

**Minutes of the
Q3 Workforce Development Council
WSI Building
1600 E Century Avenue, Bismarck ND
September 11, 2025**

Members present: Al Dohrmann, Josh Blackaby, Tara Berger, DJ Campbell, Becca Cruger, Ashley Gaschk, Cindy Griffin, Alicia Halle, Patrick Haug, Katie Ralston Howe, Howard Klug, Adam Kidwell, Melinda Padilla Lynch, Matt Marshall, Brady Pelton, Brent Sanford, Wayde Sick, Jim Upgren, Scott Wirth

Guests present: Leigh Otey, Sachi Koulgi, Kim Weis

Staff present: Phil Davis, Janna Pastir, Sherri Frieze

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairperson Cindy Griffin called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. welcoming members and guests to the WSI Century Center via TEAMS video/audio conferencing platform.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: It was moved by Matt Marshall, seconded by Josh Blackaby, to approve the Q2 June 11, 2025 minutes. Motion carried.

LMI & FEDERAL WORKFORCE UPDATES

August 2025 LMI Report

Phil Davis

Phil talked about the Labor Market Report for August 2025

- ND Unemployment Rate for July = 2.6% vs. 4.5% nationwide.
- ND Labor Force Participation Rate = 70.4% vs. 62.2% nationwide.
- The top 5 occupational groups with open jobs for July:
 - Healthcare, Management, Sales and Related, Transportation, Healthcare Support
- Open jobs in ND = 13,069

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

- September 9 = Minot AFB
- September 10 = Devils Lake
- September 18 = Williston
- September 30 = Grand Forks
- October 14 = Fargo
- November 6 = Veterans Employment Webinar

Phil also talked about proposed U.S. House Funding Cuts

- Elimination of WIOA Youth Formula Funding
- Reducing overall formula funding for WIOA Adult Dislocated Worker
- Eliminating WIOA Title II Adult Education Funding
- Eliminating the Senior Community Service Program
- Reducing Job Corps by \$880 million – 50% reduction
- Reducing the maximum Pell Grant to \$6,335, a \$1,060 decrease

WORKFORCE SUBCABINET

Katie Ralston Howe

Al Dohrmann

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.

Katie gave an overview of the mission, goals, shared vision to envision a successful workforce ecosystem, along with tracking the measurements

Established Goals:

- Established shared Vision for Workforce
- Established Shared Goals for the Subcabinet
- Activated Three Task Forces
- Developed a Preliminary List of Shared Measures for Success

One Shared Vision

- A skilled workforce that fuels North Dakota's economy

Three Taskforces have been activated to align goals to:

- Simplify entry – create a new workforce ecosystem landing page
- Data Integration - Develop and launch public facing dashboard focused on shared success measures
- Warm Handoffs – Empower workforce team members with a shared understanding of the workforce system.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Leigh Otey, Deloitte Consulting

Tracking data at the ecosystem level, offers several strategic, operational, and community benefits.

The assessment outlined four key areas for future focus:

- **Strategic Vision:** Defining clear goals and roles for ecosystem steering.
- **Customer Focus:** Streamlining access and engaging with customer needs.
- **Awareness and Engagement:** Enhancing outreach to communities and partners.
- **Information Tracking and Sharing:** Improving data collection and sharing for program efficiency.

EVOLVING ROLE OF WDC AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Katie Ralston Howe

During the March WDC meeting Deloitte worked with the council to focus on current areas and the subcommittees, as outlined in the WIOA State Plan. Members at the March meeting were asked what a 6th core theme would be considered for 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 meeting:

- Tech enablement strategy
- 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

It was mentioned that the subcommittee of Occupational licensure could be released from the current focus area.

Industry Led System for ND and how ND is to operate differently to support this future.

- Key sectors that ND are successful and growing and how to build the sectoral partnerships
- Industry alignment with recruitment of workers-system alignment, workers that will grow communities and economy.

GOVERNOR’S WORKFORCE SUMMIT

Katie Ralston Howe

Katie talked about the proposed agenda for the summit, to take place on the Bismarck State College Campus on October 2.

- The summit will provide a focused forum between workforce program staff and leadership, policymakers, educators, industry leaders, employers, and professionals to align key priorities.
- The summit will reveal and socialize the workforce ecosystem’s unified vision and goals guided by the Governor’s Workforce Subcabinet.

NEXT STEPS

Katie Ralston Howe

Q4 Meeting Dates

- December 11, 2025 in Bismarck.

FAREWELL TO OUTGOING CHAIR Cindy Griffin

Katie Ralston Howe

Thank you and best wishes to Chairperson Cindy Griffin, who has served on the council since 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 2:00 p.m.