

**STATE OF NEVADA
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Friday, July 18, 2025 – 9:00 a.m.

The GWDB Employer Engagement and Economic Development Subcommittee held a public meeting
on Microsoft TEAMS

Audio Conference Number: +1 775-321-6111

Phone Conference ID: 113 829 112#

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members Present

Dennis Perea, Chair
Edward Estipona, Vice Chair GWDB
Louis Desalvio
Ken Goodrich
Paul Kaplan
Andrew MacKay
Anthony Machabee
Sara Millett
David Schmidt
Janel Thomas
Michael Yoder

Absent

George Gault
Elaine Silverstone

Others Present

Elaine Rodriguez

1. CALL TO ORDER – OPENING REMARKS

Chair Perea called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

2. ROLL CALL – CONFIRMATION OF A QUORUM

Elaine Rodriguez took roll call and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

3. VERIFICATION OF PUBLIC NOTICE POSTING

Elaine Rodriguez verified that the meeting had been publicly posted pursuant to Nevada Open Meeting Law, NRS 241.020.

4. FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT(S) NOTICE

There were none.

5. DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – WELCOME SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair Perea introduced himself as a City Councilman in Ely, Nevada, previously served 14 years with the state, including 10 years as Deputy Director at DETR. He brings experience with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and aims to contribute rural and historical workforce insights to the subcommittee.

Louis DeSalvio is President of Laborers Local 872 in Las Vegas, with a focus on apprenticeship programs and heavy construction work.

Vice Chair Estipona is with Estipona Group, specializing in advertising, marketing, and communications, with several years of experience in workforce-related communication.

Ken Goodrich is the founder and chairman of Goettl Air Conditioning & Plumbing, with offices in Las Vegas and Reno. He expressed enthusiasm for supporting agencies, businesses, and potential employees.

Paul Kaplan is the owner of CAP Construction Inc., a general contracting firm in business for 30 years, primarily focused on commercial tenant improvements.

Andrew MacKay is the Executive Director of the Nevada Franchise Auto Dealers Association, representing passenger vehicle, light truck, and heavy-duty truck operators statewide.

Sara Millett is the Regional Director at Caesars Entertainment for talent acquisition as well as over the enterprise for US properties for Caesar's Digital and Enterprise Corporate.

Anthony Machabee specializes in industrial commercial real estate, primarily in Northern Nevada, but can cover the whole entire state.

Janel Thomas owns a print signs design promo apparel company in Elko.

Michael Yoder is the Statewide Chief for Workforce Development with the Division of Social Services, formerly known as the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, recently renamed through legislation.

David Schmidt is the Chief Economist for DETR, with knowledge of employment and labor market.

6. DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – MISSION OF EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Chair Perea outlined the subcommittee's purpose as supporting the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) by helping shape the four-year state workforce plan and aligning local efforts with state priorities. He emphasized the need to bridge federal funding constraints with local expertise, where boards have the capacity to implement effective workforce strategies.

He reviewed the GWDB's core functions—strategic planning, system oversight, performance accountability, and workforce coordination—and positioned the subcommittee as key to advancing employer engagement, labor market alignment, and economic development. He stressed the value of identifying skill gaps, tailoring training programs, and enhancing education and workforce alignment.

Work-based learning was highlighted as essential, with apprenticeships and blended learning models described as the most effective training methods. He also called for improved coordination among agencies and programs to reduce duplication and streamline services. He offered to share supporting documents outlining the subcommittee's potential contributions and invited feedback to refine its mission. He proposed inviting local board members to future meetings for practical input and confirmed plans to revisit these topics in an upcoming session.

Vice Chair Estipona suggested inviting local workforce boards to participate in the subcommittee as non-voting members. The intent was to improve mutual understanding between public and private sectors by allowing local boards to hear directly from employers about workforce challenges. It was noted that such participation could clarify bureaucratic constraints faced by public agencies and foster better collaboration. The proposal aimed to facilitate cross-sector education and strengthen alignment in workforce planning.

Chair Perea proposed to include rural workforce providers—possibly as non-voting members—in future meetings to ensure regional issues, such as those in Ely, are represented. Janelle was asked to assist in identifying potential participants. The group acknowledged that while strong plans can be developed, they must align with regulatory frameworks to be actionable. He emphasized the importance of simplifying recommendations into a few key, deliverable priorities, noting past frustrations with broad, jargon-heavy plans that lacked implementation feasibility.

Ken Goodrich raised a question regarding restrictions on mass marketing with federally funded dollars to the public and business about apprenticeship and training programs. He noted ongoing discussions about available funding to support workforce entry but expressed uncertainty about federal limitations. Clarification on these regulatory challenges was requested.

