



**West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB) Meeting  
Grand Rapids NW Service Center ▪ 215 Straight Ave NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504**

**The public may attend in-person or by remote participation via Teams.**

**[Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 285 307 890 722 Passcode: rM7dTM**

**+1 616-803-9815,,855949773# Phone conference ID: 855 949 773#**

**Monday, April 14, 2025 ▪ 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Lunch at 11:30 a.m.)**

**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment – Agenda Items
3. Approval of February 10, 2025 Minutes **Action Required**
4. Presentation: Michigan Works! Association (MWA)  
*Ryan Hundt, Chief Executive Officer of MWA* **Information Item**
5. WDB Activities **Information Item**
  - a. Board Member Spotlights
  - b. Member Nominations & Vacancies: *Jacob Maas, Chief Executive Officer*
6. WDB Committee/Council Updates **Information Item**
  - a. Executive Committee: *Heather Daniel, WDB Chairperson*
  - b. CEAC: *Tonia Castillo, Committee Chairperson*
  - c. Legislative Committee: *Jim Fisher, Committee Chairperson*
  - d. Solutions Driven Committee: *Jordan Clark, Committee Chairperson*
  - e. Bev Drake Essential Services Awards Committee: *Mark Bergsma, Committee Chairperson*
7. Success Story: [Creative Dining Services](#)  
*Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions* **Information Item**
8. WDB Service Summary: *Angie Barksdale, Chief Operating Officer* **Information Item**
9. Solutions Driven Updates **Information Item**  
*Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions, and  
Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation*
10. Other Business
  - a. Request for WIOA Youth RFP Review Committee
  - b. 10-Year Anniversary of West Michigan Works!
  - c. [2025 HotJobs! List](#)
11. Public Comment
12. Adjournment



**Future Meeting Dates**  
**Workforce Development Board**

June 9, 2025  
October 13, 2025  
December 8, 2025

**Executive Committee**

May 12, 2025  
September 15, 2025  
November 10, 2025

**Solutions Driven Committee**

April 25, 2025  
July 11, 2025  
October 3, 2025

**Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC)**

May 16, 2025  
September 26, 2025

**Legislative Committee**

April 22, 2025  
July 15, 2025  
October 21, 2025  
November 18, 2025 (if needed)



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**[Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 270 564 702 58 Passcode: tABbH7**

**[+1 616-803-9815,,43582485#](#) Phone conference ID: 435 824 85#**

**Monday, February 10, 2025 ▪ 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

## **MINUTES**

**Workforce Board Members Present:** Heather Daniel (Chairperson), Shana Washington (Vice-Chairperson), Emily Babson, Nora Balgoyen (virtual), Ryan Bennett, Mark Bergsma, Bryce Butler, Tonia Castillo, Jordan Clark, Cathy Cronick, Paul David, Jay Dunwell (virtual), Jim Fisher, Nate Henschel, Jon Hofman, TaRita Johnson(virtual), Greg King, Kelly Kroll, Lindsay Maunz, Dan Rinsema-Sybenga, Michelle Seigo, Samantha Semrau, Dan TenHoopen

**Workforce Board Members Absent:** Bradley Barrick, Jan Harrington-Davis, Jennifer Heinzman, Charles Lepper, Jen Schottke, Mark Thomas, Sara Whisler

**Staff Present (physical location or virtually):** Jacob Maas, Angie Barksdale, Kirsti Jones, Janette Monroe, Jeff Dornbos, Tasha Evans, Amy Lebednick, Chad Patton, Malinda Powers

**Guests/Public Present:** Tracy Swinburn, One-Stop Operator (Strategic Policy Consultants), Monica Robbins (LEO)

1. Call to Order at 12:03 p.m. Madam Chairperson, Heather Daniel.
2. Public Comment- None
3. Approval of December 9, 2024 Minutes **Action Required**  
**Motion – Dan TenHoopen**  
**Second – Mark Bergsma**  
**Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried**
4. Presentation: Strategic Plan Update **Information Item**  
 Tracy Swinburn, One-Stop Operator for West Michigan Works!, presented the most recent update on the strategic plan's progress, detailing the agency's efforts across the 12 strategies as outlined in the board packet. The presentation covered the scope and impact of various initiatives.
5. Career and Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) Member Approvals **Action Required**  
 Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation, explained that current CEAC member terms of office are based on the date the WDB approves the appointment of representatives. Chad stated that staff are seeking WDB approval to update CEAC member terms of office to a standard 2-year term beginning on July 1 of either an odd or even year. Chad reviewed the proposed changes as provided in the board packet. Chad also requested approval of a new CEAC member, Dan TenHoopen, WDB Member from the Heart of West Michigan United Way.  
**Motion – Bryce Butler**  
**Second – Jordan Clark**  
**Item Approved by Vote – All members present voted affirmatively. Motion carried**
6. Policy Approval: WMW Draft 16-03c10 Welfare Reform Supportive Services **Action Required**  
 Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, reviewed that in October of 2017, the WDB approved this policy to establish guidance for the provision of supportive services to job seekers enrolled in the PATH and FAE&T programs. She explained that the revisions, as outlined in the board packet, simplify the milestones required

for jobseekers to earn transitional supportive service (TSS). Tasha requested WDB approval of the requested policy revisions.

**Motion – Dan TenHooen**

**Second – Paul David**

**Item Approved by Vote – Motion carried**

7. Board Member Spotlight \*New **Information Item**  
 WDB Members Shana Washington and Cathy Cronick shared the following board member spotlight information with the full board: 1.) Name, title, and organization; 2.) Years of Service on the WDB/Committee/Councils; and 3.) An explanation about how they or their organization partners with or contributes to West Michigan Works!. Each member spotlight will also be highlighted on social media and the WMW blog.
8. WMW WDB Subcommittee Updates **Information Item**
  - a. Executive Leadership and Strategic Engagement Committee (Executive Committee): Heather Daniel reported that the EC met on January 16 and discussed today's agenda, MWA Advocacy Day, MiCQ, NAWB, WMW's 10-Year Anniversary, and a few other events. The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2025.
  - b. Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC): Tonia Castillo, WDB Member and Council Chair, reported that the CEAC met on January 24, 2025. She shared regional grant updates and discussed new programs and expansion efforts in Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan counties. The next meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2025.
  - c. Legislative Committee: Jim Fisher, WDB Member and Committee Chair, reported that the committee last met on January 28, 2025. The committee discussed Governor Whitmer's upcoming State of the State address, which is scheduled for February 26, 2025 and the Michigan Works! Association (MWA) Advocacy Day scheduled for March 19, 2025 in Lansing. Discussion also took place on the State and Federal Priorities, legislative visits, National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Forum taking place at the end of March in Washington, D.C. The next meeting is scheduled for April 22, 2025.
  - d. Solutions Driven Committee: Jordan Clark, WDB Member and Committee Chair, reported that the committee last met on November 22, 2024. Jordan reported that the committee had recently discussed artificial intelligence (AI) and youth work experience programs, noting some challenges with employers' willingness to participate. Jordan reported that the committee plans to continue to explore employer engagement, scheduling future committee meetings and identifying topics for discussion. The next meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2025.
  - e. Bev Drake Essential Services Awards (ESA) Committee: Mark Bergsma, WDB Member and Committee Chair, reported that the awards ceremony is scheduled for February 24, 2025 at the Economic Club of Grand Rapids Luncheon. The award recipients are listed in the board packet. In addition to the awards, a legacy video on Bev Drake will be premiered.
9. Success Story **Information Item**  
 Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions, reviewed the success story for LG Energy Solutions, which was provided in the board packet. The full story can be viewed online here: [LG Energy Solutions](#).
10. WDB Service Summary **Information Item**  
 Angie Barksdale, Chief Operating Officer, shared the Service Summary for October 2024 through December 31, 2024, with board members. Angie reviewed the Management Observations and Highlights which included information and data on: Service Center Traffic, Employers Served, Jobs Filled by Industry, Going Pro Talent Fund (GPTF), Hiring Events, Retention Solutions, and WorkReady Certificates Earned. Angie reported that there have not many changes since the last report.

