

Minutes
Twin Districts Workforce Development Area
Local Workforce Development Board

Wednesday, April 29, 2026,
914 Sullivan Drive, Hattiesburg, MS

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PRESENT:

Danny Box, Lindsay Brown, Rebecca Brown, Grant Crowder, Perry Duckworth, Sedgie Foxworth, Lillie Graves, Ricky Harrison, Newt Ishee, Brian Johnson, Lucy Lambert, Julia Lindsey, Calvin Newson, David Stephens, Lucretia Williams, Marshall Wood.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ABSENT:

Millie Bordelon, Wayne Buffington (proxy), Laura Lewis, Tom Miles, Tiffany Parish (proxy), Jasmine Simmons, and April Stennett.

STAFF:

Allison Hawkins, Patricia Morrison, Marilyn Minor, Shonta Duncan, Marvin Dickey, Shari White, Elena Borel, Emlyn Jackson, Sandra Gallaspy.

CALL TO ORDER AND COMMENTS:

Mr. David Stephens called the meeting to order and greeted everyone in attendance. Mr. Stephens also provided highlights from the Spring SETA conference that he attended.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the agenda.

ACTION: Mr. Danny Box motioned to approve the agenda; Mr. Calvin Newsom seconded. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Stephens called for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting (January 22, 2026).

ACTION: Mr. Sedgie Foxworth motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

LEO BOARD UPDATE:

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Calvin Newsom to present the LEO Board update. Mr. Newsom reported that the LEO Board approved several items during their meeting and deferred to Mrs. Allison Hawkins for further details in her report.

TWIN DISTRICTS UPDATE:

Mr. Stephens called on Mrs. Allison Hawkins to present the Twin Districts update. Mrs. Hawkins reported that the SMPDD Youth Monitoring Report was received with no findings. A small number of minor observations were noted; however, these reflect improvement compared to the prior year's report.

She further reported that preliminary WIOA funding for Program Year 2026 was received, indicating an overall reduction of approximately 10%. Despite this decrease, there will be no staff reductions due to attrition.

Mrs. Hawkins then introduced Kacie Brown, who presented an overview of the Career STEP program.

Ms. Brown provided the Board with the following highlights on the Career STEP program:

- A non-WIOA program that covers the cost of short-term training;
- A program that will cover most non-WIOA ETPL programs;
- Must be between 16-59 years of age;
- Must be a custodial or noncustodial parent of a dependent child;
- Household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level;
- Must not be currently enrolled in high school;
- Includes a range of supportive services; and
- The program offers internships.

Ms. Brown provided examples of training opportunities covered by the program and reported a success story before concluding her presentation.

TWIN DISTRICTS FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Shari White to present the Financial Report. She began her report with the Program Year 2025 (PY25) Funding Overview. The total PY24 carryover, which included the Unobligated and the Unliquidated Obligations totals \$3,075,301.12. The PY25 Allocations are as follows: Adult \$1,804,473; Dislocated Worker \$1,877,566; and Youth \$1,889,355.

On December 18, 2025, TDWDA received PY25 NFA #6, which provided the TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY25 Rapid Response Funds, in the amount of \$485,000. With this new NFA, TDWDA's PY25 Allocation increased to \$6,056,394.00,

and increased the Total Funds Available to \$9,131,695.12. A copy of this NFA can be found in the meeting packet.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditure Summary. The expenditures reported are through the Third Quarter - the period ending 3/31/25. The Obligations were as follows: Adult was 97.9% obligated, Dislocated Worker 88.9%, Youth 100%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 59%.

Ms. White then summarized the expenditures through March 31, 2026: Adult was 44%, Dislocated Worker 46%, Youth 64%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 52% expended. Overall, TDWDA has expended 51% of its PY25 Obligations, equaling \$4,243,245.12. Please note that the PY25 Youth Work Experience Rate is at currently at 37.95%.

Next, Ms. White went over the Unobligated Remaining Funds. Unliquidated Obligations are funds that were obligated, but not expended. The Unobligated funds were as follows: Adult funds totaling \$65,865; Dislocated Worker \$266,018; and RR/LA \$455,000 (due to the new allocation). Any funds remaining after all the closeouts have been received (which should be mid-August) will roll forward into PY26.

Ms. White continued with the Expenditure by Quarter Report. Expenditures are as follows: 1st Quarter expended \$1,280,944.45; 2nd Quarter \$1,426,300.37; and 3rd Quarter \$1,536,000.30. We expect 4th Quarter expenditures to greatly increase.

Ms. White concluded her report.

WIN JOB CENTER REPORT:

Mr. Stephens called on Mr. Brian Johnson to present the WIN Job Center report. Mr. Johnson began his report by commenting on the WIOA funding cut, stating that the unemployment rate is a factor in setting the budget. He advised everyone that the unemployment rate map was included in their packet.

Mr. Johnson reported that job fair attendance has been increasing since the COVID-related decline, with an average of 250-300 participants at recent fairs. He also noted a rise in customer traffic across all WIN Job Centers.

