

STARK TUSCARAWAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
May 6, 2026, at 12:15 p.m.
OhioMeansJobs Tuscarawas County-New Philadelphia, OH

PRESENT	ABSENT	STWDB STAFF
Rick Baxter	Marla Akridge	JoAnn Breedlove
Lauren Dalesandro	Stephen Carson	Armon Cook
Andrew Fowler	Damus Cole	Rebecca Harris
Alison Kerns	Lisa Gould	Maddy Miller
Mike Lauber	Para Jones	Aleisha Stout
Susan Lenigar	Marc Manheim	Scott Varian
Stephanie Maier	Rick Moss	
Joel McKenzie	Tracy Sabo	LEOs
Steve Rippeth		Commissioner Regula
Scott Robinson		
Joseph Sekely	Guests	JOB CENTER OPERATOR FISCAL AGENT DESIGNATED PROVIDER
Sarah Spies	Michelle Carver, ODJFS	Chuck Byrd
Patrice Yacko	Mayor Shane Gunnoe (Dover)	Carrie Domer
	Joe Gavin	Freda Martin
	Carl Draher	Amy Miller
	Jerry McKenna	Dan Sipe
	Tyler Charton	Renee Steurer
		Rena Wright
		Lori Yager

BUSINESS MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Scott Robinson, Chair called the meeting to order at 12:17 p.m.

Introductions of Guests / Announcements..... *Scott Robinson, Chair*

- Michelle Carver, Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS)
- Commissioner Richard Regula
- Mayor Shane Gunnoe (Dover)
- Joseph D. Sekely's guests (Joe Gavin, Carl Draher, Jerry McKenna, Tyler Charton)

Thank you to Aron Satterfield with *The Marilyn* for providing some of the tables and décor for the event prior to the board meeting (The dedication of The Joseph D. Sekely III Room)

Meeting Minutes..... *Scott Robinson, Chair*

March 4, 2026, Meeting Minutes.....Scott Robinson, Chair (**Attachment A**)

MOTION: SEKELY MOVED FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 4, 2026, MEETING MINUTES.

LAUBER SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director's Report / Updates..... *JoAnn Breedlove, Executive Director*

Board Initiative Updates

- **Pathways to Progress – Reentry Grant**

Breedlove provided an update on Pathways to Progress, the local implementation of the Pathway Home reentry grant operated in partnership with Midwest Urban Strategies. The program began active service delivery in January and will assist 125 participants with pre- and post-release services that are housed at the Stark Regional Community Correction Center (SRCCC). Participants are returning to Stark or Tuscarawas counties for residency and will continue to receive support after release. The Greater Stark County Urban League serves as the service delivery partner, recruiting in-house and operating services in a cohort delivery model; the first cohort has completed, and the second cohort is underway. Breedlove reported that the initiative is on track to meet grant requirements.

- **Business Resource Network (BRN)**

Breedlove reported that the Business Resource Network (BRN) continues to engage workforce ecosystem partners that directly or indirectly serve employers. The BRN 2.0 concept is being implemented this year with Scott Varian, Workforce Solutions Manager, playing a central role in coordinating the transition and strengthening relationships with partners across both counties.

- **Career Connect Initiative Transition**

Breedlove provided a detailed overview of the Career Connect initiative, originally developed and housed at the Stark Economic Development Board since 2020. Career Connect is a collaborative network of primarily 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations providing workforce services, many of which serve specialized populations. The initiative focuses on coordination, shared data, and collaborative practice among smaller providers that may lack internal capacity for professional development and data infrastructure. Career Connect tracks and shares collective metrics on individuals served, offering the community a coordinated view of local workforce efforts.

Breedlove explained that Career Connect partners are voluntary; there are no contracts or direct payments to participating organizations. The initiative has been funded through the Stark County Commissioners, with funds flowing to the Stark Economic Development Board to support a dedicated coordinator who manages data collection, convenes partners, and oversees activities. Because Career Connect is more closely aligned with the Workforce Development Board's mission and initiatives and is no longer a strategic fit for the Economic Development Board, the program will be transitioned to the Stark Tuscarawas Workforce Development Board effective July 1. The existing funding from Stark County Commissioners will continue to support the coordinator's position under the new structure. Breedlove reported that the Board is actively hiring a Career Connect Manager, with an offer extended and accepted; the new manager is expected to begin on May 18. She described the transition as a "replanting" of Career Connect under the Workforce Development Board to allow it to grow and strengthen.