## 11. Solutions Driven Updates

## Information Item

Summaries of each initiative highlighted under solutions-driven updates include a notation identifying its alignment with strategic plan goals. These “alignment indicators” are ***Diversity and Inclusion, Enhanced Relationships, and Pipeline Development.***

**Grant Updates:**

- a. Catalyze: Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation reported that WMW is currently in the running for Round 4 of the Catalyze Challenge. Catalyze will award up to \$1 million dollars to scalable programs and tools that advance career exploration for young adolescents (aged 11-22). WMW submitted a grant proposal that includes scaling MiCareerQuest, developing a career exploration event tool, and expanding career exploration events into our 7 counties in partnership with the industry talent councils. WMW was 1 of 80 applicants invited to engage in an interview with the Catalyze team. The interview is the final step before preliminary awards are announced in Mid-February. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- b. Make Michigan Home: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- c. FutureTech Careers Program (formally known as Strengthening Community Colleges Grant 4 (SCC4)): Chad Patton reported that this grant program, awarded to Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), is designed to enhance the capacity of community colleges to meet the skill development needs of employers and equitably support students in securing good jobs in high-demand industries. The grant program is centered on sector-based career pathways, which have been proven to improve employment outcomes. West Michigan Works! will collaborate with GRCC with the goal of developing targeted programs and curriculum. This grant will serve 622 participants between May 1, 2024, and April 30, 2028. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- d. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeships: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- e. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- f. Michigan Career Opportunity Academies for Community Health (MiCOACH): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- g. The Michigan Citizen Reentry Initiative (MiCRI): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***
- h. Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD): Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***
- i. Michigan Skilled Immigration Integration Program (MISIIP): Tasha Evans, Director of Talent Solutions, reported that The Michigan Skilled Immigrant Integration Program is part of a \$1M allocation for the Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) initiative as part of an overall \$5M appropriation received by Global Detroit. This program connects professional, college-degreed, internationally trained job seekers with Michigan-based careers in their profession. Eligible participants will also receive assistance with job search, networking coaching, credential evaluation, and professional licensing resources. This program has been extended through September 30, 2025. ***Diversity and Inclusion, Pipeline Development***
- j. Grand Rapids Community College One Workforce Grant: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- k. Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES) Expansion: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

- l. Michigan's Inclusive Training, Technology and Equity Network (MITTEN): Tasha Evans, reported that the Michigan High Speed Internet Office (MIHI) has initiated a \$13 million grant program aimed at enhancing digital inclusion and capacity-building initiatives for regional organizations and collaboratives across the state. WMW in partnership with the Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF), Grand Valley State University Public Media (WGVU), Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), and Casual Simulation, has collectively submitted a response to the RFP to become the resource hub for Region 4b, which excludes the city of Grand Rapids. If awarded the grant, WMW will play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of the Michigan Digital Equity Plan within the proposed project areas and for the identified covered populations. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- m. Michigan Rural Enhanced Access to Careers in Healthcare (MiREACH): Amy Lebednick, Director of Business Solutions, reported that WMW partnered with the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity on a \$2.5 million USDOL H1-B Rural Healthcare grant program. This 4-year grant was focused on increasing the number of individuals training in healthcare occupations that directly impact patient care; and alleviating healthcare workforce shortages by creating sustainable employment and training programs in healthcare occupations serving rural populations. The MiREACH grant ended in December 2024. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- n. MDARD Specialty Crop Grant: Amy Lebednick reported that WMW continues to market the remaining grant funds to specialty crop growers. As expected, due to the seasonal demand requiring growers to be in the fields, the number of employers applying for food safety training is currently down. The end date for the grant is March 31, 2025. WMW has submitted an application for the 2025-27 grant cycle for \$125k to support training, staff wages, and MiCareerQuest. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- o. Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF):  
Fiscal Year 2024:  
 Additional information is provided in the board packet:
  - Cycle 1: 222 employers received a total of \$14.8M. Awarded training may occur from January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.
  - Cycle 2: 95 employers received a total of \$5.2M, Training may take place July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.Fiscal Year 2025:
  - Cycle 1: The employer application period for FY25 Cycle 1 began on October 1, 2024 and will close October 18, 2024 at 4:59 p.m. Award recipients will be announced in mid-December.
  - Cycle 2: The application period is scheduled to start spring 2025

Employer Led Collaborative (ELCs – formerly Industry Led Collaboratives): The application period for Fiscal Year 2025 ELCs is tentatively scheduled to open March 2025.

A full list of grant recipients statewide is available online at [Michigan.gov/TalentFund](https://Michigan.gov/TalentFund). ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- p. Sector Strategies Employer Led Collaborative Grant: Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***
- q. Michigan Statewide Targeted Apprenticeship Inclusive and Readiness System (MiSTAIRS): Additional information provided in board packet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

**Industry Talent Council Initiatives:** Amy Lebednick reported that there are a variety of ways to stay connected to the innovative work taking place under each of the WMW Industry Talent Councils (ITC).

***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Multi-Industry Initiatives:** Amy reviewed some of the multi-industry initiatives taking place.

- Lunch & Learn – the Councils are funding a quarterly series of lunch and learns to connect employers with services supporting inclusive hiring and job seeker supports provided by WMW community partners.
  - Mental Health – All Councils approved the Workplace Well-Being Summit. Additional information provided in board packet.
  - Career Readiness Conference – Discover Manufacturing and Construction Careers Council are participating in the Career Readiness Conference with Talent First, The Right Place, and regional ISD partners. Additional information is provided in the board packet.
- a. **Agribusiness Talent Council of West Michigan (ATC) Mission: The Agribusiness Talent Council is an employer-led collaborative that seeks to expand the talent pool by promoting care pathways and opportunities in West Michigan agribusiness industry.** Additional information is provided in the board packet.
  - b. **Construction Careers Council (CCC) Mission: The Construction Careers Council creates a bright future for West Michigan’s construction industry by building a diverse and qualified workforce.** Additional information is provided in the board packet.
  - c. **Discover Manufacturing (DM) Mission: We Exist to Inspire and Expand Manufacturing Talent in West Michigan.** Lisa Brewer was hired in November as the Industry Council Lead for Discover Manufacturing. The council is sponsoring the Career Readiness Conference (see Multi-industry Initiatives above). In addition, the Council is excited to offer scholarships for students pursuing manufacturing pathways. Applications are open and will be closed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, with awards supporting both high school seniors and current college students entering technical programs. DM remains committed to expanding industry outreach, strengthening partnerships, and fostering the next generation of manufacturing professionals.
  - d. **Explore Hospitality: We elevate one of West Michigan’s leading employment sectors by developing careers, cultivating talent, and promoting a thriving, dynamic hospitality industry.** The council continues to make progress in its planning efforts. All non-employer partners have now been onboarded. ExH is in the process of selecting a logo and hopes to finalize one within the next couple of months. The council has also approved participation in several key initiatives, including MiCareerQuest, the Workplace Well-Being Summit, and the Lunch and Learn series. ExH is eager to collaborate with other councils on these projects and looks forward to developing initiatives of its own.
  - e. **West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC) Mission: The purpose of WMHCC is to provide an employer-led collaborative council of healthcare employers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan’s healthcare talent needs.** Brad Sims has been promoted from a Business Solutions Representative to lead the work of the council.  
In partnership with the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute, the WMHCC is laying groundwork for the creation of a local Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) apprenticeship program. This apprenticeship program supports our goal of creating more equitable pathways into nursing careers.



The council recently approved a June series of Career Fair Carnivals to take place in Montcalm, Ionia, and Muskegon counties to recruit for healthcare positions across the region.

The Health Careers Expo is scheduled for March 5 in partnership with Kent ISD. The audience is in and out of school youth looking for entry level or earn and learn opportunities in the industry.

