

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **February 13, 2026**

**Date:** February 13, 2026

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Place:** Moore Norman Technology Center

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Gray called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed attendees.

#### **Announcements**

Chair Gray announced staffing changes at Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC), including Maci Majors' departure and Jennifer Alt assuming Maci's responsibilities.

#### **Approval of Previous Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the October 24, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

#### **Opening Remarks: Chair Charles Gray**

Chair Gray provided an overview of workforce transformation efforts occurring across Oklahoma and nationally, noting that several states are moving toward a single state planning area model. He emphasized that the Governor's Council is charged not only with administering federally funded programs but also with aligning businesses and job seekers to strengthen Oklahoma's workforce.

Chair Gray highlighted a document from the United States Department of Labor (DOL) indicating that DOL will consider any waiver a state has to empower states to make the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) work for them. Chair Gray shared that, although change is a difficult process that can lead to anxiety, it can lead to a better path and an opportunity to grow Oklahoma and its workforce.

Chair Gray highlighted:

- The appointment of Trae Rahill as the Governor's Advisor on Workforce.
- Recent federal flexibility encouraging states to pursue waivers and innovative workforce models.

- The importance of viewing system changes as opportunities to grow Oklahoma's economy, increase wages, and attract businesses.

### **Workforce Transformation Update: Trae Rahill**

Trae Rahill described ongoing statewide workforce development transformation efforts, noting that foundational work over the past several years positioned Oklahoma ahead of many states responding to current federal and economic pressures.

Key points included:

- Oklahoma's proactive strategy has placed the state approximately 2.5 years ahead in system modernization.
- Announced that OESC recently won a competitive grant that was only granted to 13 or 14 other states.
- Strong interagency collaboration has enabled operational efficiencies, including consolidation of services.
- Upcoming initiatives will simplify program access for job seekers and employers.
- This meeting marked the first presentation of performance data intended to support data-driven Council decisions.

### **State Workforce Plan: Kyla Guyette**

Kyla Guyette presented the statewide workforce plan built from extensive business input, identifying key priorities, shared strategies, and development of a Workforce Insights and Reporting Engine to measure ROI.

Key points included:

- Input gathered from approximately 1,000 businesses identified 14 recurring priorities.
- The plan outlines 29 shared strategies to be implemented collaboratively across partners.
- The plan is structured as a five-year framework with annual updates.
- Development of a Workforce Insights and Reporting Engine will allow Oklahoma to better measure return on investment (ROI) for workforce expenditures.
- Annual scorecards will track agency contributions and outcomes.

### **Updates: Industry Driven Skills Training Fund Grant & WIOA State Plan: DeAnna (DeDe) Smith**

DeDe Smith introduced the employer-driven training initiative focused on aerospace and defense, advanced manufacturing, and AI infrastructure, providing reimbursement support for workforce training. Mrs. Smith gave credit to many partners who helped with the work of winning this grant, including Brandon Tatum and Guild staff.

Key points included:

- Employers will be able to receive up to 80% reimbursement for the costs of training participants.
- Industries will focus on aerospace and defense, advanced manufacturing, and AI infrastructure.
- Talent Accelerator will be for incumbent workers and new hires.
- Announced a kickoff event with lunch provided by OESC that was not paid for by federal dollars.

Mrs. Smith then went on to provide an overview of the progress of the state workforce plan modification, announcing that DOL was late (received at the end of January, 2025) to give OESC guidance. While DOL did not grant an extension, DOL offered OESC to request an extension in publishing the state plan. Mrs. Smith closed requesting public comment on the state plan when it is finally submitted.

### **Healthcare Committee Update: Lara Morris**

Lara Morris reported on recent healthcare career fairs, regional engagement efforts, and opportunities tied to the Rural Health Transformation Project (RHTP). There is an upcoming Tulsa Area Health Science Program event scheduled for February 18 with over 550 registrants.

Mrs. Morris explained that the biggest limitation for the Healthcare Committee is the cost of space being at least \$8,000.00 for each event because the committee does not have a mechanism for funding. Dan Booker, mayor of Lawton, suggested that, if the committee were to hold an event in Lawton, they would be able to provide space much cheaper than \$8,000.00.

Mrs. Morris announced that a \$223.5 million grant was recently awarded to Oklahoma through the RHTP grant and explained that it is a very complicated grant, but it is divided through five different areas: community paramedicine, doulas, behavioral/mental health, community health workers, and high school LPM programs. Mrs. Morris mentioned that these will be able to be tied to workforce initiatives.

### **Partner Updates and Performance Review**

Agency partners, including Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerTech, and Local Workforce Development Boards, presented program updates and reviewed performance data. Presentations focused on participant services, reemployment strategies, training outcomes, and efforts to improve accountability through data-driven decision-making.

Cody Cox presented on Oklahoma Employment Security Commission's Wagner-Peyser program, highlighting case management, rapid reemployment efforts, and expanded

outreach through mobile service delivery. Partners discussed the need for a unified intake and reporting system to better measure outcomes across programs.

