

Oklahoma Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development

Governor's Council Meeting Minutes

Date: April 24, 2026

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Moore Norman Technology Center – Norman Campus (Straughan Center)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chuck Gray.

Roll Call and Quorum Determination

Roll call was conducted.

Members recorded as present:

Chair Chuck Gray | Trae Rahill | Babu Peringol | Brent Haken | Brian Hill | Chase Beasley | Christopher Fusselman | Cliff Stewart | Daniel Russell | David Reid | Dennis Luckinbill | Jacob McHughes | Melinda Fruendt | Scott Fry | Stan Boker | Stephanie Vickers Regan | Cassidy Minx (designee) | Jenna Thomas (designee) | Barbra Coffee (designee) | Marissa Lightsey (designee)

Members recorded as absent:

Governor Stitt | Jeanie Webb | Nicholas Ciccone | Jamie Payne | Stan McCabe | Adam Pugh | Bill Coleman | Jack O. Sherry | Jacob Matherly | Kristen Thompson | Mark Tedford | Robin Arter | Russell Boyd | Terry Adams | David Stewart

A quorum was confirmed present.

2. Guest Speaker – Commissioner Jacob McHughes

Commissioner Jacob McHughes welcomed the council and discussed Cleveland County's workforce and economic efforts, including aviation, aerospace, and digital film initiatives. He highlighted partnerships involving more Norman Technology Center, Norman public schools, the Aviation Academy, and local investments intended to support career pathways and workforce development.

3. Approval of February 13, 2026, Minutes

The council considered approval of the February 13th, 2026, meeting minutes a motion and a second were made to approve the minutes a roll call was taken, and the motion passed.

Motion to approve: Dennis Luckinbill

Second: Brian Hill

Vote conducted by roll call.

4. Workforce Updates: A Federal Perspective

Chair Gray provided an update regarding federal workforce priorities and funding pressures. Discussion included decreasing federal workforce funding, the need to direct more resources towards businesses and job seekers, increased emphasis on apprenticeships, and the importance of innovation, efficiency, and system alignment. Trae Rahill provided additional context regarding federal expectations, noting that federal agencies are encouraging states to integrate programs, reduce administrative duplication, and improve service delivery outcomes. He stated that Oklahoma is positioned to respond to these federal shifts because of prior partnership work across agencies, education, workforce, commerce, and economic development.

5. Committee Update

Dan Russell - Apprenticeship Committee

Dan Russell provided an update regarding apprenticeship efforts. He stated that he had been working with the Governor's task force on apprenticeship to understand work already completed and determine how to leverage that work moving forward. He discussed plans to form a council, develop a plan, engage employers with existing apprenticeship programs, and assist smaller companies in building apprenticeship programs.

Lara Norris - Healthcare Committee

Lara Norris provided an update regarding healthcare workforce incentives. She discussed the virtual healthcare day scheduled for October 23rd and referenced prior work with the Oklahoma Hospital Association and career tech. She also reported on healthcare workforce career fairs held in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, including participation numbers, booths, schools represented, and future plans to expand regional efforts.

Discussion followed regarding potential regional expansion, possible host locations, sponsor support, and ways to replicate the healthcare career fair model in additional areas of the state. Members discussed the importance of regional access and using the initiative as a model for broader community council committee structure and statewide engagement.

6. State Plan Overview

Trae Rahill provided an overview of the WIOA state plan. It was stated that the state plan was expected to be submitted the following week. The overview explained that the state plan was developed through partner work and that additional local engagement and transition planning would occur after submission and federal review.

The presentation identified functions the Governor's Council may need to formally support if acting as the local workforce Development Board, including disability accessibility, industry and sector strategy, regional integration, executive committee and governance, healthcare, career pathways, apprenticeship, youth and special populations, one-stop operator oversight, performance and system accountability, and fiscal allocations and leverage. It was clarified that these functions may not each become separate committees but would need to be addressed through the council's structure.

Lacy Louthan provided a summary of the state plan public comment process. She stated that 80 comments were received, containing 272 sub comments, and that each comment was reviewed and responded to. The comments were summarized into several categories, including governance and service delivery, rural access and regional responsiveness, accountability and separation of duties, performance and system data, and implementation/stakeholder engagement.

Lacey also clarified that the proposal modifies government structure, not local service delivery, and stated that services would continue to be provided locally. She also noted that implementation would be phased and dependent on federal approval.