- f. **West Michigan Tech Talent (WMTT) Mission:** West Michigan Tech Talent looks to engage employers of Information Technology professionals with best practices, resources and a community to grow, develop, recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive world class IT workforce in West Michigan. Jules Saldivar has been hired as the Industry Council Lead for the council.

The council launched an alternative networking experience called West Michigan Tech Trails in 2024. Feedback led to the renewal for winter trail events and beyond. Two hikes will be scheduled per quarter.

In December 2024, mentors from sixteen companies as well as computer science students from local colleges and universities, led 1100 students in Muskegon, Ottawa, and Kent Counties through the {Mi}Code Experience.

## Programs

- a. **West Michigan Works! Registered Apprenticeship Programs (WMW RAP):**  
Amy Lebednick reported that WMW currently holds standards for 55 US Department of Labor registered apprenticeships, with 319 active apprentices and 105 participating employers. The WMW Apprenticeship team met with 54 unique employers in the last 3 months to discuss their interest in sponsoring a USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Program.

The apprenticeship team is making significant progress in developing a Pre-Apprenticeship Program aligned with Michigan's State Apprenticeship Expansion Team's pilot initiative, the Michigan Apprenticeship Readiness Certificate (MARC). WMW has been collaborating with Fox Motors and staff from the Kent Intermediate School District's Career Technical Center (KCTC). Fox Motors, which has an established and robust training program, will serve as the Related Technical Instruction (RTI) provider for the Automotive Specialist Technician Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). KCTC's training aligns closely with this program, and includes a detailed selection process to identify students suited for Fox Motors' apprenticeship. The KCTC training and selection process will be incorporated into the U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) Occupation Standards. This will mark the first pre-apprenticeship program under WMW's standards and will provide area high school students with the opportunity to earn MARC certification from the State of Michigan.

WMW continues to promote apprenticeship and provide intermediary consulting and workforce development training. In September, the WMW was invited to the White House as part of the Apprenticeship Ambassador program to participate in a panel discussion, showcasing valuable insights on advancing and diversifying Registered Apprenticeships and promoting awareness of this proven workforce development model. The national recognition garnered interest from local media, leading to opportunities to promote apprenticeship through radio and digital news magazine interviews. Invitations were also received to speak at various conferences, including the Trends in Occupational Studies Conference from MODAC (Michigan Occupational Deans Administrative Council), the Business Engagement National Training for Job Corps from AIR (American Institute of Research), and the Kent ISD Career Readiness Panel for Educators. For National Apprenticeship Week in November, 5 events were registered, and 6 proclamations were submitted. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

- b. **Ascend Youth Programming:** Additional information is provided in the board packet. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***



- c. MiCareerQuest (MiCQ): Chad Patton, Director of Development and Innovation, reported that MiCQ is a Career Exploration Experience for middle and high school students that will be held at DeVos Place on March 20, 2025. WMW expects to host nearly 9,000 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade students at this year's event. Board members can register for a VIP tour by signing up [here](#). Board members can also sign up to volunteer [here](#). **Pipeline Development**
- d. Elevate: Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**
- e. HireReach (HR): Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Diversity and Inclusion**
- f. Retention Solutions Network (RSN): Chad Patton reported that the Retention Solutions Network (RSN) is a fee-based employer network focused on navigating resources and providing support services to member employees, thus helping them to stay in their jobs and advance within their businesses. RSN welcomed three new member employers in the new year: Lightcorp, Pliant Plastics, and Innerspace. **Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion**
- g. Gain Employment. Maintain Support. (GEMS) formally known as Learn, Earn and Provide (LEAP) Pilot: Tasha Evans reported that GEMS launched in Muskegon as a pilot program at the end of January of 2022. It is a program that assists non-custodial parents in obtaining and maintaining employment and getting back on track with child support payments. GEMS is run in close partnership with the Friend of the Court and includes both voluntary referrals and mandated participation. This pilot is now being offered in Allegan and Ottawa counties. **Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion**

#### Initiatives

- a. Electric Vehicle (EV) Industry Recruitment Pilot & EV Jobs Academy: Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development**
- b. Manufacturing and Engineering Education Reimagined for All (MEERA) Regional Training Center (RTC): Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development**
- c. West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership (E2P): Additional information is provided in the board packet. **Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development**

#### 12. Other Business

- a. Request for WIOA Youth RFP Review Committee: Angie reviewed the details and timeline for this youth service RFP and stated that staff will send a formal request for WDB members to serve on the RFP review committee at a later date.
- b. 10-Year Anniversary of West Michigan Works!: Angie stated that October 1, 2015 was the official merger date and launching of West Michigan Works!. In honor of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, staff are planning a fall celebration to highlight the successes over the past decade. Additional information will be forthcoming.
- c. 2025 Career Coaching Virtual Academy: Angie reported that Tasha Evans and Chad Patton will facilitate a career coaching virtual academy hosted by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). This academy is based on the CareerPoint training model developed by WMW, and will include concrete, evidence-based techniques that attendees can put into practice immediately. It will take place over 3 days with eight 1-hour sessions and will allow attendees to engage in professional networking across the country.

#### 13. Public Comment – None.

#### 14. Adjournment at 1:14p.m. by Madam Chairperson, Heather Daniel.

Recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_ Received by: \_\_\_\_\_



#### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Area Community Services  
Employment & Training Council  
215 Straight Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 336-4100

#### SERVICE CENTERS

##### Allegan County

Allegan Service Center  
3255 122nd Ave  
Allegan, MI 49010  
(269) 686-5079

##### Barry County

Hastings Service Center  
130 E State St  
Hastings, MI 49058  
(616) 649-9850

##### Ionia County

Ionia Service Center  
603 W Adams St  
Ionia, MI 48846  
(616) 389-8525

##### Kent County

Grand Rapids NW Service Center  
215 Straight Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 336-4460

Grand Rapids SE Service Center  
121 Martin Luther King Jr St SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
(616) 336-4040

Rockford Service Center  
10075 Northland Dr NE  
Rockford, MI 49341  
(616) 228-6724

##### Montcalm County

Greenville Service Center  
114 S Greenville W Dr  
Greenville, MI 48838  
(616) 754-3611

##### Muskegon County

Muskegon Service Center  
316 Morris Ave  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
(231) 724-6381

##### Ottawa County

Holland Service Center  
12331 James St, Suite 130  
Holland, MI 49424  
(616) 396-2154

*West Michigan Works! is a division of ACSET,  
an equal opportunity employer/program and  
a proud partner of the American Job Center  
network.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon  
request to individuals with disabilities. West  
Michigan Works! is supported by state and  
federal funds; more details at  
westmiworks.org/about. TTY 711*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB)

**FROM:** Jacob Maas, Chief Executive Officer

**DATE:** April 14, 2025

**RE:** WDB Member Nominations and Vacancies

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## Background

As of November 2024, the West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB) had two (2) vacant private/business sector seats for the term of office through October 31, 2025. Lisa Marie Barkel-Williams is the Communications & Project Manager at Cascade Engineering. Prior to Lisa Marie's application to join the board, Kenyatta Brame, President & CEO served on the WDB from 2015-2024.

In addition, WMW received a second private/business sector seat application from Maria Dennison, Director of Human Resources at Gun Lake Casino. The term of office for this seat is through October 31, 2026.

On March 10, 2025, the Executive Committee (EC) of the WDB supported the nomination of both applicants. WMW will request a formal appointment from the ACSET Governing Board at its April meeting.

Since the EC meeting, WMW has been notified of a few additional board member changes.

1. Mark Thomas from Northview Public Schools has recently retired and has since resigned from his service on the WDB.
2. Gregory King from Greater Muskegon Economic Development has also resigned from the WDB as he will be transitioning to a new employer outside of the WMW region.

We will work with the EC to address the board roster and necessary changes that need to be made.

