



The Chair convened the meeting at 9:06 AM.

Approval of the agenda & minutes, moved by Mark Jacobs, seconded by Heather Gleason, 11 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Priorities

- Legislative updates, questions for discussion, and next steps (Cate)
 - Federal Updates
 - MAWB will begin holding weekly 30-minute Friday legislative check-ins to provide additional space for discussion of legislative issues.
 - Staff recently attended the National Association of Counties meeting in Washington, DC and met with staff from Representative Ilhan Omar's office regarding federal workforce policy.
 - Discussion focused on the need for flexibility and adequate funding within WIOA programs, particularly related to training requirements and support services.
 - WIOA reauthorization remains stalled due to federal disagreements regarding the potential transfer of Adult Basic Education (ABE) from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor.
 - Questions were raised about whether Career and Technical Education (CTE) could also shift under the Department of Labor and how that might affect coordination with workforce programs.
 - State Legislative Updates
 - The Minnesota legislative session has begun, with early discussions focused on economic impacts of Operation Metro Surge, paid family leave, and workforce and education supports for youth.
 - MAWB will distribute a template email for local boards encouraging outreach to legislators in support of the State Dislocated Worker Program.
 - The upcoming state financial forecast is expected to shape future funding discussions.
 - Broader funding concerns were noted, including the federal freeze on Medicaid funding to Minnesota, which may affect overall state budget priorities.
 - MJSP Board
 - MAWB discussed the upcoming MJSP Board meeting and current spending and obligations of State Dislocated Worker Program funding across the state.
- Marketing updates, questions for discussion, and next steps (Cate)
 - The Marketing Community of Practice met earlier in the month.
 - DEED staff provided an update on the CareerForce branding, including guidance on the use of the updated "Leading CareerForce" logo.
 - Members also discussed local outreach activities, including preparation for job fairs and other engagement efforts.

- MAWB announced the rollout of marketing funds available to local workforce areas to support outreach and promotion.
- Approximately \$715 per area will be available due to some areas opting not to use the funds.
- The goal of the funding is to:
 - Support increased marketing and outreach
 - Encourage use of the MAWB Marketing Toolkit.
- Funds will be provided through a reimbursement process using the form previously shared with members.
- The current MAWB budget cycle runs through the end of June, and areas are encouraged to utilize the funding before that time.
- Participants discussed possible uses for the marketing funds, including:
 - Job fair signage
 - Social media promotion
 - Local newspaper advertising
 - Tabling supplies or promotional items.
- Members are encouraged to share examples of how funds are used through the Marketing Community of Practice or via email so others can learn from successful approaches.
- The funds can be used broadly to promote workforce board services, programs, or the workforce system overall.
- MAWB is continuing work on updating and modernizing the MAWB website.
- The goal is to improve the professionalism and usability of the site and remove outdated content.
- Some materials will be archived rather than migrated to the new site, but all information will be retained internally and can be restored if needed.
- A short period of website downtime is expected when the transition to the new site occurs, likely in early summer.
- Leadership development/technical assistance updates, questions for discussion, and next steps (Elena/Catrice & Mark)
 - Work is underway to develop stronger onboarding resources for new workforce directors.
 - Existing materials include a comprehensive orientation packet, but the goal is to identify the most critical information new directors need early in their role.
 - Discussion emphasized:
 - Identifying key operational areas directors need to understand quickly
 - Leveraging the expertise of experienced directors across the network.

Committee Reports

- Highlights & Critical Updates
 - Jobseeker Services Committee
 - Deb is serving as the new Committee Co-Chair with Carrie.
 - Highlights from the most recent meeting are available in the committee notes on the website.

- An upcoming presentation will cover updates to the CareerForceMN website, including:
 - New functionality for employers to post job openings
 - A planned transition of the website in June.
 - Staff who work closely with employers may find this update particularly relevant.
 - Business Services/Economic Development Committee
 - The committee continues to meet bi-monthly and includes participation from workforce and economic development partners.
 - Discussions continue around coordination between workforce and economic development activities.
 - Fiscal Community of Practice
 - Recent discussions focused on grant integrity training and resources, in response to the current funding and oversight environment.
 - DEED's Employment and Training Programs (ETP) team is working to develop additional training resources related to major workforce grants.
 - The group is also working toward more standardized processes for grant modifications and fiscal practices.
 - Apprenticeship Community of Practice
 - Ongoing discussions focus on strengthening partnerships with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.
 - The group is working to clarify roles and responsibilities related to apprenticeship programming and support.
 - Legislative Taskforce on Workforce System (WTF) Updates
 - A recent meeting of the Legislative Task Force on the Workforce System focused on workforce system finances.
 - Representatives from local workforce boards and the Governor's Workforce Development Board provided perspectives emphasizing that:
 - The local workforce system is well-positioned to deliver strong results when adequately supported and empowered.
 - Jinny was invited to present at an upcoming task force meeting and provide a local workforce system perspective.
 - Participants emphasized several important considerations for any statewide metric framework:
 - Starting points differ significantly across participants and programs, and metrics should reflect those differences.
 - Participant circumstances can change over time, meaning barrier levels identified at intake may not remain static throughout service delivery.
 - Workforce services often include substantial stabilization and support work—such as housing, transportation, and crisis response—that may not be fully captured in traditional employment outcome measures.
 - Metrics should account for the fact that some outcomes represent major progress even if they do not immediately align with higher-wage or traditional performance expectations.

