makes Quorum)

Present	Virtual	Absent
Mark Gregory Fred Guenther Hren, Allitta Jamie Russell Lori Tubbergen Clark		Jack Bulger Jody Hartley Joel McCormick Paul Mellema

WDB Board Members (12 Makes Quorum)

Present	Virtual	Absent
Mike Adams Jason Finch Lindsay Hager Dave Hamelund Renee Kline-Garstka Jami Klomp Cheray LaRoue Lindsey Lassanske Kelly Rider Rebecca Robeck Tracie Ruppert/Dani Craft Tracy Sanchez Jesica Scytko		Sheila Brabaw Larry Emig Daniel Eichinger/K Huisman Stephanie Frees Nancy Griffin Anna Hutchinson Dan Kosheba Don Nolan Dawn Riley Deborah Smith-Olson Mary Trucks

Guests: Bill Tucker (Maner Consterisan)

Michigan Works! West Central Staff, Shelly Keene, Toni Davis, Jonathan Eppley, Jeff Lodholtz, Chad Marr, Kelly Miller, Julie Sanders, Kimberely Tagliareni, Kevin Welch, Angela VanSyckle

- 1. Call to Order** – Called to order at 12:29 p.m. by LEO Vice Chair Fred Guenther
- 2. Public Comment** – No public Comments

3. Welcome New Board Members

- A. Allita Hren, Mecosta County – LEO
- B. Lindsey Lassanske, Department of Health & Human Services - WDB

4. Consent Agenda-Handout-Action Items

- a. Financial Report - Handout (*Goldenrod*)
- b. Minutes from Sept. 3, 2025, meeting (Emailed)
Items were motioned for approval by Jason Finch, WDB; supported by Mike Adams, WDB; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.

5. Newaygo County Success Story

- A. Shelly Keene introduced Angela VanSyckle, Talent Specialists from Newaygo County Michigan Works! West Central service center.
- B. Angela shared the following:
When Susan Sherwood (who was unable to attend the meeting at the last minute) first came to Michigan Works! West Central, she was determined to create a better future for her growing family. With a newborn baby at home and a strong interest in restarting her career in insurance, she had the motivation but needed support navigating the challenges standing in her way. Her first goal was to earn her state license to sell insurance. Michigan Works! West Central assisted her with the costs and preparation related to licensing, ensuring she could take the next step in her career path with confidence. As she moved forward, additional barriers became clear: she needed reliable transportation to meet with clients, auto insurance to stay compliant and mileage reimbursement to help with the costs of travel. Michigan Works! West Central supported her through each of these needs, helping her secure auto insurance and assisting in the purchase of a dependable vehicle so she could safely travel for work. To help present herself confidently and professionally, Michigan Works! West Central also provided clothing suitable for interviews and client meetings. Recognizing her new career required organization and professionalism at home as well, they supplied her with a printer so she could efficiently manage documents and operate her home office. With each barrier removed, Sherwood grew more confident and more capable. Today, she is fully licensed, equipped and already building a successful career in insurance. Her family is now on a solid path toward long-term stability, and she feels empowered to reach even higher goals.
- C. Angela left the meeting at approximately 12:38 p.m.

6. Audit Presentation – Bill Tucker – Actions Item

Bill Tucker, of Maner Costerisan, presented handouts labeled, “Michigan Works! West Central year Ended June 30, 2025, Audit Presentation.” The Balance Sheet/General Fund was submitted as a draft – subject to change. The statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance/General Fund; was submitted as a Draft – Subject to change. Guenther asked for clarification on handouts. Guenther also asked for the Budget/Financial Statements to be updated and completed, so a final vote for approval of said Items will be conducted at the next board meeting, which will be March 4, 2026. No final approval was conducted at this time. Tucker left the meeting at 12:52 p.m.

7. Plans/Modifications - Handout (Blue) - Action Items

- a. PATH

1. PATH Plan 26-00 (PI- 25-34) – *Action – Signature Required*
2. Employment Related Support Services Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Partnership Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) (PI 25-33) - *Action - Signatures Required.*
3. Transitional Support Services Funding Fiscal Year 2026 Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope (PATH) (PI- 25-29) – *Action – Signatures Required*
4. Refugee Cash Assistance Program Fiscal Year (FY) Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) (PI 25-31) – *No Action Required*

b. Other

5. Gain Employment Maintain Support (GEMS) – (PI 25-30) - *Action Required - Signatures Required.*

Items motioned for approval by Mike Adams, WDB; supported by Jason Finch, WDB; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.