In response to a question regarding Tuscarawas County representation, Stout noted that the initiative has been primarily focused on Stark County due to its origin under the Stark Economic Development

Board. With the transition to the two-county Workforce Development Board/area, there is an intention to expand participation to include Tuscarawas County partners as the initiative is reset.

Legislative Updates:

Breedlove summarized key legislative and funding developments affecting the workforce system, as detailed in the board meeting packet. She noted that the Administration’s FY27 budget proposal reflects a similar theme to the prior year, including an approximate 26% reduction to the U.S. Department of Labor compared to FY26 enacted levels and a continued proposal to create a “Make America Skilled” block grant to states in place of current WIOA formula funding. This block grant concept was proposed previously and not enacted; there is limited expectation within the workforce community that it will move forward this year.

Breedlove reported that the House Education and Workforce Committee has reintroduced the **Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA) of 2026**. A prior version introduced in 2024 had bipartisan, bicameral support and advanced late in that session but did not pass. The reintroduced bill, which passed out of committee on April 21, includes a requirement that states must direct at least 50% of two of the three WIOA funding streams to training expenditures. She noted that this provision remains in the current proposal and that the bill does not appear to have the same bipartisan momentum as in 2024.

On **funding allocations**, Breedlove reported that WIOA allocations have been released to states, with Ohio scheduled to receive a double-digit increase in WIOA funds across the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth streams. She emphasized that this increase reflects a redistribution of existing national funds rather than new appropriations; while Ohio will receive more, other states may receive less funding, making the outcome “bittersweet.” Local area allocations have not yet been announced but are anticipated soon.

Other Updates

Breedlove reported that the **Ohio Workforce Association (OWA)** is organizing an event on Tuesday, June 16, in Westerville, focused on workforce system priorities. The intent is to invite the two gubernatorial candidates to share their positions on workforce and the public workforce system. Invitations were planned to be issued following the primary election and are expected to be sent imminently. The event is scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., including lunch, and board members interested in attending were asked to notify Breedlove.

Board Action Items..... *Scott Robinson, Chair*

Treasurer /Financial Report*Dan Sipe, Fiscal Agent Representative (Attachment C)*

Sipe presented the Treasurer’s Report, which was included in the meeting packet. He reported that PY24 Stark/Tuscarawas grants have been fully expended and that PY25 funds are now in use, with a goal of reaching 50% expenditure by the end of June. Preliminary state-level allocations for WIOA indicate an increase in funding for PY26 compared to PY25; local area amounts have not yet been released. Sipe noted that PY24 RESEA funds would be fully expended by the end of the April report, after which expenditures will move to PY25 RESEA funds. He also reported that several carryover grants listed in the bottom section of the report will be removed by the July report because those funds have been fully expended. Newer, non-WIOA grants, including Midwest Urban Strategies

Pathway Home and the GRIT project, are ramping up in expenditures. TANF funds are available through September 30, and the area expects to fully expend them by that date.

MOTION: KERNS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MARCH 31, 2026, TREASURER’S REPORT AS PRESENTED. LENIGAR SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Program Policy Timeline Review & Updates..... *Aleisha Stout, Assistant Director*

- **Supportive Services for WIOA Participants Policy**

Stout reported that local WIOA policies have been under review over the past year, with several updates and clarifications required. She presented revisions to the **Supportive Services for WIOA Participants** policy. The changes include making supportive services a standalone policy, removing incentives from this policy, clarifying intended use for youth versus adults, and allowing a case-by-case decision-making process for supportive services to WIOA adults.

- **Incentives for WIOA Participants Policy**

Stout presented a new standalone **Incentives for WIOA Youth Participants** policy. She explained that the content had previously been embedded in another policy. The only change is separating the incentives language into its own policy; incentive amounts, criteria, and eligibility remain unchanged.

- **Work Experience for Youth Policy**

Stout presented revisions to the **Work Experience for Youth** policy. Because the incentives content was removed and placed into a standalone policy, the work experience policy was updated to reflect that separation, and some duplicative language was removed while the remaining policy framework was maintained.