7. Report Out of Executive Committee Actions

Chair Gray reported on actions taken during the executive committee meeting held earlier that morning. He stated that the executive committee reviewed and approved submissions of the State Plan, approved the certification item related to the Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board, and approved the Workforce System Directive (WSD 02-2026, Industry Driven Skills Training – Guild Policy).

9. Performance Reviews

Prior to the performance review presentations, participants were instructed to provide employer engagement data specific to their respective areas and organizational activities during their presentations. This information was presented to the council and was also distributed to members via e-mail in advance of the meeting.

Cody Cox – Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (Title III)

Brad Wilkerson presented employer services information for the first quarter of 2026 on behalf of Cody Cox. The information presented included statewide activity through American Job Centers, hiring events, confirmed hires, attendees, and grant balance data.

Outlined employer engagement efforts and reported on hiring event outcomes, noting the number of employers participating, total events conducted, and confirmed hires during the reporting. He also provided an overview of expenditures from the Employment Services (ES) Grant and the Reemployment Services And Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grant.

Council discussion followed regarding the data presented. Topics included clarification of the differences between ES and RESEA grants, including program requirements and flexibility, distinctions between hires resulting from hiring

events and those obtained through American job center services and case management, and consideration of cost per hire metrics based on grant expenditures.

Also noted that hiring event outcomes represent only a portion of the total placements and that additional hires occur through office-based services and partner programs.

Melinda Fruendt – Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services (Title IV)

Melinda provided input on workforce system coordination and service delivery. Comments reflected the importance of ensuring that workforce services continue to reach individuals with disabilities and that programs remain aligned with employer needs. Discussion emphasized that service delivery for individuals with disabilities may require additional time and coordination due to the need for assessments, accommodations, and individualized support. The importance of strengthening connections between workforce programs and employers to improve outcomes for participants was noted.

Brent Haken – Career Tech (Title II)

Brent Haken provided input regarding workforce system alignment and partner engagement. Comments reflected that career tech and education partners have been engaged in reviewing system changes and that feedback received indicated general support for directing more funding towards training and service delivery. It was noted that the stakeholders are interested in understanding how proposed changes will be implemented and how they will impact existing programs. Discussion emphasized on the importance of continued collaboration between workforce and education partners.

Ashley Sellers – Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board (Title I)

Ashley Sellers, executive director of the Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board operating as Oklahoma's Workforce Board, provided an update on workforce activities within the region. She presented data representing approximately 9 months of activity and discussed employer engagement efforts, including participation in hiring events, work-based training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship programs.

Ashley also reported that approximately 250 employers were actively receiving services through workforce programs and noted that hiring events are conducted in collaboration with American Job Centers and Oklahoma Works system partners. She also described coordination among core partners to deliver services to employers and job seekers.

Michael Branan – Green Country Workforce Development Board (Title I)

Michael Branan provided input related to workforce service system operations and employment engagement the comments reflected the importance of maintaining strong connections with employers and ensuring that workforce services are responsive to business needs. Discussion emphasized coordination among Workforce Boards and partners to improve service delivery and outcomes across regions.

Trina Southard – South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board (Title I)

Trina Southard provided input regarding regional workforce system implementation and service delivery. Comments reflected the importance of local engagement and ensuring that workforce strategies are responsive to regional needs. Discussion emphasized coordination with partners and the role of Workforce Boards in supporting employers and job seekers within their service areas.

Kerry Manning – Southern Workforce Board (Title I)

Kerry Manning provided input regarding workforce system alignment and employer engagement strategies. Comments reflected the importance of maintaining consistency in service delivery while adapting to system changes. Discussion emphasized the need for continued collaboration between Workforce Boards, partners, and employers to support workforce outcomes.

Rebecca Shuyler – Western Oklahoma Workforce Development Board (Title I)

Rebecca Shuyler provided input related to workforce system coordination and regional service delivery. Comments reflected the importance of ensuring access to service across geographic areas and maintaining strong partnerships with local stakeholders. Discussion emphasized ongoing efforts to engage employers and support workforce initiatives at the regional level. Rebecca's reporting information reflects activity from the period prior to the merger of the Western Oklahoma Workforce Development Board with the Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board.

9. Next GCWED Meeting

July 24, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

Francis Tuttle Technology Center

Rockwell Campus-Northwest Hall, 12777 N Rockwell Ave.

Oklahoma City, OK 73142

Adjournment