## CREATIVE DINING SERVICES UNLOCKS UPSKILLING SOLUTIONS THROUGH A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



Hospitality service provider Creative Dining Services knew that accessing Going PRO Talent Fund training dollars would open opportunities for upskilling and improved employee retention. When Corporate Culinary Training Coordinator Jay Sharkey went to meet with West Michigan Works!, however, an optimal solution surfaced- a USDOL apprenticeship.

The key to this new solution was in the USDOL apprenticeship program's ability to unlock other funding opportunities with no charge to Creative Dining Services or its staff thanks to grant funding. This opportunity also offered a flexible program that upskills staff to help them reach their highest potential.

Jay and his team knew this was what they needed to bolster their organization. To make it happen, Jay partnered with Apprenticeship Success Coordinator Samantha Hinkle and created the company's new sous chef apprenticeship. Their training provider of choice, [Rouxbe](#), offered flexible and scalable online training courses already trusted by 700,000 students and 2,000 professional kitchens.

"The training provided by Rouxbe is completed by the apprentice at their own speed, allowing for apprentices to learn hands on from mentors who have been in the culinary industry for many years," Samantha Hinkle described. "The training is affordable, and students apply what is learned in their training to their job and vice versa. This kind of training flexibility and customization is key in any successful apprenticeship."



Creating Dining Services then began their new sous chef apprenticeship with 12 staff as students. One of the culinarians, Anthony Lehn, began his training while working at Aquinas College. "It's easier to learn new things through the course since you're already cooking every day for your regular day job," he shared. "I can do most of the computer work during my down time during summer when students aren't in class."

Anthony Lehn and the rest of his cohort are expected to complete their courses by March 2027. So far, their work with mentors and in the kitchen has been "going great" according to Samantha Hinkle.

Creative Dining Services also began their second cohort in November, with members slated to complete their courses in November 2027. They, too, have been acclimating well to the program and are thrilled to see how their new skillset and experiences will help their careers flourish.

# Service Summary Explanation

October 1, 2024 –February 28, 2025

## Management Observations and Highlights

- *Service Center Traffic:* Service center traffic continues to show an upward trend when compared to PY23/24.
- *Employers Served:* The Business Solutions team consistently assists a higher number of returning employers each month compared to new ones. While prioritizing quality service for existing clients, they also actively seek opportunities to engage with new employers. The number of employers served in January and February remained consistent with previous months. Additionally, we are closely monitoring the impact of changes to the Michigan Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) and minimum wage, particularly in the hospitality (food and beverage) industry.
- *Jobs Filled by Industry:* The number of jobs filled has remained stable. From January to March, there was an increase in hiring within the Construction sector as employers prepare for the warmer Michigan seasons. However, there was a decrease in jobs filled in the Manufacturing industry, as employers are assessing the political climate, which is typical during election years.
- *Training by Industry:* There has been a decrease in classroom and new hire training due to an overall reduction in available training funds outside of the Going PRO Talent Fund. However, we continue to seek opportunities to diversify and increase our funding sources for FY24/25.
- *Going Pro Talent Fund:* This metric tracks the total number of trainings completed and paid out each month. Reimbursement is usually not processed in the same month the training is completed due to delays in employer reporting and documentation collection. The data reflects multiple fiscal years and/or cycles within a fiscal year. The current billing includes training authorized under the FY24 Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, as well as the FY25 Cycle 1 funding.
- *Hiring Events:* Employer participation in the monthly Virtual Hiring Events has remained steady. Over the past quarter, the Business Solutions team strategically aligned hiring events with days of the week that typically see higher volumes in the service centers. In March 2025, several in-person events were held across all WMW counties, and the outcomes from those events will be included in the next dashboard report.
- *Retention Solutions Network:* Employer membership increased in the new year. We also saw an increase in the number of employees served as well as the number of barriers resolved. This type of increase is typical during the first months of the calendar year. Q2 retention and success coach data will be available at the next board meeting.
- *Talent Development:* This report has been updated to present the outcomes from the Talent Development department. The metrics include workshops offered, workshop attendance, and number of WorkReady certificates earned. Q2 data will be updated for the next board meeting.



## Service Summary Oct. 1, 2024 to Feb. 28, 2025

The data shown on this Service Summary indicates the organization's progress toward fulfilling of its services-based strategic priorities, as developed in the 2020 Strategic Plan: Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development and Diversity and Inclusion. Each indicator is a reflection of the work conducted on an operational level to ensure robust service delivery and strategic plan alignment.

Additional information and explanation about the data presented are included the narrative.

### Strategic Plan Alignment



Enhanced Relationships

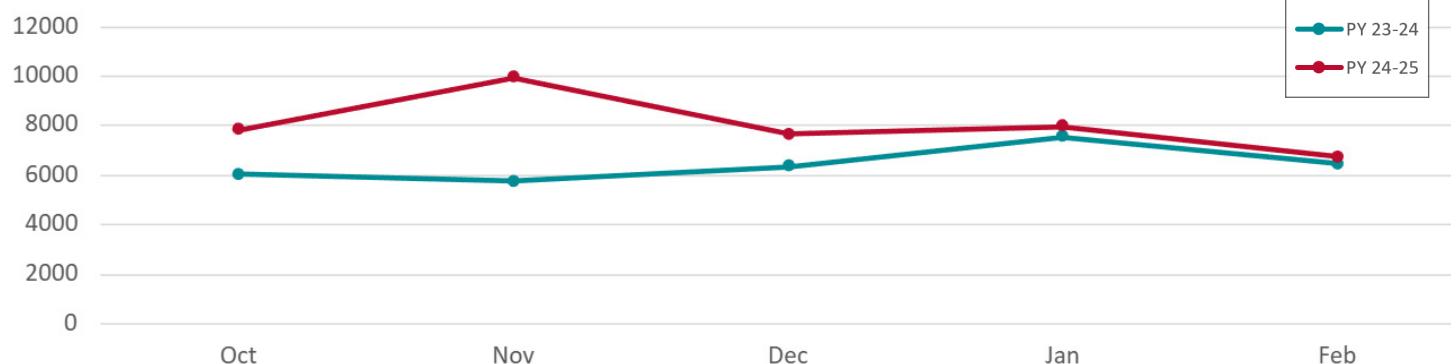


Pipeline Development

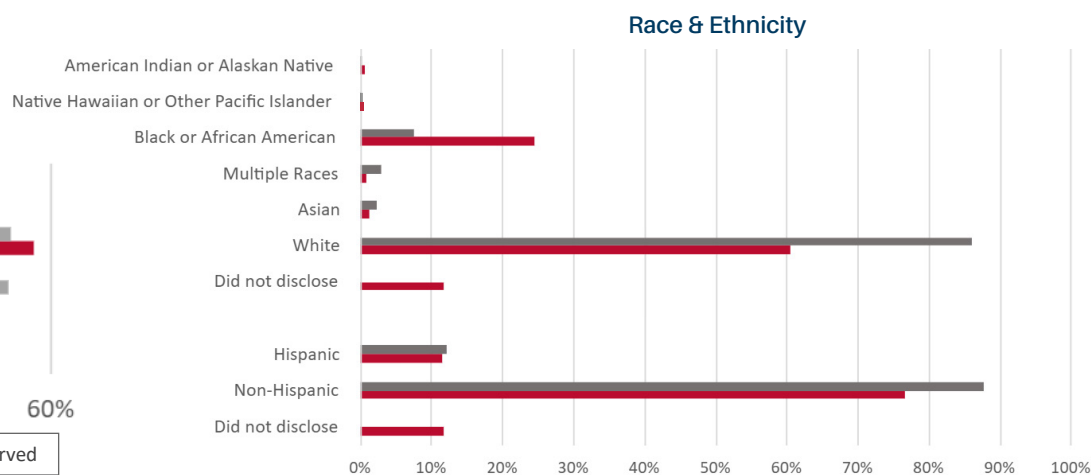
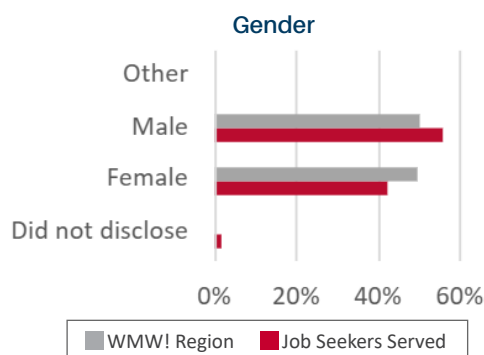