Dennis Perea explained that while federal funds have some restrictions, including a 10% WIOA set-aside for marketing with board input, there are multiple funding sources—federal and state—that could support apprenticeship and training outreach if agencies agree. The idea was proposed to invite local board members and experts, such as Michael Yoder, to provide clarity on available funding streams. A suggestion was made to prepare a concise summary outlining funding sources, target populations, and allowable uses, and to have knowledgeable representatives present and answer questions to improve understanding.

Ken Goodrich shared surprise at discovering existing workforce programs and supports, noting a 40-year Nevada business history without prior awareness of these resources. He concluded that many other employers likely remain unaware of available services, highlighting a need for improved outreach and employer engagement.

Chair Perea raised concern about the fragmentation of Nevada's workforce system, which included 13 or 14 different brands such as Workforce Connections and NevadaWorks. He suggested that the board should work to consolidate these into a single, unified workforce system to provide clear guidance and support. He committed to obtaining funding schematics

and identifying which programs have marketing authority, aiming to recommend directing funds toward marketing the entire system rather than individual parts.

Vice Chair Estipona explained that federal restrictions historically limited workforce organizations, including DETR and local boards, from marketing services, allowing only outreach framed as education. However, the distinction between outreach and marketing was questioned. In recent years, a unified statewide brand, EmployNV, has emerged to streamline services for job seekers and employers across Nevada. The local boards and DETR agreed to use EmployNV as the central point for service delivery, ensuring consistent support regardless of location. Progress has been made toward this unified approach, with plans to increase communication and marketing efforts under EmployNV within the next six to twelve months.

Chair Perea noted that while EmployNV consolidates many workforce brands under the Department of Employment, significant funding and programs also come from other agencies like the Department of Agriculture, which provides more job training funds nationally than the Department of Labor. He expressed interest in including additional partners such as Job Corps and the Department of Agriculture and acknowledged the complexity of coordinating these varied funding streams, many of which he did not fully understand regarding their capacity to support mass marketing type programs.

David Schmidt discussed the fine line between outreach and marketing, noting restrictions on spending for promotional items but affirming the importance of raising awareness. He emphasized the subcommittee's role in focusing on the most effective and impactful uses of funding. Highlighting workforce dynamics, they noted that while 50,000–60,000 people are hired or separate jobs monthly, only a small fraction—around 10,000—are served annually by roughly \$20 million in workforce grants, equating to about \$2,000 per person and reaching just one in sixty job transitions. He stressed that resources are insufficient to serve the entire workforce but suggested targeting focused investments in key areas, such as in-demand occupations, through collaboration among DETR, GOED, and OWINN. While not all workforce challenges can be solved, prioritizing critical issues and strategic funding could drive meaningful impact.

Sara Millett reported a significant challenge of “ghost employees,” noting that out of approximately 25,000 hires annually in their region, about 10,000 complete onboarding but never show up for work. The cause remains unclear, but there is speculation it may relate to state benefits or alternative employment. Similar trends were observed across hospitality companies, indicating a widespread issue.

Chair Perea asked about the capabilities of the longitudinal data system NPWR to answer some of the questions.

David Schmidt responded that no current system tracks individuals who apply for jobs but never show up, as visibility relies on wage records and employer reporting. While a reporting mechanism exists to flag job applicants who falsely certify work search activities—potentially affecting their eligibility—employers may be unaware of this. DETR acknowledged limited data on recruits who never start work unless employers report such cases.

Janel Thomas reported similar issues with “ghosting” in rural areas, including candidates failing to attend interviews, not canceling, and ignoring communication. She noted applicants sometimes apply for jobs they have no intention of taking, likely to meet eligibility

requirements. Janel also expressed interest in receiving more information on how to report these cases, as repeated applicants appear frequently without genuine engagement.

Ken Goodrich added that the issue of employees not showing up for interviews or first workdays is widespread, affecting their operations across four states. He reported that less than 60% of applicants attend interviews, and 32% of hired candidates fail to show up on their first day. Ken characterized this as a broader cultural issue beyond the control of local organizations.

Chair Perea referenced an old Department of Labor study by Mathematica, which found little correlation between earning a high school diploma and achieving middle or upper-middle-class status, but a strong correlation when students worked during high school. He noted this insight may not directly address the “ghost employee” issue but suggested targeting these populations could help the subcommittee focus on cultural challenges and state business priorities.

David Schmidt shared the link to DETRs fraud reporting form, <https://ft.nvdetr.org/form/Fraud>. This pathway was recommended for suspected cases of applicants checking a box solely to obtain benefits. Employers report individuals who were offered employment but refused or declined all hours.

Chair Perea reiterated identifying funding streams capable of marketing to employers and addressing ghost applicants. He included adding local workforce boards as non-voting members to clarify deliverables. A request was noted for Ms. Silverstone to provide an update on GOED priorities and targeted industries. The chair asked if additional topics should be added to the agenda for future meetings to support recommendation development.

