STATE OF NEVADA
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

BARRIERS AND UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday April 22, 2026 - 2:00 p.m.

The GWDB Barriers and Underserved Populations Subcommittee held a public meeting on Microsoft TEAMS

Audio Conference Number: +1 775-321-6111
Phone Conference ID: 338 700 466#

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Merritt called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Tiffany Vazquez, OWINN, called roll and confirmed quorum.

Members Present
Vice Chair Jerrie Merritt
Aubree Barnum
George Gault
Hunberto Trueba
Ken Lawson
Michael Yoder
Kam Green
Bharman Gulati
Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner

Absent
Haith Johnson
Richard Neal
Suzanne Oetjen

Others Present
Marchele Sneed
Tiffany Vazquez
Elaine Rodriguez

3. First Public Comment

Vice Chair Merritt stated, "This is the first opportunity for public comment. No action may be taken upon a matter raised under this public comment period unless the matter itself has been

specifically included on the agenda as an action item, we will impose a three-minute time limit. Please clearly state and spell your full name. To provide public comment on any agenda item via telephone, the number is (775) 321-6111. When prompted, please provide the phone conference ID 338 700 466#."

There were none.

4. Approval of February 04, 2026, Meeting Minutes - (For possible action)

Vice Chair Merritt called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. It was moved by Vice Chair Merritt and seconded by Ken Lawson. The motion carried.

5. Presentation by College of Southern Nevada's (CSN) Department of Workforce & Economic Development on the Resilient Nevada Fund – a workforce grant impacting substance and justice involved individuals for fair chance opportunities – (Discussion/Informational only)

Vice Chair Merritt welcomed and recognized each presenter from CSN and DSS to share their presentation with the committee.

Stavan Corbett, Executive Director at the College of Southern Nevada's Division of Workforce, began by explaining that the Resilience of Nevada Fund was created from opioid settlement funding to support individuals impacted by substance use. The program focuses on workforce and economic development, providing opportunities and resources for people, especially those facing barriers due to past challenges to re-enter the workforce and succeed.

Sonia Mendez, Business Development Coordinator of CSN explained that the grant funded short-term training programs for individuals impacted by opioid use, with the 45 sprint to meet the grants measurable skill gains by enrolling 45 participants with the 70k budget. After traditional marketing failed, she shifted to direct, in-person outreach at transitional housing sites, which successfully increased engagement. This approach led to 46 enrollments, 28 graduates, and 12 employed participants, while coming in significantly under budget.

Michael Yoder, Workforce Development Chief started off by thanking CSN for their many years of partnership. He went on to describe how clients are connected to the program through outreach efforts like flyers distributed to community partners and TANF/SNAP recipients. Interested individuals' complete assessments and screenings to identify career interests and needs, then are referred to CSN for further evaluation and training. The process includes ongoing case management, collaboration between partners, and support through job placement, with careful screening to ensure participants pursue realistic career paths aligned with their backgrounds.

Tony Villalobos, Coordinator with Division of Workforce and Economic Development shared that the program "braids" funding from partners such as the Department of Social Services, Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, and the City of Las Vegas. These partners contribute through eligibility verification, co-enrollment, supportive services, and direct employer connections. Co-located staff and close coordination make the system efficient and responsive.

The program focuses on reducing barriers for underserved and recovery populations, ensuring participants can focus on training and career readiness. Activities include regular student outreach, assessments, training programs (like Canva classes), and job placement support such as resume help and employer engagement. The results so far have:

- 26 new participants enrolled
- 3 training sessions delivered
- 26 DSS barrier assessments completed
- 73 participants currently on the referral list
- 12 total employed students to date

Overall, the program's strength lies in its integrated support system, combining funding, training, and employer alignment to move participants from enrollment to meaningful employment.

Natalie Smyers, new member to DWED introduced additional goals which focuses on providing holistic, wraparound services alongside industry-aligned training to prepare individuals for high-demand careers. The program combines personalized support with targeted upskilling to improve career readiness and support Nevada's evolving workforce needs. The program exceeded expectations with 19 participants engaged in upskilling and reskilling, supported by services like transportation assistance, training materials, and job readiness support. Strong employer partnerships, including Matrix Modeling Group and Seamless Flooring, help create direct pathways to employment. Additionally, 19 participants from the Foundation for Recovery completed Canva training to strengthen digital and job-search skills, while ongoing collaboration with the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation connects participants to job opportunities.

Looking ahead, this program will maintain ongoing tracking and reporting of participant progress, including enrollment, attendance, program completion, and employment outcomes to support our data-driven decision-making accountability and continuous improvement. Ms. Smyers took a moment to introduce one of their shining star participants, Kiandra Barrett, to share her experience with the Community Health Worker Program.

Kiandra Barrett greeted the committee and was happy to speak about her experience with the Resilient for Nevada program, which fully funded her Community Health Worker certification, along with additional training in CPR, first aid, Narcan use, and emergency response. The program provided essential materials, skills, and support that helped her successfully transition into a new career and was recently hired as a community health worker.

In addition to her progress, she is a student at CSN, graduating with honors in psychology and planning to continue her education at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She credits the program for not only building her professional skills but also helping her develop strong networks and resources to better serve her community.