Diversity and Inclusion

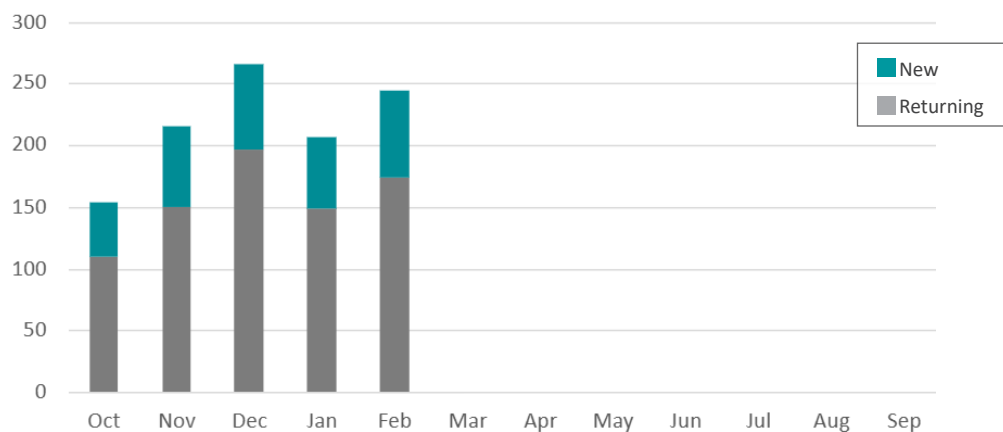
### Service Center Traffic & Call Volume (PY comparison by month)



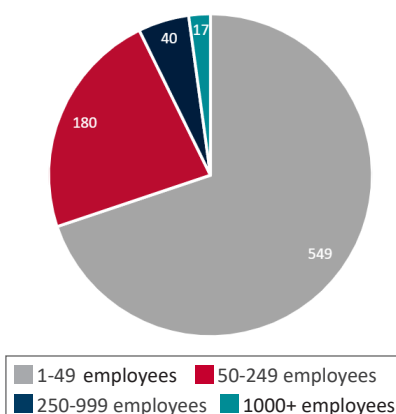
### Diversity of Job Seekers Served



### Employers Served (unique count)



### Diversity of Employers Served (by size)



## Jobs Filled by Industry

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Agribusiness	33	0	68	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	15	28	8	32	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Healthcare	102	98	183	122	96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT	9	8	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	549	374	561	317	414	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	117	148	503	233	92	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>1325</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Training: by Industry

	New Hire	Classroom	Apprenticeship	Credentials Earned
Construction	0	3	49	45
Health Care	35	186	1	75
Information Technology	0	10	0	1
Manufacturing	0	8	33	29
Other	25	120	14	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>208</b>

Active grants supporting new hire, classroom and apprenticeship training this reporting period:

Sector Strategies Employer-Led Collaborative  
MDARD Specialty Crop Grant  
MiSTAIRS  
Early Childhood Investment Corporation  
One Workforce  
WIOA Individual Training Accounts  
WIOA On-the-Job Training

## Training (completed): Going PRO Training Fund

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
New Hire	271	298	329	423	696	0	0
Classroom	336	250	452	472	348	0	0
Apprenticeship	183	35	74	116	172	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>1011</b>	<b>1216</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Hiring Events

	Participating		
	Events	Employers	Job Seekers
Q1	3	24	146
Q2	5	23	218
Q3	0	0	0
Q4	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>364</b>

## Retention Solutions Network

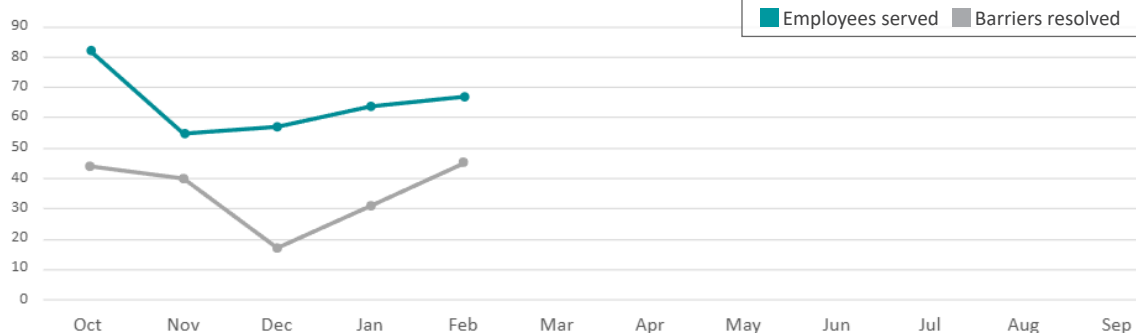
Members

12

Success coach hours

(cumulative, reported quarterly)

487



## Talent Development Metrics (cumulative, reported quarterly)

800

Workshops Offered

1,997

Workshop Attendance

56

WorkReady Certificates



Service Summary  
Oct. 1, 2024 to Feb 28, 2025



## Service Summary: Strategic Plan Alignment and Indicator Descriptions

<b>Pipeline Development:</b> Expand the local pipeline of work-ready talent to meet the needs of the workforce and of West Michigan employers.	<b>Enhanced Relationships:</b> Foster widespread networks to collaboratively address workforce needs in the region.	<b>Diversity and Inclusion:</b> Enable a culture that honors the worth and dignity of all people, where staff and customers have equitable access to opportunities.
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The indicators shown on the Service Summary are provided to inform the board about the impact of services provided through a variety of workforce development programs. Each represents the implementation of goals in the Strategic Plan.

Indicator	Strategic Plan Alignment	Narrative
<i>Service Center Traffic &amp; Call Volume</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the funnel of job seekers entering our system through the service centers and virtual appointments, giving us an opportunity to expand the talent pipeline. In October 2021, we began implementing a new tracking system. During this period, UIA reinstated the Register to Work requirement, which brought more people into the centers. The data does not include attendance at workshops, focused job search, or coaching sessions. This will be added as the tracking system is expanded.
<i>Diversity of Job Seekers</i>	Diversity and Inclusion	This indicator shows the variety of job seekers we work with compared to the region. With the implementation of the new tracking system, we resumed tracking demographic data. Although we are in the early stages of collecting this data, management regularly observes and monitors this information.
<i>Employers Served</i>	Enhanced Relationships	This indicator shows unique employers served each month, and reflects the widespread networks developed by staff. An employer is counted once per program year as unique; they likely received multiple services throughout the year. A new employer is one that has never engaged with WMW. A returning employer is one that has received services from WMW in a prior program year(s).
<i>Diversity of Employers</i>	Diversity and Inclusion; Enhanced Relationships	This indicator shows a comprehensive picture of our employer customers based on size (total number of employees). This data is helpful in planning initiatives and for identifying specific employer groups. Although we work with any size company, we target those most in need of our services which are often smaller companies without internal HR capacity.
<i>Jobs Filled by Industry</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the number of jobs filled with employer customers of WMW and with our assistance. The variation in month-to-month numbers may reflect delays in reporting WMW, as well as unique needs within a variety of employers. Spikes in the numbers may also reflect hiring events supported by WMW.

