

MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL
Local-Elected Officials Special Meeting
MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL – REED CITY SERVICE CENTER
Wednesday, March 4, 2026

MINUTES

Members Present

Gregory, Mark
Guenther, Fred
Hren, Allitta
Johnson, Les
McCormick, Joel
Russell, Jamie
Tubbergen Clark, Lori

Members Absent

Bulger, Jack
Mellema, Paul

Michigan Works! Staff

Keene, Shelly

Roll Call

LEO Special Meeting brought to order at 11:43 a.m. by Chair Fred Guenther at Michigan Works! West Central-Reed City Service Center located at 240 E. Church Ave, Reed City, MI 49677. Roll call indicates a quorum is present.

Minutes of December 3, 2025, LEO Special Meeting

Lori Tubbergen Clark moved to accept the minutes of Dec. 3, 2025; LEO Special Meeting Minutes as printed; supported by Jamie Russell; motion approved.

Election of LEO Chair

LEO voted for Fred Guenther as LEO Chair. M. Gregory motioned to approve, with A. Hren supporting the motion. Motion approved.

Election of LEO Vice Chair

LEO voted for Jamie Russell as LEO Vice Chair, F. Guenther motioned to approve, with L. Johnson supporting the motion. Motion approved.

Other Business

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.



WDB/LEO Joint Meeting
Michigan Works! West Central
Reed City Service Center
12:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 4, 2026

MINUTES

LEO Board Members (5 Makes Quorum)

Present	Virtual	Absent
Mark Gregory Fred Guenther Allita Hren Les Johnson Joel McCormick Paul Mellema Jamie Russell Lori Tubbergen Clark		Jack Bulger

WDB Board Members (12 Makes Quorum)

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

Guests, Libby Emig, Seth Mabrey, Mable Woodbury

Michigan Works! West Central Staff, Shelly Keene, Jonathan Eppley, Kevin Welch, Toni Davis, Max Meng, Chelsea Augustson, Kelly Miller, Amanda Johnson and Melissa Ruhl

1. Call to Order at 12:30 p.m. by WDB Deborah Smith-Olson
2. Public Comment – No public Comments
3. Welcome New Board Members –
 - A. Les Johnson, Oceana County - LEO
4. Consent Agenda-Handout-Action Items
 - a. Financial Report - Handout (*Goldenrod*)
 - b. Minutes from Dec. 3, 2026, meeting (Emailed)
Items were motioned for approval by Fred Guenther, LEO; supported by Jason Finch, WDB; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.
5. Osceola County Success Story
 - A. Shelly Keene introduced Amanda Johnson, and Melissa Ruhl, both Talent Specialists are from Osceola County Michigan Works! West Central service center.
 - B. Amanda shared the success of Seth Mabrey, who overcame barriers from GED attainment to CDL training.
 - C. Melissa shared outstanding achievements with Mable, who then spoke and thanked Michigan Works! for all the assistance she was given.
 - D. Amanda, Melissa and their guests left the meeting at 12:53 p.m.
6. Larry Emig Conference Room Dedication

The Reed City service center conference room was dedicated in honor of long-time board member Larry Emig.
7. LEO Election Results
 - a. LEO voted and approved, Fred Guenther as LEO Chair and Jamie Russell as Vice Chair.
8. Agency Audit
 - At the December board meeting, the auditor came and presented the audit. At that time, a corrective action was not presented to address the two findings due to the lack of timeliness on the auditor's part. A corrective action is included in the March meeting packet. It has been accepted and the single audit was filed on time. In addition to that, the audit was submitted to the State of Michigan, and it has been accepted by the state as well.
 - WDB/LEO needs to officially accept the audit for our records.
 - A meeting in February with the auditor gave CEO Shelly Keene an opportunity to address concerns with the audit process and to provide with feedback on ways they could improve.
 - At that time, Keene let the auditor know that based on our discussion in December, it was likely the organization would be putting audit services out for bid.

- It is a lot of work switching auditors, but if that is the direction the board would like us to go, we will put out a new RFP.
- Item was motioned for approval by Guenther; supported by Mark Gregory, LEO; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.

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

a. WIOA

1. Michigan Works! System Plan for Calendar Year 2026 (PI 26-02) – **Action – Signature Required.**

b. Going Pro Talent Fund Program Administration Fiscal Year 2026 Cycle 1, period of Jan.1, 2026, through Dec. 31, 2026 (Draft PI 26-xx) – **Action – Signature Required.**

Items were motioned for approval by Larry Emig, WDB; and supported by Patrick Tiedt, WDB; motion was approved by WDB and LEO.