- Members also noted the importance of recognizing employer needs and changing labor market demands, which may influence participant placements and wage outcomes.
 - Members discussed the value of incorporating participant feedback and qualitative measures into workforce system evaluation.
 - There was interest in exploring ways to better capture whether participants feel their overall life circumstances improved as a result of program participation.
 - Participants noted that these kinds of measures could help:
 - Better reflect the impact of support services
 - Capture changes that are not always visible in traditional outcome data
 - Inform future decisions about which interventions are most effective.
 - Participants shared examples of existing local and regional efforts to track outcomes for target populations and compare them to broader participant groups.
 - Members emphasized that any expansion of metrics or assessment requirements must account for the staff time required to collect, enter, and interpret the data.
 - While more robust assessments may improve service delivery and performance measurement, participants cautioned against creating additional reporting burden without corresponding capacity or support.
 - The group also expressed the importance of existing data collection being used to guide decisions, noting the importance of ensuring that any new metrics are:
 - Meaningful
 - Actionable
 - Clearly connected to program improvement and policymaking.
- OKR Subgroup Updates
 - The subgroup has served as a place to discuss:
 - Data needs
 - CareerForce center operations, infrastructure cost sharing
 - Striking a balance in in-person and virtual service delivery

GWDB Update – Katie McClelland, Director

- Workforce Pell Planning
 - Members were informed about an upcoming Workforce Pell planning session, which will include both in-person and virtual participation options.
- Governor’s Workforce Development Board Vacancy
 - A Chief Elected Official seat remains open on the Governor’s Workforce Development Board.
 - Members were encouraged to identify and recommend interested local elected officials, with particular interest in engaged leaders from Greater Minnesota when possible.
- Statewide Workforce Goals
 - Work has continued to develop new statewide workforce strategy goals.
 - The effort is intended to reestablish a clearer statewide framework for workforce priorities after earlier momentum slowed during the pandemic.
 - The process has involved collaboration among:
 - The Governor’s Workforce Development Board

- Local workforce partners
 - The Interagency Workforce Alignment Task Force
 - Multiple state agencies.
- Draft Strategic Direction
 - The draft statewide strategy is centered on a goal of building an equitable, future-ready workforce that supports both workers and employers.
 - A major statewide target under discussion is to add 10,000 people to Minnesota's labor force each year.
- Strategic Priority Areas
 - The draft statewide strategy includes the following major focus areas:
 - Equity and Access
 - Establish benchmarks for overlooked workers at both the state and regional levels
 - Improve support for employers seeking to recruit and retain workers from overlooked populations
 - Sector Partnerships
 - Expand and strengthen sector partnerships across the state
 - Encourage employer participation in the training pathways developed through those partnerships
 - Work-Based Learning and Registered Apprenticeship
 - Develop a more consistent statewide framework for defining and counting work-based learning
 - Expand multi-employer registered apprenticeship models, particularly within priority sectors
 - High-Quality Jobs
 - Implement a statewide high-quality jobs framework and related training resources
 - Support local workforce boards in applying the framework through their employer and sector partnership work
 - Integrated, No-Wrong-Door Services
 - Develop stronger cross-agency data-sharing agreements
 - Reduce duplicative data entry
 - Clarify workforce system governance, roles, and responsibilities across agencies and partners
- Interagency Workforce Alignment Task Force (IWA)
 - The Interagency Workforce Alignment Task Force has updated its planning approach for 2026 in light of the upcoming gubernatorial transition.
 - Four major focus areas were highlighted:
 - Labor force growth
 - Workforce needs in health care
 - Workforce needs in education
 - Common workforce outcomes across programs and agencies.
 - Transition Planning for the Next Governor