Indicator	Strategic Plan Alignment	Narrative
<i>Training: by Industry</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows WMW efforts to expand the local pipeline of work-ready talent by supporting training and skill upgrading. The data is presented by industries most in demand in the region. Food Processors, as part of Agribusiness, are currently reported under manufacturing. On-the-Job Training provided to New Hires results in advancement of skills and wages but does not provide a credential. This data does not include training funded by Going Pro Talent Fund.
<i>Training (completed): GoingPro</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	As one of our largest funding sources for employer-driven training, Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) is reported separately. Allowable training funded by GPTF includes new hire, incumbent, and registered apprenticeships.
<i>Hiring Events</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows hiring events that bring employers and job seekers together, requiring coordination across multiple departments and programs. We continue to look for new and innovative ways to conduct outreach to job seekers, including greater collaboration with community partners.
<i>Retention Solutions Network</i>	Enhanced Relationships; Pipeline Development	This indicator shows how we leverage networks among community partners to provide services to member employers. Data reflects services provided by Success Coaches via dedicated on-site hours as well as virtual. Services provided to each employee does not consider the high number of touchpoints with the coach. Barriers addressed can include needs for transportation, housing, medical bills, utilities, and many more, all so that workers can successfully engage and fulfill their role for the employer.
<i>Talent Development Metrics</i>	Pipeline Development	This indicator shows the number of jobseekers who attended any of our workshop offerings. It also shows the number of workshops offered during each quarter in service centers and at external partner locations. Workshop offerings include resume writing skills, job application skills, digital literacy skills, interview skills, and many other workshops that assist jobseekers in obtaining and retaining a job. The indicator also shows the number of jobseekers who obtained a WorkREADY employability skills certificate. Job Seekers take a pre-assessment to determine areas of readiness and areas for improvement; they only attend workshops for areas identified as needing improvement. A post-assessment determines their skill attainment and if successful, earns a certificate. This conveys to employers that they are “work ready.”

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

Area Community Services  
Employment & Training Council  
215 Straight Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 336-4100

**SERVICE CENTERS****Allegan County**

Allegan Service Center  
3255 122nd Ave  
Allegan, MI 49010  
(269) 686-5079

**Barry County**

Hastings Service Center  
130 E State St  
Hastings, MI 49058  
(616) 649-9850

**Ionian County**

Ionian Service Center  
603 W Adams St  
Ionian, MI 48846  
(616) 389-8525

**Kent County**

Grand Rapids NW Service Center  
215 Straight Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 336-4460

Grand Rapids SE Service Center  
121 Martin Luther King Jr St SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
(616) 336-4040

Rockford Service Center  
10075 Northland Dr NE  
Rockford, MI 49341  
(616) 228-6724

**Montcalm County**

Greenville Service Center  
114 S Greenville W Dr  
Greenville, MI 48838  
(616) 754-3611

**Muskegon County**

Muskegon Service Center  
316 Morris Ave  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
(231) 724-6381

**Ottawa County**

Holland Service Center  
12331 James St, Suite 130  
Holland, MI 49424  
(616) 396-2154

West Michigan Works! is a division of ACSET,  
an equal opportunity employer/program and  
a proud partner of the American Job Center  
network.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon  
request to individuals with disabilities. West  
Michigan Works! is supported by state and  
federal funds; more details at  
westmiworks.org/about. TTY 711

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** West Michigan Works! (WMW) Workforce Development Board (WDB)

**FROM:** West Michigan Works! Staff

**DATE:** April 14, 2025

**RE:** Solutions Driven Updates

**Enhanced Relationships:**

Foster widespread networks  
to collaboratively address  
workforce needs in the  
region.

**Pipeline Development:**

Expand the local pipeline of  
work-ready talent to meet  
the needs of the workforce  
and of West Michigan  
employers.

**Diversity and Inclusion:**

Enable a culture that honors  
the worth and dignity of all  
people, where staff and  
customers have equitable  
access to opportunities.

**Grant Updates**

**Catalyze:** WMW is currently in the running for Round 4 of the Catalyze Challenge. Catalyze will award up to \$1 million dollars to scalable programs and tools that advance career exploration for young adolescents (aged 11-22). WMW submitted a grant proposal that includes scaling MiCareerQuest, developing a career exploration event tool, and expanding career exploration events into our 7 counties in partnership with the industry talent councils. WMW was 1 of 80 applicants invited to engage in an interview with the Catalyze team. The interview is the final step before preliminary awards are announced. The announcement of awards has been pushed back to end-of-March. We have not received an update yet. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Make Michigan Home:** WMW has been awarded a \$91,250 Make MI Home grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The funds will be used to support training, employment, and retention efforts for Michigan residents. The grant period runs from March 18, 2025, through February 2, 2026. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**FutureTech Careers Program (formerly known as Strengthening Community Colleges Grant 4):** This grant program, awarded to Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), is designed to enhance the capacity of community colleges to meet the skill development needs of employers and equitably support students in securing good jobs in high-demand industries. The grant program is centered on sector-based career pathways, which have been proven to improve employment outcomes. West Michigan Works! will collaborate with GRCC with the goal of developing targeted programs and curriculum. This grant will serve 622 participants between May 1, 2024, and April 30, 2028. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeships:** WMW received a second round of funding totaling \$373,000 to continue supporting childcare providers in developing registered apprenticeship opportunities for early childhood educators. The grant's performance period will conclude in February 2026.

***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA):** The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awarded a \$2.9 million dollar Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) grant to Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). West Michigan Works! (WMW) has partnered with GRCC and Corwell Health, Cherry Health, and Trinity Health Systems to implement the grant. This three-year grant will expand the public health workforce in West Michigan through classroom training and apprenticeship opportunities. The focus is on 150 participants, with approximately 60% of grant dollars going directly toward students. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Michigan Career Opportunity Academies for Community Health (MiCOACH):** The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awarded a \$3 million dollar Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) grant to the State of Michigan, Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO). LEO has partnered with multiple Michigan Works! Agencies and Intermediate School Districts (ISD) to increase the number of Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Health Support in the ISDs. Locally, WMW will work with MAISD and the Muskegon Heights Public School system. This three-year grant will aim to improve the dissemination of health information, connection to mental health resources, and help create safer, healthier school environments and communities. Throughout the course of this grant, WMW will partner to serve 24 recently or soon to graduate Muskegon Heights youth. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**The Michigan Citizen Reentry Initiative (MiCRI):** A cooperative grant opportunity with the US Department of Labor and the Department of Justice with a state award of \$7.6 million to launch the new initiative designed to reduce recidivism among justice involved citizens and increase their successful participation in employment and training opportunities. This includes individuals incarcerated in the Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) and Residential Reentry Centers (RRC). WMW will provide services in stage 2 -post release for participants in the RRC and Home Confinement (HC). ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

**Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD):** The PROWD program, funded by the Joint First Step Act, intends to expand on the methodology of the MiCRI program to establish a statewide network of support for Justice-Involved Citizens to provide Stage 1, 2, and 3 pre-employment training services accessible at Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs) and to individuals in home confinement (HC) throughout the state. This grant will serve 250 participants statewide over a 37-month period of performance from September 1, 2024, to September 30, 2027. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

**Michigan Skilled Immigration Integration Program (MISIIP):** The Michigan Skilled Immigrant Integration Program is part of a \$1M allocation for the Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) initiative as part of an overall \$5M appropriation received by Global Detroit. This program connects professional, college-degreed, internationally-trained job seekers with Michigan-based careers in their profession. Eligible participants will also receive assistance with job search, Networking coaching, Credential evaluation and Professional licensing resources. This program has been extended through September 30, 2025.