He reminded attendees that the Meridian WIN Job Center is fully operational, though it remains understaffed. The Forest and Pascagoula WIN Centers welcomed new staff starting this week.

While enrollment goals are slightly behind schedule, he expressed confidence that the goal will be met by June 30th.

Mr. Johnson also highlighted the Gulfport manager's strong outreach efforts in the area.

He provided an overview of the Navigator system (also referred to as Kiosk) and discussed the WIN Mobile Unit, which he plans to make available at the Board's July meeting for members to tour.

Mr. Johnson concluded his report.

YOUTH COMMITTEE REPORT:

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Lillie Graves to present the Youth Committee Report. Ms. Graves stated the Youth Committee met virtually on April 15th. The current Youth total enrollment is currently 223 participants, which includes 183 out-of-school youth and 40 in-school youth. Third-quarter benchmark reviews are scheduled to occur soon.

Ms. Graves reported that Meridian Community College will phase out its Youth Program and will not continue it in Program Year 2026. The decision was made due to budget concerns; however, all currently enrolled participants will be allowed to complete the program.

The Youth Committee approved one action item, the Program Year 2026 SMPDD Youth Subaward. Although the total funding is reduced compared to Program Year 2025, the program will continue to serve 110 participants, with an increased focus on work experience and in-school youth. The total amount of the subaward has been decreased and is in line with the overall 9.04% for Youth. Ms. Graves requested approval of the subaward.

ACTION: Mr. Calvin Newsom motioned to approve the PY 26 SMPDD Youth Subaward; Mr. Sedgie Foxworth seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ONE-STOP COMMITTEE REPORT:

Mr. Stephens called on Ms. Rebecca Brown to present the One-Stop Committee Report. Ms. Brown reported that the One-Stop committee met on April 24th in Picayune to discuss One-Stop certifications and the Laurel WIN Job Center.

The certification reviews that were conducted (per WIOA requirements) included: Meridian, Choctaw, Picayune, and Pascagoula WIN Job Centers. Ms. Brown motioned to certify these WIN Centers through June 30, 2028.

ACTION: Ms. Brown motioned to certify Meridian, Choctaw, Picayune, and Pascagoula WIN Job Centers through June 30, 2028. Danny Box seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown continued her report by informing members that due to a scheduling miscommunication, the certification review for the Forest WIN Job Center was not completed. The review would be completed prior to June 30, 2026. Ms. Brown motioned

to authorize the Executive Board to make the certification decision for the Forest WIN Job Center following the One-Stop review.

ACTION: Ms. Brown motioned to authorize the Executive Board to make the certification decision for the Forest WIN Job Center following the One-Stop Committee's forthcoming review; Sedgie Foxworth seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown further stated that the Laurel WIN Job Center's certification expires on June 30, 2026. The committee did not conduct a certification review based on the staff's recommendation and pending Board action. Ms. Brown stated that there was a lengthy discussion with Mrs. Hawkins and other staff members regarding this issue. She concluded and turned the matter over to Ms. Hawkins for further discussion, noting that the One-Stop Committee supported Ms. Hawkins and staff in their recommendation.

Ms. Hawkins opened by thanking the One-Stop Committee for their work certifying the WIN Job Centers in our area.

Ms. Hawkins informed the Board of a two-year review of Workforce Center operations to identify cost-saving measures while maintaining service access. The review considered customer volume, facility costs, space, and geographic access. Declining WIOA funding and ongoing staffing challenges necessitate steps to ensure long-term sustainability.

The key finding for the three WIN Job Centers included in the review, Columbia, Laurel, and Forest, indicates:

1. All three Centers serve comparable annual customer volumes.
2. Laurel has the highest operating cost per customer (4.5 times more expensive than Columbia).
3. Laurel to Hattiesburg- approximately 35 minutes
Columbia to Hattiesburg – approximately 45 minutes
Forest to Meridian – approximately 60 minutes.
4. Despite a larger population base, Laurel does not serve any more customers than the small service areas.
5. MDES is deploying kiosk-based virtual service technology to supplement in-person services. The proposed installation includes Laurel and Jasper County.

The Laurel WIN Job Center provides service levels similar to those at comparable locations, but at the highest cost, with nearby alternative access available. We recommend the closure of the Laurel WIN Job Center effective June 30, 2026, with a phased transition beginning June 1, 2026.

While we acknowledge community impact, this recommendation reflects the need to balance fiscal responsibility, service accessibility, and long-term operational sustainability.

ACTION: Mr. Marshall Wood motioned to close the Laurel WIN Job Center effective June 30, 2026, with a phase-out beginning June 1, 2026; Mr. Perry Duckworth seconded. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

David Stephens asked for Calvin Newsom's assistance, and together they presented a plaque to Kenny Jett in recognition of his 20 years of service to the SMPDD and the Twin Districts Workforce Development Area.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Stephens adjourned the meeting.