8. Election of WDB Chair & Vice Chair (WDB only) – Action Item

A motion to approve Deborah Olson-Smith as WDB Chair and Rebecca Robeck as WDB Vice Chair was made by Mike Adams, WDB; and supported by Jason Finch, WDB; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.

9. Federal & State Budget Updates

- a. Federal – With the continuing resolution until January 30 – we only received 1/3 of our PATH allocation from the state. The remainder of our full allocation will be contingent on the passing of the full federal budget.
 - i. We were able to utilize the fifth quarter spending for PATH to make it through until we had access to our new FY26 funding.
 - ii. The struggle with this is by the time we get access to our full allocation, four or five months will have passes and then we will be in a situation where we have ¼ of a million dollars to spend in six months.
 - iii. WIOA funding is flat – we did receive our full PY25 funding allocation, so we have been able to enroll participants in training.
 1. With the late notice of receiving funding, we are going to have a shortened period to spend funds.
- b. State – We have received access to all our state funding for this program year for the FY26 budget.
 - iv. We took a significant cut in workforce development funding.
 1. 40 percent for Going PRO Talent Fund, apprenticeship funding and Barrier Removal funding were eliminated.
 2. For GPTF, they opened Cycle 1 for FY26 – they did receive a total of \$49.3 million in requests – compared to \$58.5 last fiscal year. The total budget amount for both cycles is only \$29 million.
 3. It is likely less than 50 percent of the grant applications will be awarded.
 - v. We are currently working on our legislative priorities for this next calendar year knowing that the Governor typically releases her budget in February. We have

legislative day scheduled for March 19, in Lansing. Any work that we can do between now and then will be in our benefits.

10. Action Planning Updates

In the board information packet are updates on two of the action planning goals the board set in fall 2024. One is an overview of our fourth and final virtual board academy session, which was held on Oct. 1. The topic for this session was communications. Through these efforts in the past five years, the organization's profile and reputation have increased within the region significantly. These efforts are continuing to help maximize the organization's visibility.

The second discusses a recent community resources expo held in the Big Rapids service center to help meet the job readiness and education goal set in the 2024 action plan. The event hosted 29 local agencies to help share what programs and services they offer to residents. This is the fourth year we have hosted this event.

Other such events are in the early stages for the first part of 2026, at several other service centers.

11. Michigan Works! West Central Organizational Updates.

a. Director's Report, Shelly Keene

1. In the past several months, any correspondence that has been coming out from the Department of Labor has a strong emphasis on AI – and the implementation of AI in workforce development. In order to try to stay ahead of the curve, we implemented an AI workgroup internally and they have been working behind the scenes to get our agency ready for AI integration. I have staff members from most departments represented on the work group that is being led by George LeVasseur, our IT Specialist. Kevin Welch, Business Services Specialist, will give an update on the workgroup's progress later in the meeting.
2. We are preparing for our all-staff professional development training on Dec. 12. We have a motivational speaker coming in to present to the group for the morning that will be focused "The Brain as a Bridge." A little bit of self-care for staff and some reminders that in order to help others, we need to be sure that we are taking care of ourselves.
3. Clients seem to be extremely challenging right now. This time of year, always is more difficult but this year seems to be above all others. We have taken some steps to implement a few staff appreciation gestures. All managers have been directed to schedule a day where they can take their team away from the office – out to lunch – a fun team building activity to help ease the stress a little bit and to give them a break and an opportunity to spend some time together outside of the office. We have moved staff around to cover the offices during these days. If isn't much, but I know that the little things are appreciated.
4. Unemployment data is still delayed due to the government shutdown. September data will be released on Dec. 11 – not sure when the other data will be available.

b. Communications Report, Jonathan Eppley

We are working to finalize the date for this spring's MICQ. The team at Ferris is meeting today to finalize the winter sports and practice schedule. Tentatively, we're set for April 15, at Wink Arena, but I will let you all know as soon as possible once our date is locked in.