***Diversity and Inclusion, Pipeline Development***

**Grand Rapids Community College One Workforce Grant:** WMW has partnered with GRCC on a \$9.8 million H1-B One Workforce Grant, focusing on advanced manufacturing, received by GRCC. Similar to the America's Promise Grant, the H1-B One Workforce Grant is a 4-year grant and will rely on a network of partners across the region, including Montcalm Community College, Muskegon Community College and multiple community partners to provide training and employment to hundreds of workers across West Michigan. This grant is in its final year of implementation with an end date of December 31, 2025. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES) Expansion:** The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) has awarded a total of \$14.6 million in Barrier Removal and Employment Success grant funds. West Michigan Works! Partnered with seven community-based organizations (CBOs) and received the maximum allocation of \$1 million. These funds will help remove barriers directly related to employment such as childcare, transportation, and housing. The CBOs include Grand Rapids Center for Community Transformation, Grand Rapids Women's Resource Center, GoodWill of Greater Grand Rapids, Steepletown Neighborhood Services, The Source, Treetops Collective, and United Way of Montcalm & Ionia.

***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

**Michigan's Inclusive Training, Technology and Equity Network (MITTEN):**

The Michigan High Speed Internet Office (MIHI) has initiated a \$13 million grant program aimed at enhancing digital inclusion and capacity-building initiatives for regional organizations and collaboratives across the state. West Michigan Works!, in partnership with the Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF), Grand Vally State University Public Media (WGVU), Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), and Casual Simulation, has collectively submitted a response to the RFP to become the resource hub for Region 4b, which excludes the city of Grand Rapids. This grant will play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of the Michigan Digital Equity Plan within the proposed project areas and for the identified covered populations.

***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**MDARD Specialty Crop Grant:** The grant's performance period ended March 31, 2025. An application for the 2025-27 grant was submitted on February 6, 2025,

requesting \$125,000 to support specialty crop grower training in agribusiness and career exploration at MiCareerQuest. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

#### **Going PRO Talent Fund:**

##### Fiscal Year 2024:

- Cycle 1, Awards: 222 employers received a total of \$14.8M. Training may occur January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.
- Cycle 2, Awards: 95 employers received a total of \$5.2M. Training may occur July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

##### Fiscal Year 2025:

- Cycle 1, Awards: 175 employers received a total of \$11.2M with the possibility of 17 additional pending awards to potentially be issued for another \$984,865. Training may occur January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.
- Cycle 2, Independent Applications: The application for cycle 2 will be open April 14 – May 2, 2025 5:00 p.m.
- Employer Led Collaborative (ELC) Applications: Applications are open for Employer-Led Collaboratives, which must include two or more employers with shared training needs. The application period opened on March 24, 2025, and will remain open until MWAs are notified that ELC funding has been exhausted.

A full list of grant recipients statewide is available online at

[Michigan.gov/TalentFund](https://Michigan.gov/TalentFund). ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Sector Strategies Employer Led Collaborative (SS ELC):** In July 2023, West Michigan Works! was awarded a \$406,472 Sector Strategies Employer-Led Collaborative (ELC) Grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to support the creation of new, or enhancement of existing, employer-led collaboratives statewide. This two-year grant runs through September 30, 2025. The funds will help WMW maximize the impact of the existing employer-led Industry Talent Councils. Current funding has been used to hire a Project Coordinator, offset training costs for registered apprenticeship programs, expand the MiCareerLaunch initiative to prepare high school seniors for careers in high-demand industries, and develop a career exploration event website for use by parents, students, educators, employers, and partners. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

**Michigan Statewide Targeted Apprenticeship Inclusive and Readiness System (MiSTAIRS):** West Michigan Works! received \$324,625 in funding from the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to continue developing and implementing strategies that support the expansion of Registered Apprenticeships (RAs). This includes engaging industry and workforce intermediaries, employers, and other partners to promote and expand RA to new sectors and underserved populations. The funding will also enhance capacity to conduct outreach, work with employers to establish new programs, and encourage participation in RA through



innovations, incentives, and system reforms. WMW will specifically target underrepresented populations for direct enrollment and completion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). The funding is available from July 2, 2023, through June 30, 2025. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

**State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) 2025:** West Michigan Works! is one of five organizations selected to receive State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant funding from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO). Awarded organizations had to demonstrate prior success with grant programs, a proven track record of performance, effective utilization of grant funds, and the expertise to monitor progress and meet performance targets. WMW will receive \$212,360 to support 32 registered apprentices in non-infrastructure occupations. The SAE grant program is designed to assist organizations that currently sponsor or partner with sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

### Industry Talent Councils

There are various ways to stay connected to the innovative work taking place under each of the West Michigan Works! Industry Talent Councils (ITC). Each council has expanded its outreach through dedicated LinkedIn accounts and bimonthly newsletters. The increased online presence enables each ITC to provide employers and partners in their respective industries with pertinent information such as workforce trends, council initiatives, and opportunities to participate in future projects. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***

#### **Multi-Industry Talent Council Initiatives:**

- **Lunch & Learn** – The Councils are funding a quarterly series of lunch and learns to connect employers with services that support inclusive hiring and job seeker support provided by WMW! community partners. The first event, focusing on supported employment for individuals with disabilities, will be hosted at the Muskegon Service Center on May 7.
- **Workplace Well-Being Summit/Hope Certification** – All Councils have approved the Workplace Well-Being Summit. This immersive, workshop-style event focuses on developing a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to address critical aspects of workplace mental health, including suicide prevention, addiction recovery, and overdose prevention. Anticipated for October 2025, employers, non-profits, and government agencies will have the opportunity to attend the first-ever H.O.P.E. Certification Cohort after the summit to obtain the H.O.P.E. Certification. [H.O.P.E. Certification Website](#).
- **Career Readiness Conference** – The Discover Manufacturing and Construction Careers Council participated in the Career Readiness Conference, hosted with Talent First, The Right Place, and regional ISD partners. The February 26 event reached 175 employers and educators and helped foster relationships to support greater career exploration activities in the region.



### Agribusiness Talent Council of West Michigan (ATC)

**Mission: The Agribusiness Talent Council is an employer-led collaborative that seeks to expand the talent pool by promoting care pathways and opportunities in West Michigan agribusiness industry.**

Ahead of National Agriculture Month in March, the ATC invited local farmers, food processors and growers to participate in the Spotlight on Ag Readers (SOAR) initiative. Professionals can volunteer to spend 45 minutes in a K-5 classroom, reading an agriculture-focused book, answering students' questions and, if time permits, leading a hands-on activity. The Spotlight on Ag Readers initiative concluded on March 31, 2025, engaging 25 schools, 56 classrooms, 1,273 students, and 44 industry volunteers. This included a visit from Michigan Agri-Business Association President Chuck Lippstreu and State Senator Roger Victory at a 2nd-grade class at Jamestown Lower Elementary School in the Hudsonville Public School District.



The ATC Scholarship program received 21 applications from high school seniors and college students majoring or planning to major in agribusiness-related fields within the seven-county region. The scholarship review team is currently scoring applications and will select three awardees by April 16, 2025.

Additionally, the ATC will collaborate with Muskegon County partners, including Muskegon Community College Fab Lab, Hackley Library, Lakeshore Museum Center, and Muskegon Museum of Art, for the STEAM Along the Lakeshore event. This event will connect 750 Muskegon County K-12 students with hands-on activities related to careers in agribusiness.

### Construction Careers Council (CCC)

**Mission: The Construction Careers Council creates a bright future for West Michigan's construction industry by building a diverse and qualified workforce.**

The CCC Construction Field Trip Project expanded to include two additional trips, reaching more counties. On March 28, sixteen high school students from Ottawa

County toured the Acrisure Amphitheater, The Diatribe, and United Methodist Community House projects. They observed active construction, met trades professionals, and learned about internship opportunities. Students from Barry County will have a similar experience at the GRR Airport in early May.



The council also launched the Summer Build Scholarships, which will close on April 25, 2025. Twelve middle school students will receive full tuition for the West Michigan Construction Institute's summer camp in June, where industry experts will provide hands-on experience exploring various careers. The Women in Construction Week concluded with seven nominees from six companies, each of whom will be interviewed for the Women Who Built West Michigan blog series to inspire more women to enter the field.

#### **Discover Manufacturing (DM)**

**Mission:** We exists to inspire and expand manufacturing talent in West Michigan.

The Discover Manufacturing Council sponsored and participated in the Career Readiness Conference (see Multi-industry Initiatives above).

