STATE OF NEVADA
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

FULL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 20, 2026 - 2:00 p.m.

Location:
Nevada State Building
Governor's Conference Room - 4th floor
1 State of Nevada Way
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Video Conference Location:
DETR SAO Auditorium
500 E. Third St.
Carson City, NV 89713

1. Call to Order - Opening Remarks and Pledge of Allegiance

The full board meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 20, 2026. The meeting was held at the Governor's Conference Room in the Nevada State Building and video conferenced at the DETR SAO Auditorium in Carson City.

Chair Soderberg reminded anyone that speaks to identify themselves for the record.

2. Roll Call

Tiffany Vazquez, OWINN called roll and confirmed quorum.

Members Present
Don Soderberg, Chair
Edward Estipona, Vice Chair
Marchele Sneed
Tracy Brown-May, Assemblymember
Scott Black, Councilman
Robert Benner
Natalie Brown
Irene Bustamante-Adams
Lou DeSalvio
Drazen Elez
Toni Giddens
Jimmy Jacobson
Sarah Johns
Haith Johnson
Paul Kaplan
Ken Lawson
Tony Machabee
Jerrie Merritt

Rick Neal
Suzanne Oetjen
Nancy Olsen
John Parel
Jeff Sutich
Janel Thomas
Humberto Trueba
Michael Yoder

Absent
Dina Neal, Senator
Dennis Perea, Councilman
Aubree Barnum
Susan Brager
George Gault
Andrew MacKay
Chris Smith
Jesse Wadhams

Others Present
Kara Abe
Cecilia Alonso
Arianna Florence
Kimberly Jadidi
Ila Friedenthal
Zorrawa Jefferson
Elaine Rodriguez
Tiffany Vazquez
Craig Von Collenberg

3. First Public Comment

Chair Soderberg stated, "Members of the public are invited to provide comment at this time. No action may be taken upon a matter raised under this public comment period unless the matter has been specifically included on the agenda as an action item. We will impose a three-minute time limit. Please clearly state your name for the record."

Zorrawa Jefferson made a public comment. Please see attached.

Chair Soderberg asked Marchele Sneed about the Workforce Summit happening in October.

Marchele Sneed announced that event registration is now open and noted that sponsorship opportunities are still available. She will reach out to selected members to serve on a panel. She reiterated that this is a statewide convening bringing together education, workforce, and economic development partners to discuss in-demand industries and strategies to advance career pathways.

4. Approval of June 18, 2026, minutes - (For possible action)

Chair Soderberg called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. It was moved by **Jerrie Merritt** and seconded by **Lou DeSalvio**. The motion carried, with abstention from Jeff Sutich, who was not a member of the Board at that time.

5. Full Board and Subcommittee Updates -

(Discussion/Informational only)

Chair Soderberg welcomed three new members; Chris Smith, Jeff Sutich, and Jimmy Jacobson to the board. Rick Neal has been appointed Chair of the Barriers and Underserved Populations Subcommittee. Janel Thomas has been appointed Vice Chair of the Employer Engagement & Economic Development Subcommittee.

6. Presentation on the Status and Achievement of Women's 2026 Report -

(Discussion/Informational only)

Ila Friedenthal, President & CEO, Nevada Women's Fund presented a comprehensive analysis conducted in partnership with the Guinn Center. This interactive report serves as the first statewide benchmark in two decades. The report identifies significant benchmarks in female workforce participation, wage gaps, and social barriers, particularly in rural verse urban counties.

Ken Lawson asked how these resources available currently being advertised to ensure access?

Ila Friedenthal acknowledged that the Nevada Women's Fund leverages strong local partnerships and a four-decade history to drive awareness of its scholarship program. While brand recognition remains high in Washoe County through intergenerational word-of-mouth and educator engagement, rural outreach focuses on intentional relationship-building and yearly events in Elko County, Hawthorne, Douglas County, and Yerington.

Ken Lawson asked about activity in Southern Nevada.

Ila Friedenthal noted that Nevada Women's Fund supports 16 of the 17 counties, excluding Clark County. The money lasts longer in the 16 counties in northern and rural Nevada.