For those who are unfamiliar with MICQ, it is a large-scale, hands-on, career-exploration event for every ninth-grade student in our region. In one day, we cycle through nearly 1,500 students from more than 20 local high schools so they can try hands-on activities with local employers to get an idea of the wide variety of in-demand career paths available right here in our region.

New for this year, we did have Montcalm Area ISD reach out to us to see if two of their northernmost high schools would be able to join our event this year, instead of traveling to the MICQ event in downtown Grand Rapids. After talking with them about the details, we agreed to have Montabella and Vestaburg high schools join us this year, adding about 100 students to our overall total.

Eppley asked board members to support to support MICQ as either a participating employer providing a hands-on activity; as an event volunteer; or as a generous event sponsor.

Last year, we had a record of 14 board members as participating employers providing hands-on activities for students. If your business wants to participate again this spring, come see me or anyone of our business services team after the meeting and we can get you registered. Registration information hasn't gone public yet, because we wanted to give our board members priority registration. Once the date is locked in at Ferris, more information about the event will be sent out.

In other news, we interviewed five candidates last week from Ferris' TV & digital media production program, all of whom I know would do great work for us. We made an offer to a young man – his name is Gavin Rudlaff – and he accepted yesterday afternoon. We're finalizing the paperwork in the next week or so, and he is scheduled to start after the first of the year.

c. Business Services Report

1. Kevin Welch

- a. The AI workgroup's priority is developing a policy on acceptable use for AI by staff. That policy has been approved and implemented across the company. From there, we moved to identifying the AI system we would adopt and train on, and we decided on Microsoft Copilot following their integration with ChatGPT. Now, we're focused on identifying the next set of AI ideas, products and training that can help us create greater efficiency within the organization.

2. Julie Sanders

- a. We have added new apprentices to our ECE apprenticeship and one new employer location. There are a group of 7 ECE apprentices attending West Shore Community College and a group of 5 apprentices who will be attending Grand Rapids Community College beginning in January. The apprentices receive support services in the form of books and gift cards for school supplies/gasoline.
- b. We are planning to host a Race to Talent apprenticeship event during MICQ this spring. At MICQ we will share an interview with two employers and 2-3 apprentices on the benefits of starting an apprenticeship program. All employers at MICQ will have access to apprenticeship information during the event and will have the opportunity to talk with our business services team about apprenticeship options.

New occupations that we are working on include a human resources apprenticeship, operations manager apprenticeship, and some apprenticeship readiness certificates through our local CTE centers.

3. Kim Tagliareni

- a. Going PRO Talent Fund FY26 Cycle 1 applications were recently submitted. We expect the state to make an announcement of awards during the week of Dec 8. Overall available funds have been reduced by 40 percent from previous years, although the overall ask has increased. Many employers that typically receive the award will not be this year. Our region saw an increase in applications over our 6-county area, with 22 employers, including 8 new employers. Applications included 27 new hires, 366 current employees, and 47 Apprentices.
- b. Employers that are not awarded for Cycle 1 can expect their Business Services Specialist to reach out to discuss IWT.

d. Workforce Development Services, Toni Davis

1. Regional Innovation Project has been launched in our region. We applied for funds with three other MWAS: Northeast, UP and Northwest. We are focused on classroom training, incumbent worker training and on-the-job training. Specific industries include infrastructure, construction, mobility and energy. The vast majority we expect to see enrolled will be individuals supporting those industries looking for CDL training. The enrollment goal is 25 individuals in a training program. We have until September 2026, to exhaust the funds. Quickway and Lake County Road Commission both wrote letters of support for the grant.

12. Handouts

- a. News Clippings
 1. MCDC, and Mecosta County Chamber merge
 2. Earth and Aether Awakens
 3. State says Gotion in default of agreement
 4. Hi-Lites halts shoppers' guide Printing business sold to GR company
 5. Still early for two battery storage projects
- b. Unemployment

The state level is at 4.7 percent and the national level 3.9 percent.
- c. Updated WDB Roaster
- d. Updated LEO Roaster
- e. 2026 Meeting Schedule

13. Next Meeting:

March 4, 2026 – Michigan Works! West Central Reed City service center, 240 E. Church Ave

14. Other Business

15. Adjournment

Guenther motioned to adjourn meeting at 1:36 p.m.