

Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County
Policy & Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 3-4 p.m.
Via Zoom Video Conference

Present:

Jonathan Banks
Lisa Guetzkow
James McClean
John (JP) Perlich

Absent:

Matt Bandstra
Hanna Getachew Kreusser
Donna Rapacz

Staff/Guests:

Karyn Berg, Ramsey County
Rebecca Milbrandt, Ramsey County
Catrice O’Neal, Ramsey County

Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

Perlich called the meeting to order at 3:07pm and read the land acknowledgement aloud.

Approval of November Minutes

Motion (Perlich/McClean) to approve the November 12, 2025, Policy and Oversight Committee meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously by voice and chat vote.

Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement

Perlich read the Conflict of Interest policy aloud, noting it is standard practice for the WIB and each committee to review the policy at the first meeting of the year. All members were asked to review, sign, and return the acknowledgement form to Milbrandt.

Federal Funding Update

O’Neal reported on developments discussed at the statewide Policy and Legislative Committee. She explained that changes included in HR1 related to WIOA remain stalled due to unresolved decisions about Adult Basic Education and shifting responsibilities between the Departments of Labor and Education. Federal priorities continue to focus on AI, apprenticeships, and workforce modernization, though precise guidance is still emerging. O’Neal also shared that new national funding opportunities related to AI, construction, and apprenticeships were announced this week and have been forwarded to the county’s Federal Response Action Team and grants staff for review. She noted that DHS, DCYF, and DEED will meet with MAWB’s Operations Committee next week to provide updates, particularly around SNAP work-eligibility changes. At the state level, the upcoming abbreviated legislative session begins on February 17 and will focus primarily on bonding, with no new county workforce funding requests anticipated.

Committee Work Plan/Project Updates

WIB 2026 Policy Statements: O’Neal stated that a workgroup was convened to review the WIB’s 2026 policy statements. Most priorities remain consistent with the 2025 one-pager but with refined language in the following areas:

- Greater emphasis on supporting MAWB’s advocacy for the Dislocated Worker Fund including education around how the fund supports employment programs in the local areas.
- Increased focus on strengthening employer partnerships to support skills-based hiring and connections to high-demand jobs.
- Expanded language around youth workforce funding to ensure that programs such as Minnesota Youth Program, Youth at Work, and other youth employment services are funded.
- Stronger integration of apprenticeships, paid work experiences, pathways programming, and adult education.
- Refined language to emphasize the board’s commitment to advancing equity.
- Adding “individual” to the services section, emphasizing the importance of childcare, transportation, housing, and other supports that enable workforce participation.

2026 Strategic Goals: O’Neal gave a brief update on the county’s strategic planning refresh for 2024–2025. Workforce Solutions is aligning its goals with county priorities and feedback from the October WIB meeting, including employer engagement, justice-impacted residents, and digital equity. A more detailed plan will be brought to a future WIB meeting.

WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker Dashboard: Berg provided an overview of program data from the past year, noting that the county is shifting to a model in which all Adult and Dislocated Worker services will be contracted out to four community-based providers. Case transfers are expected to be nearly complete by the end of the month. Berg highlighted key trends in enrollment, rates of training participation, wage outcomes, and demographic characteristics among participants, noting common barriers such as long-term unemployment, basic skills deficits, and low income. She also acknowledged the need to continue improving data alignment across state and WIOA reporting systems. Committee members briefly discussed Banks’s question about how workers who cannot safely travel to work due to current federal actions might be able to apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. Milbrandt suggested this topic be forwarded to MAWB to advocate for the entire state. UI is administered at the state level, so any eligibility policy changes would require state action.

CareerForce Engagement Dashboard: Guetzkow reported that the Metro Square CareerForce location was the busiest in the state throughout 2025. She described the seamless integration of county and state staff, which has allowed for more flexible and comprehensive service delivery. More than 3,400 onsite MinnesotaWorks.net logins were recorded and customers also receive individualized assistance, referrals, and workshops at both the CareerForce site and other county service locations. Moving into 2026, the One-Stop Operator Consortium will focus on enhancing customer feedback mechanisms and expanding partner presence at the site. Milbrandt thanked Guetzkow for her leadership on the collaboration that has supported such successful service integration.

Staff Updates

In the interest of time, Milbrandt shared that additional updates on the Youth Workforce Champion Awards and upcoming events would be sent in a follow-up email.

Other

No other topics were discussed.

Adjourn

Upon completion of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 3-4pm