DM scholarship applications closed with 12 submissions from students pursuing manufacturing pathways. Scholarships, ranging from \$500 to \$1,500, will be awarded to 11 applicants at a ceremony on May 21, 2025. The council continues to recruit West Michigan based manufacturers to be showcased on the DM [Earn and Learn Directory](#) website. The Earn and Learn Directory is a resource for students, parents and educators to explore manufacturing opportunities and connect them with potential resources to further a student's education.

#### **Explore Hospitality (ExH):**

**Mission:** We elevate one of West Michigan's leading employment sectors by developing careers, cultivating talent, and promoting a thriving, dynamic hospitality industry.

ExH successfully completed its first project, MiCareerQuest, marking its inaugural year of showcasing hospitality occupations. A total of eight exhibits represented all five sub-sectors of the hospitality industry. The council aims to expand its presence next year.



ExH continues to make significant progress in planning efforts. Final logo options are expected to be approved this month. Additionally, the council has initiated project brainstorming sessions and is actively working on the development and implementation of new initiatives in the coming months.

#### **West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC)**

**Mission: The purpose of WMHCC is to provide an employer-led collaborative council of healthcare employers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan's healthcare talent needs.**

In partnership with the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute, WMHCC is laying the groundwork for creating a local Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) apprenticeship program. This program supports the goal of creating more equitable pathways into nursing careers. The council has also renewed the Career Fair Carnivals project, with the first event scheduled for May 7 at Montcalm Community College Greenville Campus. Additional events will be held in Ionia, Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties to recruit for healthcare positions across the region.

The Health Careers Expo, held on March 5 in partnership with Kent ISD, featured nine employers and nine community or education partners presenting entry-level or earn-and-learn opportunities to 51 youth and 28 parents in attendance.

#### **West Michigan Tech Talent (WMTT)**

**Mission: West Michigan Tech Talent looks to engage employers of Information Technology professionals with best practices, resources and a community to grow, develop, recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive world class IT workforce in West Michigan.**

Jules Saldivar has officially completed onboarding and now serves as the Industry Council Lead. Four new members joined the WMTT council in 2025: Katie Born

(Vervint), Charles Elwood (SolisMatica), Rodd Lowell (GVSU), and Mali Unger (Corewell Health), each bringing expertise in talent experience, AI innovation, career development, and user-centered design. Outgoing members included Cindy Brown (GVSU), Elizabeth Wilson (Vervint), Greg Snow (Corewell Health), and Sara Schmidt (US Foods).

Due to the success of the 2024 launch of West Michigan Tech Trails, the series has expanded in 2025 to include two hikes per quarter. The next event will take place in partnership with Friends of GR Parks during Arborfest on April 25 from 1–4 PM, creating space for community connection while celebrating nature.



Tech Trends 2025 will be held at WMCAT on June 4 from 5–8 PM, featuring futurist and entrepreneur Keith Brophy sharing insights on emerging technologies. In partnership with STEM Greenhouse, all ticket proceeds will support STEM education for underrepresented students.

WMTT continues to support the Future Tech Careers initiative with GRCC, with over 15 employers joining the advisory committee and three implementing new work-based learning programs. A panel event featuring companies like Fusionay and Corewell Health is scheduled for April 10 from 2–3 PM at the West Michigan Works! Northwest Service Center to encourage additional employer engagement.

## Programs

### **West Michigan Works! Registered Apprenticeship Programs (WMW RAP):**

West Michigan Works! currently manages 58 U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL)-registered apprenticeships, serving 355 active apprentices and 121 participating employers. Since January 1, 2025, 61 unique employers have received registered apprenticeship services, including information sessions and technical assistance. As a result of this support, six new occupations have been registered with the USDOL.

The apprenticeship team is increasing its efforts to develop Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in alignment with Michigan’s State Apprenticeship Expansion Team’s pilot initiative, the Michigan Apprenticeship Readiness Certificate (MARC). The MARC acknowledges high-quality apprenticeship readiness programs that help individuals access training leading to RAP opportunities, while also enabling sponsors to more easily find qualified RAP applicants. When specified in USDOL-approved RAP standards, the MARC can serve as an industry-recognized credential that meets Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements and qualifies as a Postsecondary Recognized Credential under Perkins V. West Michigan Works! has submitted documentation for MARC Levels I and II in connection with the Fox Motors Auto Tech program. Additionally, discussions have taken place with

Royal Technologies in Hudsonville, MI, to incorporate MARC Levels I and II into their Mechatronics program. Conversations are also underway with regional Career Technical Centers to align work-based learning opportunities for high school juniors and seniors with RAPs across the seven-county region.

West Michigan Works! continues to expand the reach of registered apprenticeship programs in the region by promoting apprenticeships and offering intermediary consulting and workforce development training. Recent training sessions tailored specifically for internal Talent Solutions staff (Career Coaches) have been well received, with additional sessions scheduled for the next quarter. The recent work on MARC was shared with the WMW Ascend youth services team to ensure alignment and was also presented at the Career Readiness Conference in Holland, MI, where networking took place with employers, educators, and other workforce development professionals. In conjunction with the Governor's announcement of \$1.9 million in State Apprenticeship Expansion Funding, the apprenticeship team was interviewed by Wood Radio regarding regional efforts to expand pre-apprenticeship programs and apprenticeships in non-traditional industries.

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**Ascend Youth Programming:** The Ascend team provides programming for eligible out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24. Ascend continues to grow referral partnerships throughout the region. The program also just launched its application for its Youth Summer Career Readiness Program on April 10. Youth ages 14 to 24 will be able to apply to be placed in a work experience for 6-weeks with a partner employer.

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**MiCareerQuest:** MiCareerQuest is a Career Exploration Experience for middle and high school students. MiCareerQuest was held at DeVos Place on March 20, 2025. This was one of MiCareerQuest's biggest years with nearly 8500 students at the event representing 89 different schools. ***Pipeline Development***

**Elevate:** Elevate is an expansion to Rise Up, a model of outside-in recruitment and inside-up career development that began in partnership with West Michigan Works!, The Source, and Trinity Health. Elevate uses Career Coaching, Resource Navigation, and employer coordination to reduce the friction of hiring and promotion. Staff are recruiting employers to join an inside-up academy so that we can further scale impact for career growth. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

**HireReach:** HireReach provides instruction and consulting to businesses interested in implementing skills-based hiring. HireReach continues to make its services available to employers who are interested in unlocking skills-based hiring processes. ***Diversity and Inclusion***

**Retention Solutions Network:** Retention Solutions Network (RSN) is a fee-based employer network focused on navigating resources and providing support services to member employees, thus helping them to stay in their job and advance within



their business. Retention Solutions Network is currently partnering with Elevate to provide light career coaching as well as the resource navigation that it is known for. ***Enhanced Relationships, Diversity and Inclusion***

**Gain Employment. Maintain Support (GEMS) formally known as Learn, Earn and Provide (LEAP) Pilot:** GEMS launched in Muskegon as a pilot program at the end of January of 2022. It is a program aimed to assist non-custodial parents in obtaining and maintaining employment and gets back on track with child support payments. This program is in close partnership with Friend of the Court and includes both voluntary referrals and mandated participation in Allegan, Ionia, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. ***Pipeline Development, Diversity and Inclusion***

### Initiatives

**West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership (E2P):** E2P is a Talent First initiative that brings together employers, education and training providers, and community-based organizations to help individuals who are un- or underemployed access skills-based pathways into high-demand jobs requiring postsecondary training. E2P aims to develop a regional opportunity marketplace that offers shared coaching, resources, and wraparound support to generate more talent, increase the efficiency of credential attainment, and retain graduates in West Michigan. West Michigan Works! supports the collaborations and actively participates in this initiative but is not a sponsor of the platform. ***Enhanced Relationships, Pipeline Development***