



LCWD Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 8:00 AM
Room A103
College of Lake County - Grayslake Campus

Present: John Castillo, Kevin Considine, Laura Crivlare, Timothy Dempsey, Carrie Espinosa, Yvette Ewing, Ed Gallagher, Christine Hammerlund, Lisa Johnson, Dennis Kessler, Noelle Lepper, Rachel Loberg, Troy McIntosh, Kathy Nellia, Carlotta Roman, Mary Ross-Cunningham, Carla Schroeder, Jennifer Serino (Zoom), Tasha Shell (Proxy), Lori Suddick, Ken Swanson, Andrew Warrington, Kimberly Wimer.

Absent: Josh Fischer, Jennifer Harris, Marcus Jordan, Michael Karner, Sara Knizhnik, Kristi Long, Darryl Rader, Julie Savitt.

I. Call to Order Kimberly Wimer, Chair

The meeting was called to order on **Thursday, April 17, 2025**, at **8:09 AM** by Board Chair Kimberly Wimer.

II. Public Comment

- III. Karen Rios, Program Director of Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)** , address the Lake County Workforce Development Board to inform members about the termination of a youth employment program due to federal funding cuts. The program, which was designed to serve 24 youth participants, had five youth actively engaged at the time of closure. Participants had performed extensive environmental work across Lake County, including collecting 96 bags of trash, maintaining over 3,400 feet of waterway, pruning more than 2,000 trees, and preparing for a certified controlled burn. YCC is temporarily continuing the program using private funds and is actively seeking employment opportunities for the youth still involved. Karen emphasized the urgent need to understand the local impact of federal funding losses and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak.

IV. Chairman's Report

Chair Kimberly Wimer reminded members of the Board that proxies can be designated to maintain quorum and voting continuity. Chair Wimer also encouraged members to consider serving in committee leadership roles.

V. Consent Agenda

- February 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
 - Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Regular Agenda

- **Presentation: The Community Works - Youth Empowerment Program**
 - Yvette Ewing, Executive Director of The Community Works, introduced five interns participating in the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), which is funded by LCWDB. The interns shared reflections on their hands-on work improving the community's access to resources and creating peer-focused outreach materials. One youth shared how they developed marketing skills by designing social media campaigns to promote services for youth. Another intern described that they learned to facilitate community interviews and learned how to communicate with people of

different backgrounds. A third spoke about organizing and hosting a per roundtable that helped them recognize the value of youth voices in shaping services. Each of the interns emphasized the mentorship and real-world learning that they gained from this program and expressed interest in continuing along educational and community career pathways.

- **NAWB Forum**

- Updates were provided by Carlotta Roman, DJ Newport, Jeff Hubert, and Sara Espeland, who attended the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Forum. Carlotta emphasized the importance of building workforce narratives that center on impact, particularly for youth and marginalized populations. DJ Newport highlighted strategies discussed around integrated service models and the role of community colleges in aligning with WIOA goals. Jeff Hubert shared insights on employer engagement strategies, including how boards can support small and mid-sized businesses in adopting skills-first hiring practices. Sara Espeland reflected on sessions focused on data-driven storytelling and the national push to modernize workforce systems to better serve diverse and rapidly changing communities. Collectively, the group noted that the forum reinforced the urgency of board-level advocacy and the value of cross-sector partnerships in shaping sustainable workforce pipelines

- **NAWB Workforce Advocacy Day**

- Board members who participated in Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C., reported that their meetings with legislators focused on protecting WIOA funding and advocating for greater flexibility within youth and apprenticeship program structures. Attendees shared that while there is bipartisan support for workforce programming, there is also a growing urgency to demonstrate a measurable return on investment. Members underscored the value of elevating local program impact to support these conversations.

- **NAWB Community of Practice - Skills First Hiring and Learning and Employment Records (LERs)**

- An update was shared on national initiatives around Skills First hiring practices and the use of Learning and Employment Records (LERs). These digital records are being piloted to help individuals document and share their skills and credentials more efficiently. The Board discussed how this innovation can support equitable hiring and create more visibility for short-term credentials. Members also expressed interest in exploring how Lake County might engage in future pilot efforts.

- **Strategic Plan in Action**

- The discussion focused on how the Board can take a more active and strategic role in state-level workforce advocacy. With recent federal funding disruptions affecting local programming, members discussed the importance of building visibility and influence with state decision-makers. The conversation emphasized the need to consistently elevate success stories from Lake County programs, highlight return on investment, and align messaging with both state and regional priorities. It was noted that advocacy should not be reactive, but rather an ongoing part of the Board's culture. A consultant has been engaged to assist in developing a tailored advocacy strategy, and volunteers were invited to participate in a working group to help shape messaging and identify key audiences. Several members expressed interest, and the next steps will include convening the working group to begin this process.

VII. **Announcements**

- **LCWD Board of Directors Meeting**
 - June 26, 2025, at 8:00 AM

VIII. **Updates/ Other Items**

IX. **Adjournmen t**

The meeting was adjourned at **9:25 AM**.