

Workforce Development Board (WDB)
Merced County DWI
West Mark
441 Business Park Way
Atwater, CA 95301
December 11, 2024, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.



www.worknetmerced.com

Members Present:

Leslie Abasta-Cummings
Steve Hobbs
Will Kelly
Joshua Lepper
Amie Marchini
Jack Mobley

Dale Johns
Chudy Nnebe
Jorge De Nava
Mark Hendrickson
Joe R. Perez
Vinton Thengvall

Steve Tietjen
Chris Vitelli
Tim O'Neill
Greg Vincelet
Chris Winek

Members Absent: Michael Altomare, Michelle Skoor, Jeff Segars, Matthew Lee, David Ness, Daron McDaniel

Others Present:

Erick Serrato, Linda Gutierrez, Stacie Tury, Valente Huitron, Yang Her, Patricia Hinson, Robert Theurer, Mary Whited, Steve Stevenson, Luis Sobrevilla, Vilma Reynoso, Dr. Thomas Pogue, Yolanda Meraz, Ernesto Rodriguez, Jose Velasquez, Jonathan Munoz

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1. **Call to Order/ Roll Call:** The WDB Chair, Ms. Leslie Abasta-Cummings called the meeting to order at 2:08pm.
 2. **Public Opportunity to Speak:** None
 3. **Host Welcome Statement:** Mr. Tim Hanson welcomed the Board Members to West Mark. He noted that he is very appreciative of all the support he has received from Merced County WDB. To include the partnership with OJT's training as well as the wealth of information received and support from DWI Staff.
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Board Member Jorge De Nava, presented a gift to Stephen Xiong, a youth who was sent to training through the Empower program in which he completed his Welding training through CVOC and received his AWS certification upon completion. He attended a tour of West Mark with his class and was invited to an interview for a welding position. Stephen was hired with West Mark as a Welder and will receive training for the position in Alaska.
 4. **Approval of Minutes (March 27, 2024):** Vinton /Mobley approved the meeting minutes as published.
Abstain: Chis Winek.
 5. **Open Announcements:**

6. **Chair Comments:** The Chair announced that Mr. Greg Vincelet is retiring and extended her gratitude for his contributions to the Workforce Development Board and the time he dedicated to us. His presence on the Board has been incredibly valuable.

Erick expressed his appreciation to Mr. Vincelet for his years of service on the Board and presented him with a gift.

Mr. Greg Vincelet stated that it has been an honor and pleasure working with everybody on this Board and educating him about workforce development.

7. **Director's Comments:** Erick mentioned that today's meeting will include discussions about CA Jobs First/ North Valley THRIVE. He also noted that Mr. Thomas Pogue, who is in attendance, will speak about the selected industry sectors and their significance. Additionally, there will be a trivia game focused on the economy of Merced County. The Board members will split into groups based on their outlook for the economy in the coming years—whether they believe it will improve or decline. Each group's choice will lead to a series of related questions.

8. **California Jobs First (NVT) Update:** Staff shared with members the following information. The North Valley THRIVE Strategic Plan identified three core industries sectors as follows:

- ✓ Advance Manufacturing
- ✓ Bioeconomy/Bio-Industrial
- ✓ Clean Energy

Over the next two years the work is Implementation Phase and will focus on the exploration and development of these three industry sectors.

Dr. Thomas Pogue, of the University of the Pacific, was the lead author of the Strategic Plan. He shared with members key insights regarding sector selection.

9. **Local and Regional Plan:** The Regional Plan development process includes multiple public meetings, economic analysis and review by the workforce board directors of the Region's eight workforce boards. The Regional draft Plan will be available across the Central Valley beginning on February 7, 2025, and will be available for public comment on February 19, 2025, through March 20, 2025.

The Merced County Workforce Development Local Plan will be drafted by staff in collaboration with a consultant, the Munoz Group. There are two community forums facilitated by DWI Staff focused on jobseekers and partnerships. One will be held at Los Banos College Campus on January 23, 2025, from 4-6pm, and the next second one is scheduled on January 29, 2025, at Merced County Administration Building, from 4-6pm. The draft Plan will be completed by March 5, 2025. The Local Plan will be available for public comment on March 17, 2025, through April 18, 2025.

The Local and Regional Plan will be available on the Worknet website, www.worknet.com. The Plans must be submitted to the State by April 25, 2025, but no later than June 27, 2025.

Staff requested a motion to authorize staff to pursue the proposed Local Plan process.

Motion by Steve Tietjen, seconded by Chris Winek to authorize staff to pursue the proposed Local Plan process; carried by unanimous roll call vote.

10. MCWDB-Worknet Marketing and Communication Strategy: In early 2024, Merced County initiated a procurement process, receiving nine proposals. A review team evaluated these submissions and shortlisted three for individual meetings. The Workforce Board has selected JPW Communications, a San Diego-based firm specializing in public sector communications and marketing. JPW will begin its work in late December 2024, with the initial deliverables due for review by the Workforce Board in June 2025.

11. Board Discussion: 2025-2027 Economic Projection and Service Response: WDB Members participated in an interactive design session about the Merced County economic outlook and potential response in workforce strategies.