9. Action Planning Update

As a reminder, the three priorities set by the board in fall 2024 were:

- Maximize Agency Image & Visibility
- Create job readiness/ retention workshops & explore business education options
- Strategically reach out to the next generation needing workforce development

In the packet are images of promotional materials for our six-winter career and resource fairs. By bringing job seekers, employers and community partners together, these events strengthen the organization's visibility and enhance our long-term impact across the region, meeting that first strategic priority.

12. Michigan Works! West Central Organizational Updates

a. CEO, Shelly Keene

- Federal Funding
 - Flat funding for WIOA in the past 10 years. The Michigan works! Association has worked with our Federal Legislative Liaison to submit a FY27 WIOA Adult Appropriations Request to support the new Medicaid Work requirements that will become effective January 2027.
 - This coupled with the SNAP benefit requirement changes that were effective November 2025, has a great potential to put a strain on an already stretched workforce budget.
 - Federally, the offices are currently accepting FY27 programmatic funding requests through the House Appropriation process.

- The request is a coordinated effort through our Liaison and the USWA coalition to submit a coordinated request asking Congress to increase WIOA Adult program funding from the current level of \$875.6 million to \$1.5 billion – a 71.3 percent increase driven by the legislated mandates that Congress itself has created.
- The request will be submitted by the Michigan Works! Association to all of the Michigan congressional delegation offices on behalf of the Michigan Works! System.
- Organizational changes
 - For the past several months I have spent a significant amount of time evaluating the organizational chart, trying to figure out ways that we can modernize the organization and to improve the services that we provide to both the job seekers and the employers in our Region. My key focus was to make sure that Michigan Works! West Central not only stays relevant in the workforce development space but also looked at as a leader across the state.
 - In doing my review, and after consulting with Marv Pichla, our One Stop Operator, February 2, we rolled out our new organizational chart and staffing structure.
 - One of the biggest changes is that I have added one new position, Director of Strategic Partnerships & Innovation. The main responsibilities of this position is strategic partnerships and employer engagement, innovation and program development, community and public relations, strategic planning and advisory and supervision and team leadership for the business engagement team.
 - I am pleased to announce Kevin Welch has been promoted to the Director of Strategic Partnerships & Innovation. His extensive leadership and business engagement experience makes him the perfect fit for the position.
 - Through these changes, I have also re-evaluated job titles and have aligned them to be more modern and to follow the appropriate job title hierarchy.
- Lake County Employability Skills Training
 - We have been working for the past several months on the development of employability skills training for Lake County. This stems from the work that I do sitting on the Lake County Economic Development Alliance Board.
 - We have designed a 44-hour program based on the feedback from local employers who have participated in our workforce development committee. This training will be instructed by two of our talent specialists, other MWWC staff and several key community partners.
 - The training program focuses on core employability skills, customer service & tourism, digital literacy for rural workers, off season realities & career explorations, seasonal readiness, job readiness & career planning and Job Fair & Interviews.

- Once the participants successfully complete the program they will have four credentials: our employability skills certificate, National Retail Federation certification, first aid/CPR and Servsafe. In addition, they will receive training on point-of-sale system.
 - We are looking forward to this program starting on April 7, and will conclude on May 7. Our goal is to have a maximum of 10 people in the first cohort.
 - It is critical that this is done well. We have spent a great deal of time designing it to meet employer needs. Our goal would be after we pilot it in Lake County, it is a tool that we can utilize in our other counties as well. It may need some adjusting to meet the employer needs in other counties, but the structure of the program will be there.
- Advocacy Day
 - Next week on Wednesday, we will be in Lansing for Advocacy Day. We will be meeting with our local state legislators to discuss legislative priorities for the year. We will be discussing Going PRO Talent Fund and USDOL Registered Apprenticeship funding.

b. Communications Report, Jonathan Eppley

MICQ Planning

Registrations for MICQ are more than two-thirds full (just under 70 percent full).

We are six weeks away from the big event today.

We still have openings in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors.

14 board member businesses/organizations are registered – THANK YOU!

20 Under 30 Nominations

Nominations for our annual 20 Under 30 magazine are open now through March 27. If you know a young professional who is under the age of 30 and excelling in their career, please nominate them on our website at MWWC.org/20Under30. Voting opens March 31.

This year's publication will be out on Saturday, May 30.

We'll have an awards ceremony in late-July/early-August. We hope you can make it.

Impact Award

Gavin Rudlaff is our new video production intern from Ferris' TDMP program. He started in January and will be with us for the next couple of months.

