

LCWDB Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 8:15 AM

Zoom

Present: Kevin Considine, Timothy Dempsey, Jennifer Harris, Dr. Kristen Jones, Marcus Jordan, Dr. Michael Karner, Dennis Kessler, Dr. Carlotta Roman, Jennifer Serino, Dr. Andrew Warrington, Kimberly Wimer

Absent: Laura Crivlare-Maglio, Ed Gallagher, Josh Fischer

I. Call to Order..... Chairwoman, Dr. Carlotta Roman

The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 8:15 AM by Executive Committee Chairwoman Dr. Carlotta Roman.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

III. Chair Report

No chair report for this meeting.

IV. Strategic Focus

a. Changes Affecting Talent Development in Lake County

- i. Jennifer Serino provided an overview of current and emerging changes affecting talent development in Lake County and encouraged the Executive Committee to discuss how the Board can continue to lead in these areas. The discussion focused on work-based learning and career pathways, digital access and literacy, integrated partnerships and community access, employer communication, and governance, policy, and advocacy.*

1. Digital Literacy

- a. The Committee discussed the importance of digital literacy as a foundational workforce skill. The Digital Growth Initiative has provided digital literacy training, access to Northstar Digital Learning, and devices to Lake County residents through ARPA*

funding. While the program itself is not ending, the County's ARPA funding supporting the initiative is scheduled to sunset at the end of 2026.

- b. Workforce Development has secured additional DCEO funding to continue one digital navigator position, provide Northstar training, and distribute a limited number of devices. Staff are also working with the County Administrator's Office on a request to transition the initiative into Job Center on the Move and potentially support it through County funding. A final decision is expected as part of the County's November budget process.*
- c. The Committee discussed the value of Northstar Digital Learning, which provides structured training in basic computer literacy. Participants complete six sessions and demonstrate competency through an assessment. The training is intended to improve employability and help individuals navigate an increasingly digital workplace.*
- d. Members discussed whether digital literacy should be viewed as a standalone service or integrated into a broader continuum of workforce and community services. Jennifer Harris encouraged the Board to consider how participants could remain connected to additional services after completing digital literacy training, including employment services, education, financial literacy, and other supportive resources.*
- e. The Committee also discussed the connection between digital literacy and AI literacy. Members noted that individuals need foundational digital skills before they can effectively utilize AI tools and that AI literacy will increasingly be an important workforce skill. Staff shared that Workforce Development has partnered with Deloitte on AI training for staff and is exploring how to incorporate AI literacy into services provided to staff, job seekers, and participants.*

- f. Members also discussed the sustainability of device distribution. Ideas included pursuing private philanthropy, corporate social responsibility partnerships, refurbished devices, and potential partnerships with technology companies and foundations. The Committee discussed exploring organizations such as CDW, Microsoft, HP, and the Circle of Service Foundation as potential sources of support.*

2. Pell Grant Changes

3. Increase in Employer-Led Training

- a. The Committee discussed the continued growth of work-based learning, apprenticeships, and employer-led training as major workforce development priorities. Staff noted that apprenticeship expansion is a federal and state priority, and Lake County has received apprenticeship grant funding to support expansion.*
- b. The Board's investment in youth-serving organizations and high schools is also supporting work-based learning opportunities. Staff indicated that metrics from these pilots will help determine their impact and inform future strategies for expanding employer participation.*
- c. The Committee also discussed the importance of employer engagement in apprenticeship programs. Staff shared that Lake County is participating in an international initiative focused on learning how to better engage employers in apprenticeships and work-based learning.*
- d. Members discussed the need to engage Board members more intentionally in industries where they can provide leadership and connections. Healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and the skilled trades were identified as areas where Board members could help strengthen employer relationships and talent pipelines.*

4. IWDS 2.0 / Local Policy Revisions

- a. Staff provided an update on IWDS 2.0, which launched July 8, 2026. The new system creates a standardized, customer-driven entry point*

for workforce services throughout Illinois. Customers complete portions of the intake process online, including uploading documents, completing assessments, and providing signatures.