Janel Thomas shared personal insights on the younger generation's delayed workforce entry and lack of urgency in gaining independence, noting this as a potential cultural shift. She highlighted limited access to vocational training in Elko right at the gold mines. Local high school students struggle to enroll in trade courses such as welding, carpentry, and automotive due to limited capacity, which prevents early skill development. Janel emphasized the importance of reaching students at a younger age to build career pathways and workforce readiness. She proposed exploring partnerships or advocating for a vocational high school in Elko, suggesting it could better serve non-college-bound youth and meet local industry needs.

Chair Perea asked if there is representation from the Department of Education on the full board. He noted that school districts can apply for state education grants to support vocational programs, as demonstrated by White Pine County in Ely. Decisions on implementing such programs are typically made at the local school board level. The subcommittee planned to invite a relevant representative to discuss this further. The speaker emphasized the need to bring trades back into high schools, particularly in rural areas, and questioned why more districts aren't applying for available funding.

Janel Thomas clarified that vocational classes do exist but are consistently over capacity, especially in growing areas like Spring Creek. Limited space, staffing shortages, and scheduling priorities—such as reserving weight training for football players—further restrict access. An AutoCAD class was recently dropped due to a lack of instructors. The speaker questioned whether, if the school board is not pursuing expansion, another agency could partner to encourage or support the development of a dedicated vocational school.

Chair Perea added that DETR can help fund and establish high school training programs, but typically only through one-time funding. Sustaining these programs requires long-term support, which has been lacking. He emphasized the need for legislative involvement to ensure ongoing funding and avoid repeating past mistakes of short-term, unsustainable program investments.

Vice Chair Estipona identified key barriers to expanding vocational education, including insufficient funding to hire qualified instructors who earn more in the private sector, and limited physical space for programs. These issues persist at both the high school and NSHE (postsecondary) levels. High equipment costs also hinder program development. NSHE is exploring shared resources and partial online delivery for certain programs, though hands-on trades like welding still require physical lab space. He acknowledged similar concerns in Reno and emphasized the need to continue these discussions.

David Schmidt shared that a contact from a California HVAC company shared that they prefer in-house training to teach their specific methods and team integration. Subsequently, a private training provider expressed interest in offering HVAC training locally. This highlights the need for employer feedback to determine if external training investments are worthwhile or if companies prefer to train internally. The workforce system should focus on employer engagement to identify areas where outside training adds value and avoid wasting resources. Having employers involved is crucial to align training with actual industry needs.

Ken Goodrich previously arranged EmployNV to present to the Southern Nevada HVAC trade group (Snarska), revealing most industry peers were unaware of workforce programs. The event had a large turnout and positive response. HVAC companies increasingly build their own apprentice programs due to declining trade school enrollment and low youth interest in manual labor jobs, despite high wages. Existing trade schools cannot meet labor demand, prompting investment in private HVAC schools in Las Vegas and Reno. State-sponsored schools struggle with enrollment, particularly in remote areas like Mesquite. Industry sees a need to better promote HVAC careers to youth to fill training programs. Targeting disconnected youth for HVAC training programs was identified as a strategic focus, as they fit the ideal profile for entry into the trade. Employers and training programs were encouraged to direct efforts toward this group, noting that HVAC workers can earn six-figure salaries within a few years.

Anthony Machabee discussed promoting trades as a viable alternative to university education, highlighting that trades offer quicker entry, avoid significant student debt, provide six-figure salaries, and offer job security against AI replacement—an opportunity that is more relevant now than in prior years.

Chair Perea stated that mass marketing and outreach must target both the labor force and employers.

Ken Goodrich mentioned the need to focus on grassroots outreach by leveraging industry contacts within trade associations to engage employers. Meetings were initiated with HVAC and plumbing groups to promote workforce programs, despite some resistance to government involvement. Continued work planned to broker additional meetings with trade organizations.

Chair Perea observed that public-private partnerships can be challenging to establish, but when successful, they can achieve significant positive outcomes.

Vice Chair Estipona noted that the traditional education-to-workforce model is shifting due to societal changes and resource limitations, such as overcrowded classes. The old solutions no

longer suffice, requiring new approaches like public-private partnerships. The public sector has been hesitant, and some industries remain independent-minded. Greater private sector involvement is needed to align training with employer needs. Encouraged fostering more dialogue between workforce boards, government, and industry to improve mutual understanding and develop effective solutions.

Chair Perea mentioned government agencies prioritize activities based on federal performance measures, which may not align with current workforce needs. He suggested subcommittees propose adding new performance metrics tied to funding to incentivize desired outcomes. He also emphasized that changing performance measures and linking funding can effectively steer agency focus and actions.

