Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County

**General Membership Meeting**
**Thursday, October 10, 2025, 2:30– 4pm**
**Plato Conference Center - 90 W. Plato Blvd, Saint Paul, MN 55108**

| WIB Members Present | Members Absent | Staff/Guests Present |
|---|---|---|
| Ismail Ali | Tom Aasheim | Karyn Berg, Workforce Solutions |
| Matt Bandstra | Jonathan Banks-EA | Julie Brekke, Hired-V |
| Sara Garbe | Tami Cybulski-EA | Maddy Fisher, Minneapolis Regional Chamber |
| Karen Gerdin | Becky Degendorfer | Carlo Franco, City of Saint Paul |
| Jennifer Germain-V | Ethel Garcia | Brad Mahr, Workforce Solutions |
| Lisa Guetzkow | Hanna Getachew-Kreusser | Rebecca Milbrandt, Workforce Solutions |
| Katie Kapaun | Fidelity Goodlaxson | Dr. Mohamed Mourssi-Alfash-V |
| Hwa Jeong Kim | Chad Kulas-EA | Kathleen, Murphy, Ramsey County |
| James McClean | Traci Leffner | Catrice O'Neal, Workforce Solutions |
| Yolanda McIntosh | Koami Pedado-EA | Nardos Tesfalidet, City of Saint Paul |
| Kelly Miller | John Perlich-EA | Longkee Vang, Workforce Solutions |
| Don Mullin | Mary Rick-EA | |
| Donna Rapacz-V | Aalayha Traub | |
| Elisa Rasmussen | | |
| Sheri Riemers | | |
| Trish Stevens | | |
| Tanya Velishek-V | | |

**Call to Order and Announcements**
Chair McIntosh called the meeting to order at 2:35 pm and read the following announcements:

- Welcome to the Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County meeting. We especially welcome our partners and guests joining us today.
- Welcome to Traci Leffner who was recently appointed to the WIB. In just a few minutes, I will invite Traci to come up and introduce herself.
- A reminder that all WIB and committee meetings are open to the public. Agendas and minutes for all meetings are posted on the WIB's webpage. Committee meetings are conducted virtually and instructions on how to join are also posted on the webpage.
- Article 8 of the WIB's Bylaws state that "…members shall not cast a vote on any matter regarding the provision of services by the member or by an entity that the member represents or on any matter that would provide direct or indirect financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member". If you believe you have a conflict on any items on today's agenda, please abstain from discussion and voting.
- The next WIB meeting is Thursday, December 4, 11:30am-1pm at the MN Humanities Center in Saint Paul. This meeting will include a special recognition lunch celebrating the completion of the Inclusive Workplaces Cohort. An Eventbrite registration link will be sent out soon for this meeting so we can get an accurate count for lunch. Thank you to the Equity for their leadership on the cohort.

**Land Acknowledgement**
The land acknowledgement was read aloud.

**New Member Introduction - Traci Leffner**
Leffner was unable to attend. She will introduce herself at the next meeting.

**Approve Consent Agenda**
*October Meeting Agenda*
*August Meeting Minutes*
*WIB Financial Report*
**Motion (Miller/Mullin) to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator Program**

Fisher provided an overview of the Skill-Based Hiring Accelerator Program, which supports employers in shifting from credential-based to skills-based hiring practices. The program aims to:

- Reduce barriers to employment by focusing on demonstrated competencies.
- Promote equity in hiring by valuing diverse experiences.
- Provide technical assistance and tools to employers implementing skills-based practices.

She highlighted success stories from regional employers and encouraged WIB members to consider how these practices could be promoted across Ramsey County.

**2026 Legislative Priorities**

O'Neal shared updates on the development of the Ramsey County and MN Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) 2026 Legislative Platform. Ramsey County formed internal action teams to review 2025 priorities and shape 2026 legislative goals, using budget priorities as a guiding framework. Emphasis is on aligning workforce investments across local, regional, and state levels. There is also support for removing employment barriers, such as lack of driver's licenses as well as advocacy for re-entry supports for justice-impacted individuals, including navigators. MAWB's state-level priorities include preserving the Dislocated Worker Program and policy changes that ensure local boards have maximum flexibility to meet local workforce needs. O'Neal also shared the potential impacts of a federal government shutdown and the county's preparedness to continue services.