- The IWA and the Governor’s Workforce Development Board are preparing transition-oriented roadmap documents to help inform the next governor’s workforce priorities.
 - These documents are intended to outline:
 - Key workforce priorities
 - Legislative opportunities
 - Potential executive actions
 - The value of continued cross-agency coordination.
- Federal WIOA Waiver and Flexibility Updates
 - The Department of Labor is encouraging states to pursue additional WIOA waivers and flexibilities.
 - At the same time, federal WIOA reauthorization remains uncertain due to broader disputes involving Adult Basic Education and the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Members were advised that, in the near term, waivers may offer one of the more practical paths for addressing system challenges.
 - Possible Areas of Interest
 - Greater flexibility around American Job Center requirements
 - Alternatives to current MOU/IFA processes
 - State-level options for structuring one-stop funding mechanisms
 - Other implementation flexibilities that could reduce administrative burden and improve local operations.
 - Coordination with Local Boards
 - Local leaders noted that they have already reviewed many of the available waiver options and gathered feedback on which flexibilities may be most useful.
 - DEED and local partners agreed that the waiver process should move forward as a joint effort, with additional discussion needed to clarify process, roles, and next steps.
- State Plan and Local Plan Modifications
 - The current state plan modification is open for public comment.
 - The modifications are intended to be technical and limited in scope, rather than a major strategic reset.
 - Local plan updates should similarly focus on:
 - Information that has actually changed
 - Necessary corrections or updates
 - Avoiding unnecessary revisions where content remains accurate.
 - Local Plan Timing
 - DEED and MAWB discussed a tentative October submission timeline for local plan modifications.
 - Members did not raise concerns with that timeframe.
 - It was confirmed that local plan modifications should still include the appropriate public comment process.

Common Exit Project Update – Jay Berger, Performance & Reporting Coordinator, DEED

- Jay provided an update on its work to modernize workforce data systems, including development of a data Lakehouse and implementation of common exit.
- These efforts are closely connected, with the broader data modernization work serving as the foundation for common exit implementation.
- Why This Work Is Needed
 - Minnesota currently uses multiple workforce data systems, which has created challenges such as:
 - Duplicate customer records
 - Separate tracking across systems
 - Different exit dates and reporting logic
 - Inconsistent participant counts and reporting outputs.
 - Jay noted that Minnesota is currently the only state that has not yet implemented common exit, and the department is working to address that gap proactively.
- Identity Resolution Progress
 - A major early focus has been identity resolution—improving the ability to match records that belong to the same individual across systems.
 - DEED has implemented machine learning-supported matching tools to better identify duplicate or related records using multiple data points, rather than relying solely on Social Security numbers.
- Master Service Table Development
 - DEED is building a master service table that will pull service activity from across systems into a single, standardized structure.
 - The goal is to create one authoritative service history for each person, making it possible to better understand:
 - Customer engagement across programs
 - Service timelines
 - Participation periods
 - Exit timing and reporting logic.
- Current Status
 - DEED shared that it has completed the first load of data into the master service table, including millions of activity records tied to hundreds of thousands of customers.
 - This work remains in the validation and refinement phase, with additional testing, rules development, and reporting logic still underway.
- Local Input and Steering Committee
 - Members asked about opportunities for local workforce system representation in the ongoing work related to common exit and data modernization.
 - DEED confirmed that a steering committee is in place and meets periodically as the project progresses.
 - Members encouraged DEED to continue bringing in local workforce voices early in the process to help identify practical considerations and potential blind spots, particularly for Title I programs.
- Potential Impact on WIOA Performance

- DEED confirmed that this work could affect WIOA performance outcomes, including adult, dislocated worker, and youth reporting.
- Members emphasized the importance of closely monitoring for any unintended consequences, given the high level of accountability already attached to those programs.

ETP & CareerForce Update – Art Larsen, Job Service Field Director & Reggie Worlds, CareerForce Deputy Director, DEED

- ETP Update
 - Members were encouraged to continue reaching out directly to the ETP division and program directors with questions & concerns.
 - DEED also requested that local areas share any concerns or observed impacts related to federal immigration enforcement activities, noting that internal conversations are underway and additional follow-up is expected.
- Employer Services Staff Survey
 - A final reminder was provided regarding the Employer Services Staff Survey, which is intended for DEED staff and local area staff who regularly serve employers.
- Cisco Phone Upgrade
 - DEED shared information about an upcoming Cisco phone system upgrade affecting common and shared phones across the state.
 - Key points included:
 - No additional cost for replacement equipment
 - No change in the service rate for the standard replacement phones
 - Optional opportunities to upgrade to more advanced systems
 - Expected implementation that should be largely straightforward, though some technical issues may arise.
 - The hard cutoff for the existing Cisco phones is expected in June, and DEED is working to ensure locations receive equipment in advance.
- Printer Replacement / Rightsizing Project
 - DEED also provided an update on an ongoing printer replacement and rightsizing effort tied to a new printer contract.
 - The goal is to reduce unnecessary costs while ensuring locations still have the right equipment and functions.
- CareerForce Corner Events
 - DEED shared that planning is underway for upcoming CareerForce Corner events this spring and summer.
 - The goal is to support and leverage events that are already being planned locally, rather than creating entirely new standalone events.