- **On-the-Job (OJT) Policy**

Stout presented the final policy action item, the **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** policy. She reminded the board that OJT had been brought to the board a year prior and noted that locally the decision has been made not to provide OJT as a designated service. Instead, those funds will be redirected to serve a broader group of participants in more impactful ways. The revised policy formally states that OJT is not an applicable designated service in the local area.

MOTION: LENIGAR MOVED TO APPROVE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR WIOA PARTICIPANTS POLICY AS PRESENTED. YACKO SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH NONE OPPOSED, AND 1 ABSTENTION (RIPPETH)

MOTION: LAUBER MOVED TO APPROVE THE INCENTIVES FOR WIOA PARTICIPANTS POLICY AS PRESENTED. BAXTER SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH NONE OPPOSED, AND 1 ABSTENTION (RIPPETH)

MOTION: YACKO MOVED TO APPROVE THE WORK EXPERIENCE FOR YOUTH POLICY AS PRESENTED. MCKENZIE SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH NONE OPPOSED, AND 1 ABSTENTION (RIPPETH)

MOTION: SPIES MOVED TO APPROVE THE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING POLICY AS PRESENTED. SEKELY SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH NONE OPPOSED, AND 1 ABSTENTION (RIPPETH)

Featured Updates

- **Service Provider (Designated)**.....*Lori Yager, Program Mgr., Workforce Initiative Association*

Yager provided the designated service provider update, focusing on the **Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP)**, which serves youth ages 16–24 with at least one barrier to employment. She shared the success story of Ocean, who enrolled in November 2024 as a single parent lacking work history and a high school diploma. Initial assessment by her case manager identified the absence of reliable childcare as Ocean’s primary barrier. Through coordination with Job and Family Services (JFS), Ocean obtained a childcare voucher and secured consistent care for her child, which allowed her to pursue education and employment goals.

Ocean was then referred to Goodwill, one of the Board and CCMEP Lead Agency jointly procured vendor partners, where she earned her 22+ high school diploma, a significant accomplishment within CCMEP. After obtaining her diploma, she secured employment at Taco Bell and exited cash assistance. During follow-up, staff confirmed that she has since advanced to employment as a home health aide, with a long-term goal of becoming a nurse; future training support for her LPN may be considered. Yager noted Ocean’s statement that “having a kid doesn’t stop your success; it gives you the motivation to keep pushing forward,” emphasizing that participants often must resolve barriers such as housing and childcare before they can complete a diploma. Currently, approximately 27% of CCMEP participants enter the program without a high school diploma, making diploma attainment a central focus of their service plans.

- **Job Center Operator (Procured)**.....*Renee Steurer, Employment Services Mgr., Workforce Initiative Association*

Steurer delivered the Job Center Operator update, aligning her remarks with **In-Demand Jobs Week**. She highlighted the story of Scott, a local veteran affected by the closure of Kraton Corporation in Dover, which displaced ninety-one workers. The rapid response team engaged workers on-site in December 2025, where they first connected with Scott and began planning his next steps before a prolonged employment gap developed.

Steurer explained that Scott later worked with Tabitha Crago in the OhioMeansJobs resource room, where the focus turned to individualized support and veteran priority of service. Although Scott faced additional challenges as a justice-involved individual, staff emphasized his technical skills, work history, and military service as assets for employers. Together, they updated his resume to reflect his decades of experience and aligned his background with regional demand. Craigo identified a production operator opening at **Dover Chemical** that matched his skills, and Scott was hired into a control room role starting April 20. Steurer emphasized that the collaboration across rapid response, veteran services, and employer engagement demonstrates how early intervention and hands-on support can move individuals from dislocation into in-demand, locally based employment.

Member Updates

Rick Baxter publicly thanked Steurer and the OMJ staff for their substantial assistance with a career fair held in April, noting the event hosted more than fifty employers and over one hundred job seekers. He reported that despite much of the organizing team being new to the process, the collaboration and staff support led to a successful event.

MOTION: LAUBER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. YACKO SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Adjourned: 12:47 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: July 8, 2026 -Zoom