**Workforce Solutions Reorganization, 2026-2027 County Biennial Budget and Discussion of Emerging Priorities for 2026**

O'Neal presented the county's 2026–2027 budget timeline and reorganization plan for Workforce Solutions. Facing a significant revenue decrease, the department plans to save $1.2 million through staff and program realignment. Key changes include combining the WIOA and Career Services teams and vending out WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker service to community providers. O'Neal also reported that Workforce Solutions will shift to the new Community Services and Supports service team. The department will continue investing in inclusive workforce initiatives and adapting to reduced grant funding. Board members concluded the session with small group discussions on emerging priorities, including workforce trends, partnerships, and populations facing employment barriers. Each table shared some highlights from their discussion questions:

- Table 1: What are 1-2 key outcomes we should focus on in the next 12-24 months?
    - Strengthening job development and job skills training, ensuring alignment with employer needs.
    - Addressing technology-related workforce changes, including AI, automation, and growth in the green economy—especially transportation and construction.
    - Recession preparedness through upskilling strategies that help jobseekers withstand economic uncertainty.
    - Ensuring connections between skills training and real employment opportunities.
- Table 2: What are the most urgent external trends or disruptions we need to center in our planning?
    - Competitive labor market conditions with reduced entry-level positions, especially in nonprofits, the private sector, and government.
    - Young people increasingly competing against experienced workers for entry-level roles.
    - AI and automation transforming occupational requirements.
    - Rapid changes in the tech sector, with traditional entry-level pathways and credentials (e.g., A+, CompTIA) losing traction with employers.
    - Need to reevaluate training models to reflect evolving industry expectations.
- Table 3: Where do we need stronger partnerships?
    - Continued collaboration with education, nonprofits, and employers.
    - More intentional engagement of small businesses that lack capacity to participate regularly.
    - Stronger partnerships with organizations addressing homelessness, recognizing its impact on employment.

    - Direct engagement of students and youth, including support for entrepreneurship pathways.
    - Increased collaboration with state legislators, given concerns about future federal funding levels and the need to elevate local priorities.
- Table 4: What populations are still experiencing significant barriers to employment that we should be prioritizing?
    - Justice-impacted individuals identified as a key priority population.
    - Discussion referenced CareerForce data showing many visitors are newly connected to services, with additional outreach needed to unconnected jobseekers.
    - Need for deeper expertise and partnerships to support justice-impacted residents, including collaboration with Goodwill and other re-entry partners.
    - Recognition that "justice-impacted" is broad and may include individuals with long-term convictions, recent interactions with the justice system, or barriers identified through self-attestation.
    - Proposal to strengthen a "one-stop front door" approach for justice-impacted job seekers and to highlight this work in a future board meeting.

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**Staff Updates**

*CareerForce Activities:* Guetzkow and Garbe shared updates on CareerForce Saint Paul, which officially relocated to Metro Square in March 2025. The site has seen a surge in activity, with July–September visits surpassing the first half of the year. Over half of visitors are first-time users, and the site has become the busiest in the state for computer access. Employer of the Day events have resumed with strong hiring outcomes, and Goodwill continues to offer weekly support for justice-impacted job seekers. The team also hosted the annual Partner Convening, highlighting the Workforce Development Month themes: Connect, Advance, Innovate. New materials displays have been added to improve access to partner program information. A printed one pager with additional stats for the first two quarters of 2025 was available.
*3DE Volunteer Opportunity:* Vang gave an update on the 3DE program which is being led by Junior Achievement and supported by the county at Como Park High School, where students are exploring how Ramsey County can build a stronger talent pipeline. Volunteers are needed for classroom feedback sessions on October 27–28 and a culminating event on November 19 at Landmark Center. The program connects youth to public sector careers and fosters real-world problem-solving and 21st-century skills.
*Upcoming Event:* In the interest of time, Milbrandt will send event details in a follow up email.

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**Other**

No further items discussed.

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**Adjourn**

Upon conclusion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 4:02pm.

Next Meeting: December 4, 2025, 11:30 AM–1:00 PM at the Minnesota Humanities Center.