Gavin got pushed into the deep end in his first week and began working on our Impact Award video, which will be shown during the annual Impact Award ceremony April 8, in Lansing.

This year's honoree is Huntley's Clubhouse. They were selected for their involvement in helping to launch our Early Childhood Development apprenticeship program, entering 10 staff members into the apprenticeship program, earning a \$20,000+ GPTF award and for championing reliable & affordable childcare policy in Lansing. Played video.

c. Business Engagement Report, Kevin Welch

Kevin shared positive feedback on this year's Employer Appreciation Lunches, which were hosted in Ludington, Reed City, and Newaygo.

These events provided an opportunity to:

- Celebrate and thank local employers
- Highlight upcoming organizational events, such as MiCareerQuest
- Recognize and celebrate Race 2 Talent apprenticeship participation

Kevin reported that six employers in our region were awarded approximately \$253,000 in funding.

He also noted that 16 employers, were not awarded funding, representing an additional \$250,000 that was requested but not received.

Kevin highlighted a significant reduction in GPTF funding, which began at \$52 million and has since been reduced by 40%.

He emphasized the value and purpose of county tours, explaining that visiting employers in person allows staff to better understand their operations and products, ultimately strengthening our ability to promote and support local businesses.

d. OS Reentry Services, Chelsea Augustson

- 1st quarter of FY26 is mixed but encouraging start across both parole and probation services.
- Parole – We are starting off a Little slower this year than last, but we are headed in an upward trend and believe that will continue as the year progresses.
- Probation – has started off strong in 2026, it's been growing steady since it started as a pilot in 2024. We don't expect it to slow down as the year goes on.

Proposed new positions for Reentry.

I am pleased to share that we are looking at expanding the OS Reentry Program this year. The new contracted positions Will be a Family Reunification Specialist, a Specialized Resource Navigator, and a Job Development Specialist. With these new contracted

positions, we are looking forward to strengthening Service Delivery, addressing emerging needs, and supporting long-term success in areas we have not been able to yet.

Family Reunification Specialist

This role will focus on strengthening family relationships during the reentry process by providing targeted support to justice-impacted individuals on parole and probation, as well as their families. The position is intended to promote family stability, reduce recidivism, and support positive long-term outcomes.

Specialized Resource Navigator

The Specialized Resource Navigator will provide enhanced, individualized support for participants with higher or more complex needs, including older adults and individuals facing medical or mental health barriers. This role will ensure improved access to appropriate resources and coordinated care.

Job Development Specialist

This position will focus on employer outreach and labor-market engagement to expand employment opportunities for justice-impacted individuals. This role will strengthen employer partnerships and support sustainable workforce placement outcomes.

e. Workforce Development Services, Toni Davis

Big Rapids Public Schools came to our office on Monday and Tuesday. We had 180 juniors come in and participate in speed workshops that focused on apprenticeship, job search, mock interviewing, and top careers in our region.

At West Shore Community College our staff is participating in speed interviewing on March 25.

West Shore Community College invited us to present to area school counselors about training services that are available to graduating seniors. In Mecosta County, eight youths in the diesel mechanic course have started to meet with staff to schedule appointments about training available to them.

We took three youths to the capital for Legislative Day. We had youth from Newaygo County and Mason County attend.

Dreams to Destination is scheduled in Mason County for area youth on March 20. Topics of discussion include: Now What? Thriving After High School, Real-World Resources 101, Financial Skills for Real Life and The Art of Communication.

13. Handouts

a. News Clippings

1. Big Rapids – Two Cheezy Guys Closes
2. Remus – Dairy co-op to invest \$74M to reopen Mid-Michigan Cheese Plant
3. Long-delayed Northern Michigan potash mine lands new battery customer
4. Ludington’s first major housing project in decades is a \$20M bet on upscale apartments

5. Rustic Haven opens in Rodney
6. Dunkin' Donuts coming to Big Rapids Walmart in May 2026
7. Big Rapids – Chamber names new CEO, President
8. Big Rapids – New event space opens downtown
9. Chinese battery maker feuding with state offers to give up land – but not \$24M
10. Breaking: Burlington, Five Below apply for building permits at Ferris Commons

b. Unemployment

The state level is at 4.8 percent and the national level 4.1 percent.

c. Updated WDB Roaster

d. Updated LEO Roaster

14. Next Meeting:

June 3, 2026 – Michigan Works! West Central Ludington Service Center, 920 E. Tinkham Ave.

15. Other Business

16. Adjournment

Emig motioned to adjourn meeting; supported by Les Johnson, LEO; meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.