Ken Goodrich acknowledged HVAC as a strong career path for young men but highlighted severe labor shortages making staffing trucks extremely difficult. The company invests more resources in recruiting (22 HR staff) than in marketing for customers (6 marketing staff). He emphasized the need to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers willing to train. Most large HVAC businesses have established their own training programs due to ongoing workforce challenges. Ken recommended focusing on improving marketing and connection efforts to address the labor shortage.

David Schmidt highlighted growing challenges in finding workers due to slowing population growth in Nevada and nationally. Unlike past decades of rapid growth, the current labor pool is shrinking, making workforce matching more difficult. They noted a paradox between fears of AI taking jobs and a shortage of available workers. Unemployment rates are historically low, tightening the labor market. The speaker emphasized the need to adapt to current conditions rather than trying to return to past norms.

Chair Perea emphasized the need for coordinated efforts—engaging local boards, aligning with economic development priorities, and leveraging funding—to bridge workforce gaps. He discussed aligning curriculum and capacity in schools and colleges. Additionally, he noted occupational licensure as an unexpected barrier to employment and suggested it be considered in future workforce strategies.

Vice Chair Estipona added the importance of including the unemployment group in workforce discussions. They raised concerns about limited communication and outreach, noting a need to better inform unemployed individuals about career opportunities and earning potential. They suggested moving beyond basic requirements and instead providing meaningful guidance to help individuals achieve long-term employment.

Chair Perea asked David Schmidt if he knew of a name or two from WISS and UISS that could assist in answering questions for a future meeting.

Vice Chair Estipona asked if Patricia would be a good resource to speak.

David Schmidt highlighted the need to engage with individuals not currently connected to the workforce system. While 20,000 receive unemployment insurance, about 90,000 Nevadans are actively seeking work—most of whom aren't in the system. Many are re-entering the labor force after time away due to caregiving or other reasons and aren't eligible for benefits or visible in workforce data.

He emphasized the importance of identifying contacts within unemployment and workforce services to improve outreach. A previous survey with UNLV aimed to understand this group's barriers and behaviors, such as job searching directly on employer websites. David stressed that finding ways to reach and support this "invisible" population is key to improving employment outcomes in the state.

Louis DeSalvio shared his long-standing commitment to engaging youth in trades and highlighted successful past outreach efforts, including ads at DMVs and movie theaters, and QR codes linking to apprenticeship programs. He emphasized the need to re-engage middle and high school students early—ideally starting in middle school—through counselors, trade presentations, and school partnerships.

He mentioned barriers, such as CCSD's resistance to retired tradespeople teaching, and the shutdown of effective counselor engagement programs due to budget constraints. They suggested using grant funding to revive such initiatives.

He also stressed that many applicants lack long-term interest in trades, making recruitment difficult. He advocated for increasing awareness of trades as viable, debt-free career paths with good pay and benefits. Finally, he celebrated progress in Southern Nevada, where a long-term effort led to trades being reintegrated into schools, with ongoing investment in building trade-focused campuses.

Ken Goodrich emphasized that workforce recruitment is a year-round effort requiring early engagement in middle and high schools. He likened it to a sales and marketing job, stressing the importance of building long-term relationships and consistently recruiting to bridge workforce gaps.

7. **DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – NEW BUSINESS. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS**

Chair Perea who currently serves on the board for Jobs for Nevada's Graduates, noted that while J4NG has seen strong graduation outcomes, they are now focusing efforts on junior high levels to create earlier impact. He suggested inviting local boards to present their current work and how it aligns with seven identified priorities, with the goal of refining these into actionable items for full board planning. He emphasized the importance of focusing on a few key issues for greater impact rather than a broad "shotgun" approach.

He proposed involving subject matter experts—particularly from the Department of Education, GOED, DETR, and other agencies—to help address issues like capacity building at junior/high school levels and to explore the topic of ghost applicants.

Vice Chair Estipona emphasized the need to approach issues differently than in the past, especially from a private-sector perspective. He noted that while government partners often face significant constraints, those barriers can be addressed through collaboration—provided assumptions aren't made prematurely.

He stressed that while government processes may not always appear logical, progress can be made through patient, open dialogue. Nevada's smaller size and collaborative culture are seen as advantages. He concluded by encouraging full engagement from committee members to foster meaningful discussions and solutions.

Chair Perea agreed that communication is key and noted it's beneficial for local boards to hear from board members. He acknowledged that, like the private sector, the state sometimes holds incorrect assumptions. He supported bringing in experts from government and economic development to explore issues in more depth.

8. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT(S)

There were none.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Perea called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by **Vice Chair Estipona** and seconded by **Louis DeSalvio**. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.