- b. Staff noted that the system was only approximately one week into implementation and that Workforce Development was continuing to identify and address issues. Because the new system changes customer flow, engagement, assessment, and eligibility processes, local policies must be reviewed and updated accordingly.*
- c. The Board must complete its policy updates by October 1, 2026. Staff are conducting crosswalks between existing local policies and new state requirements, with policy revisions expected to come before the Board in September. The process also provides an opportunity to review the Board's priority occupations and determine whether the Board should place greater emphasis on specific industries and occupations when funding occupational training.*
- d. A Committee member recommended obtaining feedback from customers regarding their experiences with IWDS 2.0, particularly because the new system requires significantly more online interaction. Staff agreed to bring an initial review of customer experience to the Committee in September.*

5. Sustainable Youth Funding

- a. The Committee discussed the Board's continued focus on work-based learning and career pathways for youth. Staff described the ongoing ecosystem work focused on ensuring that every student has access to a career pathway as they transition from high school.*
- b. The discussion also emphasized that career pathways should not be limited to youth. Members noted that adults of all ages can benefit from career planning, professional development, apprenticeships, and opportunities to continue building skills throughout their careers.*
- c. The Committee discussed the use of School Links to connect students and employers and track work-based learning opportunities. The*

platform currently has more than 830 businesses registered for the countywide portion, while nearly 5,000 students have participated in Navigate Lake activities. Paid internships through Endeavor Health are also being tracked through the platform.

6. Additional Strategic Discussion

a. Integrated Partnerships and Community Access

- i. The Committee discussed upcoming SNAP work requirements and the role workforce partners can play in helping individuals meet those requirements while progressing toward employment and family-sustaining wages.*
- ii. Staff explained that SNAP work requirements generally involve 20 hours per week of employment, participation in an approved work program, community service, or a combination of qualifying activities. Approximately 25–30% of Workforce Development participants disclose that they receive SNAP benefits.*
- iii. Members discussed the importance of viewing the issue as part of a larger workforce ecosystem rather than simply helping individuals satisfy the initial requirement. The Committee discussed opportunities to connect individuals to training, employment, community service, digital literacy, and other services that can help them progress toward sustainable employment.*
- iv. The Committee also discussed barriers such as transportation and childcare and the importance of connecting individuals with partner organizations that can address those needs.*

b. Employer Communication

- i. Staff briefly reviewed the upcoming work of the Employer Connections Committee, which is focused on creating clear entry points and a strong value proposition for employers, industries, and businesses seeking to engage with the workforce system. The Employer Connections Committee was*

scheduled to continue this discussion at its upcoming meeting.

c. Governance, Policy, and Advocacy

- i. Jennifer provided an update on proposed federal changes affecting the use of workforce funding. The proposed changes could increase reporting, documentation, and scrutiny related to expenditures such as staff development, conference attendance, and association memberships. The Committee discussed concerns that additional administrative requirements could increase staff workload and reduce the amount of time available for direct workforce development activities.*
- ii. Members discussed the importance of strengthening relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials and increasing awareness of the workforce system's role in Lake County. The Committee discussed potential advocacy strategies, including developing stronger relationships with local elected officials and potentially participating in a statewide Workforce Day or similar advocacy effort.*
- iii. Staff noted that the Illinois Workforce Association has submitted comments regarding the proposed federal changes and that Lake County Workforce Development is participating in those efforts. Staff also noted that the proposed changes could affect other county departments receiving federal funds and that workforce concerns have been incorporated into the County's legislative agenda.*
- iv. The Committee also discussed the state's new 2040 postsecondary credential attainment goal. Illinois previously established a goal of having 60% of adults hold a high-quality postsecondary credential by 2025; approximately 57.1% was achieved. The new initiative seeks broad stakeholder input—including businesses, industries, community organizations,*

and workforce partners—to help establish the 2040 goal and define meaningful credentials and their value to the labor market.

V. Other Business / Updates

- a. No additional business was discussed beyond the strategic topics above.*

VI. Member Time

- a. Dr. Carlotta Roman encouraged members to attend an upcoming presentation on using data and outcomes to drive workforce development decisions, which Workforce Development staff were scheduled to present.*
- b. Dr. Carlotta Roman also recognized DJ Newport for his contributions to the Lake County Workforce Development Board, Workforce Development Department, and broader workforce ecosystem as he prepared to transition to a new opportunity.*

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 AM.

Upcoming Meetings:

LCWDB Employer Connections Committee Focus Group

- Thursday, July 23, 2026, at 9:00 AM

LCWDB Operations Committee Meeting

- Friday, August 8, 2026, at 9:00 AM

LCWDB Talent Pipeline Committee Meeting

- Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at 9:00 AM

LCWDB Employer Connections Committee Meeting

- Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 9:00 AM

LCWDB Executive Committee Meeting

- Wednesday, August 19, 2026, at 8:15 AM

LCWDB Board of Directors Meeting

- Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 8:00 AM