Stavan Corbett wanted to highlight that while employment placement can sometimes lag, they are actively partnering with the Judicial Court to help students expunge their records. This important step can remove barriers to employment. While working with Judge Cynthia Cruz and others, several students have already progressed through the process after completing their training. The initiative reflects strong collaboration among education, workforce, government, and community partners, showcasing how coordinated efforts can create meaningful opportunities and positive outcomes for participants and the broader Nevada community.

Vice Chair Merrit thanked the group for the presentation and opened the floor up for questions.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner asked how the "braiding" has allowed them to work or serve the individuals. And what were some of the opportunities for systems to invest in this type of work?

Stavan Corbett responded that by "braiding" multiple funding sources, such as internal funds, Title I, and Title III, they can stretch resources to serve more students while also providing comprehensive wraparound support. This approach allows them to quickly connect students to services like rental assistance, childcare, or job equipment without delays or gaps between funding streams. As a result, students can stay focused on their training and transition more smoothly into employment. The effort is also helping partner organizations document best practices and measure the overall impact of this coordinated, multi-agency approach.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner followed up with another question, wondering whether, as the program scales, it consistently encounters barriers like housing or utilities that one traditional funding source can't address, and whether these challenges are typical enough that the committee should consider them when planning how to improve outcomes.

Stavan Corbett acknowledged that there is room for further collaboration, especially around improving response times for support services. While case managers have learned which partners can respond more quickly, there's a need for more consistent and equitable turnaround across all resources. He emphasized that unlike others who can absorb financial setbacks, many students need immediate assistance, so identifying the right resources quickly is critical. The infrastructure and knowledge are in place, but there's an opportunity to strengthen coordination and timeliness to better support student success.

Vice Chair Merritt called for additional questions. Since there were none, she moved on to the next agenda item.

6. Discussion on Workforce Challenges in the Rural Areas –

(Discussion/Informational only)

Vice Chair Merritt introduced Chrisi Hanner, supervisor of the Ely EmployNV Business Career Hub.

Chrisi Hanner provided a little background history about living and working in Ely. Stating that rural Nevada communities like Ely are unique, yet face distinct challenges due to isolation, including limited job diversity, rising housing costs driven by higher mining wages, lack of transportation, and difficulty accessing or sharing information. While new funding and building a relationship with Great Basin College are beginning to create hope and expand training opportunities, outreach often relies on personal, grassroots efforts rather than digital systems. She stressed that rural areas operate differently from urban ones, and more tailored approaches, stronger communication methods, and better integration between rural and urban systems are needed to fully support these communities.

Vice Chair Merritt invited questions for Chrisi Hanner.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner pointed out a few opportunities that she took from Chrisi's discussion. Highlighting the need for improved employer communication strategies, the impact of housing costs on the workforce, opportunities for job diversification as part of economic development, and the importance of transportation. Especially partnerships funded through SEP with Great Basin. With her question being, do you know if those entities, whether it's housing, transportation, or higher education, are there any convening in the rules that bring them together to discuss the interdependency of their work or how their efforts are related as you try to move the needle around workforce.

Chrisi Hanner replied that there is some support for small businesses in Nevada through NSBC, particularly aimed at reaching new businesses. However, outreach to existing (older) businesses appears limited or unclear which is not organized or coordinated in the way it's being discussed.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner then asked while leveraging social media before pivoting to canvassing and knocking on doors, where the 800 individuals on Facebook were directed to and what was the result of it.

Chrisi Hanner noted that in rural areas, people prefer simple processes and often resist more complex systems or changes. Even when encouraged to engage (like listing job orders), some employers are reluctant, so support is adapted to meet them where they are. There's a strong, resilient local culture that values comfort and familiarity, making change slow but creating a unique and rewarding environment to work in.

Michael Yoder mentioned an upcoming career event that will be held at the Ely Correctional facility. It will be hosted by DETR and EmployNV. He wanted to share this information with Ms. Hanner since Great Basin College is near Ely with a potential approach to partner with Great Basin College to offer short-term, non-degree credentialing programs aligned with regional workforce needs and braid funding to assist individuals in Ely. The key step would be identifying the most relevant jobs and aligning training pathways to meet employer demand in the Ely area.

Chrisi Hanner stated that Great Basin College offers training programs in high-demand fields such as diesel mechanics, electrical trades, and now construction certification. These programs have been well received, with strong positive response indicating solid interest and workforce relevance in those areas.

Vice Chair Merritt called for further questions. There were none.

7. New business from subcommittee members – (Discussion/Informational only)

Vice Chair Merritt recognized **Dr. Tiffany Tyler Garner** who suggested that board has an opportunity to, as a policy body or entity, make recommendations that would support them to address the things they're seeing in their communities or their landscape, whether it's a recommendation to include periodic convenings whether it's semi-annually or quarterly. To review employment and unemployment, to focus on convening some of the stakeholders in some of the areas of need, like transportation or communication.

Vice Chair Merritt agreed with Dr. Tyler Garner, emphasizing that the issues being raised particularly in Ely represent chances to better support the community and provide needed assistance to residents, turning workforce and service gaps into actionable opportunities for improvement.

8. Second Public Comment

There were none.

9. Adjournment

Vice Chair Merritt called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Michael Yoder and seconded by Humberto Trueba. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m.