Ken Lawson raised a question on the causes of the gender wage gap, do women apply less frequently to higher-paying positions and industries?

Ila Friedenthal mentioned that there is no simple solution. She highlighted four essential pillars for workforce progress.

- Visibility: Celebrating women in leadership roles and ensuring representation so younger women can see themselves in those positions.
- Access: Providing allies, mentors, and the necessary education/licensure to enter high-level conversations.
- Culture: Shifting industrial environments (i.e., mining and construction) to be welcoming, including practical changes like providing female-specific Personal Protective Equipment.
- Accountability: Maintaining transparency regarding wage gaps and diversity numbers within organizations.

Ken Lawson thanked Ila for including safety in the presentation. The work environment is not always safe and employers should take that into consideration.

Michael Yoder spoke of past joint outreach initiatives that yielded low female participation despite available opportunities. Local employers such as auto repair facilities are actively seeking entry-level female technicians and working to transform male-dominated shop cultures into welcoming environments. Future outreach campaigns must directly address industry stigmas by actively encouraging women and reassuring them that they are capable, supported, and welcome in non-traditional trades.

Ila Friedenthal agreed. The Nevada Women's Fund targets visibility and representation as a core pillar, recognizing that seeing women in non-traditional careers inspires broader participation. To support this, the organization maintains a dual social media strategy: engaging corporate partners on professional platforms regarding business initiatives, while leveraging channels like Instagram to showcase scholarship recipients in non-traditional fields to connect with younger audiences.

Humberto Trueba mentioned mindset. Outreach must shift focus from industry entry to business ownership. In addition to educational guidance, financial support is needed to build their business.

Ila Friedenthal agreed, highlighting their mission statement is empowering women to achievement, to believe in themselves and have the confidence.

Vice Chair Estipona encouraged board members to leverage local connections in Clark County to expand accessibility of programs to the South. He asked about potential future plans.

Ila Friedenthal addressed the historic North-South regional divide, clarifying that while the foundation operates with a core staff of four and a 35-member working board, it is actively building local relationships in Clark County and rural communities (such as Elko and Winnemucca) to expand its footprint and impact statewide.

Nevada Women's Fund has a collaborative approach. Corporate partners like Western Alliance Bank and Tesla fund directed scholarships. The Fund facilitates recipient matching without taking administrative fees, providing donors with direct control over their workforce talent pipeline.

Ila noted the Nevada's Women's Fund is a strategic community partner driven by mutual return on investment. She highlighted direct partnerships with sector leaders including the Nevada Mining Association and Manufacture NV.

Sarah Johns expressed appreciation for Ila's leadership and drive in growing the Nevada Women's Fund and expanding its reach. The report is an essential tool for understanding women's participation in the workforce and guiding future policy decisions.

7. Update on Employer Engagement and Economic Development Subcommittee's Current Work - (Discussion/Informational only)

Marchele Sneed, Executive Director, OWINN and Natalie Brown, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development and Community Colleges, NSHE gave a high-

level overview of the Workforce Pell grant, a federal initiative expanding financial aid to include short term, non-degree training programs effective July 1st.

All Programs must be offered by accredited, Title IV-eligible providers and demonstrate a positive return on investment. Programs must have operated in their current form for at least one year before applying and meet all federal and state requirements. In Nevada institutions must have a data sharing agreement in place with the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation at least 12 months prior to submitting their program to OWINN for approval.

To ensure funding supports programs aligned with workforce needs, certain programs and conditions are excluded including remedial, ESL, correspondence, study abroad courses and programs offered by unaccredited institutions.

Below is the Program Eligibility Requirement:

- 150-599 clock hours (credit equivalent)
- At least 8 weeks but less than 15 weeks
- Must be on the ETPL list
- High-skill, high-wage, or in-demand sector/occupation in Nevada
- 70% completion rate
- 70% placement rate
- Tuition and fees cannot exceed value added earnings *(adjusted median earning - 150% of the federal poverty guideline)*

The Workforce Pell application process will be administered in **two distinct phases**. *Phase 1* will begin on July 1, 2026, and will be limited to institutions within the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). *Phase 2* will subsequently expand eligibility to all non-credit training programs. Implementing a phased approach ensures that the initial review period is used to evaluate, refine, and strengthen application procedures prior to broader statewide implementation.