Melinda Fruendt from the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services explained that Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs report data differently from other workforce programs due to federal requirements and Oklahoma's status as a "combined state" serving individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and those with other disabilities under one system. She noted that services are highly individualized, with career services focused on employment preparation and retention, and training services centered on skill development such as work-based learning and postsecondary education.

Council members asked several questions about how cost per participant is calculated and whether traditional budgeting methods should be used. DRS staff clarified that the figure is based on total expenditures divided by participants served, rather than beginning and ending balances, and that costs can vary significantly depending on the level of support required by each individual. It was also noted that DRS operates on a two-year federal funding cycle, which can make standard workforce reporting templates difficult to apply.

Members acknowledged that these differences can make comparisons with other programs challenging and agreed on the need for continued discussion to better align and understand reporting methodologies across partners.

Brent Haken reported that CareerTech is continuing to adapt its reporting to align with the new template and expects improved alignment in future submissions. He explained that Title II programs primarily address participants' educational barriers before they enter occupational training, noting that many individuals continue into further education rather than immediately entering the workforce.

Mr. Haken shared that training-related costs are often higher than those associated with traditional students due to the additional supports participants need. CareerTech is working to develop individualized education portfolios to better align prior learning with program requirements, allowing students to receive credit for work already completed and transition more efficiently into training and employment pathways.

Discussion highlighted correctional education efforts, including the opening of an additional skills center within the Department of Corrections system and anticipated growth in participation. Council members noted the broader statewide goal of expanding access to skills centers.

In response to questions about performance outcomes, Mr. Haken explained that many participants initially seek training rather than immediate employment and may need foundational skills, such as English proficiency, before entering high-demand programs like nursing. Additional barriers, including prior incarceration, can also affect employment outcomes. He confirmed that certain job placement data are derived from

follow-up surveys and indicated he would provide clarification on median earnings data at a later time.

Representatives from the Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board (COWIB), Green Country Workforce Development Board (GCWDB), South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board (SCOWB), Southern Workforce Board (SWB), and Western Oklahoma Workforce Board (WOWDB) provided regional updates highlighting program operations, successes, and challenges.

Local boards described administering Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding in accordance with federal requirements, including the mandate that at least 75% of youth funds serve out-of-school youth. Funding is managed on a two-year cycle, requiring intentional carryover to ensure continuity of services. Boards emphasized that training expenditures must be limited to providers on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and that employment outcomes are often verified through direct employer follow-up, though future data sharing with the OESC may streamline this process.

Several boards reported strong monitoring outcomes, successful service delivery, and efforts to connect employers with skilled workers through job fairs, sector partnerships, and business engagement. The DOL monitoring of COWIB, which reviewed more than two years of fiscal activity, resulted in no findings. GCWDB highlighted operational restructuring following the absorption of another local area, reductions in administrative costs, and improvements in service provider performance. SCOWB shared initiatives such as healthcare sector partnerships, collaboration with local schools to reduce facility costs, and pilot programs with the Department of Corrections to prepare justice-involved individuals for employment, including CDL training aligned with immediate job placement opportunities. SWB discussed effective use of Rapid Response funds to address layoffs and expanded business services initiatives, including programs supporting women entrepreneurs. WOWDB described maintaining service levels despite significant federal funding reductions and the recent merger with COWIB.

Board representatives also discussed challenges, including reductions or elimination of certain funding streams (notably business services funding), the transition to OESC as the administrative entity, implementation of a new state reporting system, and the difficulty of capturing complete performance data within current templates. Several noted that reported figures may not fully reflect ongoing training participants or follow-up services.

A broader discussion followed regarding the value of locally driven workforce strategies and the importance of aligning reporting metrics to better reflect regional differences, service populations, and outcomes. Council leadership expressed appreciation for the work of the LWDBs and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining representation from both rural and urban areas as the workforce system continues to evolve.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at Moore Norman Technology Center in Norman with a focus on aviation workforce initiatives.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:22 a.m.

### **Attendance**

Present: Babu Peringol, Brent Haken, Chase Beasley, Charles Gray (Chair), Clay Bullard (Ex-Officio) Cliff Stewart, Daniel Russell, David Reid, Dennis Luckinbill, Jacob Matherly, Jamie Payne, Melinda Fruendt, Scott Fry, Stan Booker, Stan McCabe, Trae Rahill, Cassidy Minx (Designee), Dr. Jenna Thomas (Designee), Marissa Lightsey (Designee)

Late Arrival: Brian Hill (9:35 a.m.)

Absent: Bill Coleman, Christopher Fusselman, Gov. Kevin J. Stitt or Designee, Jack O. Sherry, Jacob McHughes, Jeanie Webb, John Budd, Kristen Thompson, Mark Tedford, Robin Arter, Stephanie Vickers Regan, Terry Adams, Lindel Fields (Ex-Officio), Sean Burrage (Ex-Officio), Justin Farris (Ex-Officio),

Prepared by: Kris Van Dyke