

**Minutes of the
Q4 Workforce Development Council
TEAMS meeting only
December 11, 2025**

Members present: Al Dohrmann, Senator Michelle Axtman, Pat Bertagnolli, Josh Blackaby, DJ Campbell, Kellie Carlson, Becca Cruger, Michael Faridolfs, Darrel Hannum, Patrick Haug, Katie Ralston Howe, Michael Keller, Howard Klug, Melinda Padilla Lynch, Matt Marshall, Sara Mitzel for Stan Schauer, Raquel Nachatilo, Brady Pelton, Brent Sanford, Jim Upgren, Wayde Sick.

Guests present: LaTonya Stocks, Kim Weis

Staff present: Phil Davis, Janna Pastir, Sherri Frieze

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairman DJ Campbell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., welcoming WDC members and guests. Due to the winter weather forecast, the meeting was held via video/audio TEAMS conferencing.

With two new members present, Mike Keller and Darrel Hannum, introductions were conducted.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: It was moved by Michael Fridolfs, seconded by Kellie Carlson, to approve Q3 September 11, 2025, minutes. No discussion, all in favor. Motion carried.

LMI UPDATES AND WIOA ANNUAL REPORT

Phil Davis

Phil talked about the Labor Market Report for November 2025

- ND unemployment rate = 2.5% vs. 4.5% nationwide
- ND Labor Force Participation Rate = 70.2% vs. 62.4% nationwide.
- The top 5 occupational groups with open jobs for November:
 - Healthcare, Sales and Related, Management, Healthcare Support, Transportation
- Open jobs in ND = 12,961

Upcoming Job Fairs, Webinars, and Podcasts were also discussed.

- January 29, 2026, Virtual Job Fair
- February 10 = Bismarck
- March 17 = Dickinson
- March 19 = Williston
- April 9 = Grand Forks
- April 28 = Minot
- May 6 = Devils Lake

JSND LABOR DEMAND SURVEY

Phil Davis

The report was developed to provide a more comprehensive assessment of total job openings across the state and include job openings not posted online.

The report:

- April – June 2025 provided a single point of view of the Labor Market vs. the Online Job Openings Report, that is updated monthly.
- Labor demand by the numbers

GOVERNORS WORKFORCE SUMMIT
Katie Ralston Howe

Katie talked about the day's event with Governor Armstrong, his vision and priorities for workforce and the great work being done through the Workforce Development Council and the Cabinet.

Program highlights from WIOA core partners were presented through success stories. A Panel conversation that featured leaders from the Workforce Cabinet/Workforce Development Council. The day was closed with a keynote presentation moving forward with employment skills for the 21st century.

Key takeaways were summarized:

- ND government has a strong relationship across agencies with businesses and in communities
- Given the rapidly changing economics, old processes for success may not produce the same results, focusing on adaptability and flexibility.
- WDC & subcabinet are partnering closely to set clear priorities with action.
- Our workforce and opportunities are growing.
- Industry will continue to drive focus and strategy through the WDC.
- Strong executive support to innovate and challenge norms as we optimize opportunity in ND.
- Workforce is a crosscutting issue that requires a holistic approach, coordinated and agile government infrastructure with value created through industry and community activation.

Katie will email the roundtable discussion summaries to the council. These discussions could be carried forward to the next council meeting in 2026. The response from the survey conducted indicates the request for another summit.

WORKFORCE SUBCABINET
Review of Shared Data draft
Katie Ralston Howe
Kim Weis

Governor Armstrong has put together a Workforce Taskforce that has met every other week over the summer months. The Subcabinet is made up of agency leadership and elected officials with workforce programming. 30 members and almost a dozen.

Now that goals and visions have been aligned, the subcabinet is acting more like a board. Providing feedback for the taskforces to move forward. Some deliverable will be available within the next 6 – 9 months. The Commerce team is partnering with the Health and Human Services (HHS) on ways to help leverage the resources that the HHS will receive, without duplication.

The taskforces have been meeting two times a month and are making real progress with three themes:

1. Simplify entry Taskforce – Katie Ralston Howe
2. Data System Integration Taskforce – Kim Weiss
3. Warm Handoffs Taskforce – Phil Davis

Objectives include:

- 1a. Create a new workforce ecosystem landing page.
- 2b. Develop and launch public facing dashboard focused on shared success measures.
- 3c. Empower workforce team members with a shared understanding of the workforce system.

Questions for other metrics to capture:

- Data on in demand jobs filled
- Net in migration/ out migration rates population growth
- Housing costs, childcare costs – Governor's Housing subcabinet is helping tackle these metrics.

Kim continued the conversation about the Workforce Subcabinet and the preliminary success measures to consider for evaluation. Building on the research conducted, the subcabinet identified eight measures, along with other potential measures to track successes at an ecosystem level, and along with the identified measures, other questions were identified for consideration.

WORKFORCE PELL + FEDERAL UPDATE
Eric Aboodi, National Governors Association

Eric talked about NGA Center for Best Practices, Administration Priorities on Industry-Driven Strategies, and Workforce Pell Grant and the required role of Boards in the Workforce Pell.

SUBCOMMITTEE STRUCTURE + WDC TIMELINE
Katie Ralston Howe

During the March WDC meeting, Deloitte worked with the council and subcommittees on the focus areas outlined in the WIOA State Plan. Members at the March meeting were asked to vision a 6th core theme as a focus area.

Current Focus Areas and Subcommittees:

- Earlier and more diverse career exploration
- Addressing the technical skills gap
- Removing barriers to employment
- Recruitment and retention of workers
- Occupational licensure reform

Additional focus areas for consideration that were brought forward at the March and September meeting, for the thoughts of a 5th theme:

- Tech enablement strategy (Artificial Intelligence)
- Employer engagement
- Community engagement
- System alignment
- Public awareness – build a team dedicated to developing a communication plan/strategy
 - Who is the public we are focusing on – education, kids, economic development with new jobs
- Global Talent – Removing Barriers – foreign born workers employment
- Rural opportunities

Members discussed the possibility of Tech. enablement strategy or system alignment to be a fifth theme. This will be brought forward to the Q1 2026 WDC Meeting for full support.

Katie talked about the timeline for the WDC meeting and the Workforce subcabinet.

- Jan/Feb Q1 Meeting+ Recommendation Workshops
- March – Present Phase I draft recommendations to Workforce Cabinet
- April – Edit + Present Phase II recommendations to Workforce Cabinet
- May – Finalize recommendations
- June – WDC votes to approve recommendations and in demand occupations list.
- October – Governor’s Workforce Summit + WDC Special Meeting to release Report of Recommendations.

AROUND THE ROOM UPDATES **All**

Members gave an update to their industry.

NEXT STEPS **Katie Ralston Howe**

- **Unified State Plan Updates**
 - Katie will send out an interest survey for subcommittee membership interest.
 - 2026 WDC meeting dates to be finalized in December.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 1:15 p.m.