Approval of Workforce Pell programs occur through three primary levels of oversight:

1. The college or training provider must be a Title IV-eligible institution and fall within the institution's accredited offerings
2. OWINN, on behalf of the Governor, will ensure alignment with labor market needs and recognized credential requirements. This also includes approval through the Governor's Workforce Development Board before the Governor's final approval.
3. After the state's approval, the final authority rests with the U.S. Department of Education.

Information for Workforce Pell can be found on the OWINN website https://owinn.nv.gov/workforce-pell/#. All Workforce Pell Applications and supporting documentation must be submitted via email to nvworkforcepell@detr.nv.gov

John Parel asked for thoughts on the current ETPL list. Would different tiers or levels need to be created?

Marchele Sneed added that the programs will have to be on the ETPL list. Some of the college programs are already on the ETPL.

Natalie Brown mentioned that over 200 NSHE programs are currently on the list, but not every one of those programs will meet eligibility for Workforce Pell.

Vice Chair Estipona spoke on the challenges of tracking placements. He asked if there was a federal mandate in place.

Marchele Sneed stated that we don't have the data infrastructure in place to capture that information, Initially, program staff will be required to follow up.

Natalie Brown mentioned using the program as a catalyst to request enhanced wage record data Nevada collects sector-level employment data but lacks the occupation-level data required for workforce health reporting. A cross-agency team, including all NSHE community colleges, has submitted a grant application to support data collection and outreach over the next four years. The state is exploring closer collaboration with NPWR partners and potential legislative options to address current data gaps. These efforts could also help secure enhanced wage record data, including cross-state information.

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Marchele Sneed added it will take legislation and data infrastructure.

John Parel noted that DETR is in the process of modernizing a case management system. He inquired about ways to track everything.

Vice Chair Estipona reports his hires on a monthly basis to the State of Nevada; minimal information is required. He doesn't want to see any of the institutions being disqualified from getting the Pell Grant again. He suggested going for industries that are true partners until others can report better.

Natalie Brown highlighted the importance for institutions to coordinate with local workforce boards, employer partners, and industry sector groups to determine program needs and ensure alignment. Some existing programs may qualify, and institutions submitting them understand the outreach required during this interim period before state-level data infrastructure is in place. While opportunities are open, the qualifications and processes will be restrictive early on as the framework is developed.

Ken Lawson asked about the wage criteria and what is considered a good or high paying job.

Natalie Brown informed the wage criteria is 150% of the poverty level nationally. She will look up what that wage dollar amount is and get back to him. On the other hand, the cost of the program cannot exceed the earnings potential that the student can earn.

Chair Soderberg requested for details to be sent to all the board members to get some type of instructions a few weeks ahead of time to know what the role is, how to approach these items, and what to look for in order to vote properly

Marchele Sneed noted that OWINN would send out ahead of time. GWDB members would need to read through the coursework and see if it aligns.

Tony Machabee asked for information on the time frame we are looking at before GWDB members will need input.

Marchele Sneed noted that the board's role will come into play once programs have submitted their applications. After oversight from NSHE, OWINN, and the local boards, the program will present to the GWDB. Board members will get the material prior to the meeting.

Tony Machabee asked if the board will vote this year.

Marchele Sneed responded that GWDB could potentially vote this year since the schools do have the application. It depends on when the program is submitted.

8. New Business from Full Board Members - (Discussion/Informational only)

Marchele Sneed announced OWINN's 2026 Nevada Workforce Summit that will be held October 27–28 at the Durango Casino and Resort. Save-the-date notices have been distributed, and the office is seeking business sponsorships to support the event and advance statewide workforce solutions. Sponsorship packages are being shared with board members, who are encouraged to help identify potential sponsors and promote attendance.

9. Second Public comment

There were none.

10. Adjournment

Chair Soderberg called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by **Vice Chair Estipona** and seconded by **John Parel.** The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.