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Update – Hue Nguyen, Assistant Vice President, Policy & Community Affairs Officer, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

- Hue provided an overview of the Minneapolis Fed's community development and engagement work, which focuses on understanding challenges and opportunities facing low- and moderate-income communities.

- Hue expressed interest in building stronger connections with MAWB and local workforce leaders to identify research questions, policy issues, and partnership opportunities where additional data analysis or long-form research could be useful.
- Members discussed a number of possible areas where collaboration with the Minneapolis Fed could be valuable, including:
 - Artificial Intelligence and the Workforce
 - Return on Investment (ROI) for Workforce Programs
 - Virtual vs. In-Person Service Delivery
 - Housing and Workforce Planning
 - Longitudinal Outcomes for Youth Programs
 - Labor Force Growth and Demographic Change
- The Minneapolis Fed expressed strong interest in continuing the conversation and taking these ideas back to its economists and research staff for further consideration.

Unemployment Insurance Program Update – Jim Hegman, Unemployment Insurance Director, DEED

- General Program Overview
 - UI is an eligibility-based program designed to provide temporary benefits to people who are unemployed through no fault of their own.
 - Key points included:
 - UI generally provides up to 26 weeks of benefits
 - Weekly benefit levels are indexed and updated over time
 - Minnesota is one of the states that has built in mechanisms to keep benefit levels current without needing constant legislative changes.
- Federal-State Structure
 - UI operates as a federal-state partnership, meaning Minnesota’s UI program is closely tied to federal law, federal guidance, and federal funding structures.
- Performance and Responsiveness
 - Minnesota’s UI program generally continues to meet or exceed federal performance standards.
 - One area currently under strain is call wait times, particularly during the winter.
- Reciprocity Rate
 - Minnesota continues to have one of the highest UI reciprocity rates in the country.
 - Jim noted that this reflects both:
 - Strong access to the program
 - A larger share of eligible workers actually receiving benefits.
- Employer Taxes and Post-Pandemic Adjustment
 - Recent increases in UI tax rates for employers reflect the unwinding of temporary tax suppression measures put in place during the pandemic.
- Technology and Program Modernization
 - Jim outlined ongoing UI technology and modernization efforts.
 - UI infrastructure has been leveraged to support implementation of paid leave tax collection, helping reduce duplication for employers and improve integration across programs.
- Fraud Oversight

- Minnesota recently received a federal “strike team” review, but Jim emphasized that:
 - No findings were expected at the time of the presentation
 - Minnesota’s UI program has generally performed strongly compared with other states.
- RESEA / Job Search Support
 - Nearly all UI applicants who are not expected to return quickly to work are contacted and routed through the RESEA process if eligible.
 - Assessments and plans are completed online, followed by scheduled conversations with staff.
 - Job Service receives referral information and follows up with individuals as part of the broader reemployment process.
- Labor Market Conditions and Claimant Trends
 - Jim described recent UI activity as showing more “churn” in the labor market, with more movement between jobs rather than a traditional recession pattern.
 - Recent claimant profiles have included more activity in industries such as:
 - Retail
 - Food service
 - Hospitality
 - Banking, at certain points.

Successes/Challenges/Questions

- Continuing Connection with DCYF Partners - Jinny/Cate
 - Members emphasized the importance of staying connected to DCYF, particularly because of SNAP-related work requirements and the overlap between workforce services and public benefit programs.
- GLETA Co-Rep - Cate/Dina
 - Ryan volunteered to serve as co-representative alongside the existing representative.
- Walk Through Waivers – Jinny
 - MAWB leadership reminded members to continue sharing input on WIOA waiver priorities.
 - Feedback submitted by members will be compiled and shared with DEED staff as part of next steps.
- Joint GWDB/MAWB Winter Meeting – Cate
 - A proposed date **of November 18 was** shared as a possible alternative to the previously scheduled week following Election Day and the week affected by Veterans Day.
- 2026-27 MAWB Regional Planning Grant Funds – Cate
 - MAWB provided an update on timing for the next Regional Planning Grant cycle.
 - Because of requests for a little additional submission time, the updated working assumption is that execution of the new grant funds may begin mid-April rather than early April.
- MAWB Summer Conference Planning Members – Bob
 - Jinny, Deb, Heather, Erik, Elena, Ryan

The meeting concluded at 2:00PM.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 19th, at AMC & via Zoom