Members feedback:





1. What factors will produce a BETTER economy than we have today. Are there policies you imagine will spur this? Other State, Local or Federal changes?

WHY

Some deregulations
Costs will stabilize
Inflation will decrease
Cost to borrow will decrease
More affordable than the rest of California, incoming population
Support new Industry & Support a MC footprint
Infrastructure Investment
Clean energy
Fewer regulations (FED)
Conflict between FEDs and State
Less Regulations
Tax Cuts
Cheaper fuel
Less government spending

2. What do you think will look different. More business openings, lower unemployment, more investment? New construction projects, or something else?

WHAT

More fracking
Federal Taxes  State 
Regs Fed  State 
Water
Climate change
Economy

Flat is a win
High Speed Rail
ACE Train
Patriot
Infrastructure
Housing expansion

3. Who do you imagine will fare WORST from this economy. Existing employers or new businesses? New Merced County residents or long-time residents? The most certified or skilled workers, or the least?

WHO

The marginalized and undocumented
Fed everyone
California Low-income folks
Merced College
ALL
Those employers that pay a living wage
Certified and skilled workers

4. Thinking about how we might respond.

Worknet/Workforce Board provides many services. Considering your outlook on the economy, what might we do differently in response? A new target customer? A change in service strategy? More of something or less of another?

Service: Information about how the economy is doing, provided to job seekers, businesses and education partners:

Publish our LMI

Career Counseling:

Rebranding manufacturing careers

Skills: Workshops and Vocational Training

Earn to learn

Small business support, such as hiring assistance, grants, and connection to new markets

Support employers that follow Good Jobs principle

- 12. Youth Internship Programming:** Staff highlighted that you can find detailed information about the Youth Internship program in your meeting packet.

13. Early Childhood/Childcare Program Update: Staff mentioned that a couple of years ago, the Workforce Development Board (WDB) was informed about receiving a grant from the Irvine Foundation to support a project called Nurture. This initiative aimed to accelerate the pathways to licensure in collaboration with our local referral agency, the Merced County Office of Education (MCOE). Ms. Brooks presented to us about the creation of an online training program for childcare entrepreneurs, which has proven to be successful. We are currently implementing this program in Merced County and are proud to be the only board that has integrated it into our WIOA system.

Through this collaboration, we are addressing key challenges in Early Childhood Education alongside the Merced Adult School, the Merced County Office of Education, and Worknet.

Early Childhood Education Partnership: MCOE conducted interviews and selected twenty (20) participants for the program. Currently, Worknet has enrolled 17 of these selected individuals, while three have not yet responded or declined the position. Upon completion of their internship/work experience, the participants will be eligible to apply for their permits and, assuming there are no personnel issues, will be hired by MCOE as full-time employees at a starting wage of over \$20 per hour.

Worknet/Nurture Program: We have successfully enrolled 29 participants in the program. Currently, seven (7) are undergoing training, while 17 have launched their own childcare facilities. On average, those who have opened their childcare centers are earning around \$62,000 annually. One inspiring success story from this group features a woman who formerly worked as a painter, earning approximately \$2,000 per month. Since opening her childcare facility, she is now bringing in \$9,380 each month.

This childcare program is making a significant impact by promoting economic stability for children, families, and the community. It's incredibly rewarding to be part of this transformative process, and we would like to express our gratitude to Merced Adult School, UC Merced, and MCOE for their collaboration and support.

14. AJCC Facility Planning: TABLED

15. WIOA and Workforce Policy Updates: Staff have drafted and updated the following Local Policy for review, discussion and Approval.

On-the-Job Training: This policy outlines the revised standards for the mandated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) requirements in an OJT (On-the-Job Training) within our learning and development framework.

Current Policy:

Ninte-percent (90%) of the learning objectives must be successfully completed or met in order for the OJT to qualify as an MSG in the Caljobs system.

Proposed Policy:

Employer verification that at minimum one successful learning objective must be completed or met in order for the OJT to qualify as an MSG in the Caljobs system.

Request for a motion to approve the Proposed Policy, On-the-Job Training.

Motion by Joshua Lepper, seconded by Steve Hobbs to approve the Proposed Policy On-the Job Training; carried by unanimous roll call vote.

16. Future Agendas & Meetings: The following dates were identified for the 2025 calendar year.

WDB Meetings: Meetings take place on the last Thursday of each quarter, with adjustments as necessary. The meeting are scheduled from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Locations hosted at Industry/Employer/Training throughout the County.

Meeting Dates: March 27, June 26, September 25, and December 11, 2025.

Executive Committee Board Meetings: Meetings are scheduled on Mondays during odd-numbered months from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

The location is Merced County Workforce Development Board Administration Offices, in person.

Meeting Dates: January 27, March 10, May 12, July 14, September 8, and November 10, 2025.

Request for a motion to approve the 2025 Workforce Development Board and Executive Committee Meeting dates.

Motion by Steve Tietjen, seconded by Chris Vitelli to approve the 2025 Workforce Development Board and Executive Committee Meeting dates; carried by unanimous roll call vote

17. **Bylaws Review:** Staff has requested the establishment of an Ad-Hoc Committee to review and propose revisions to the Workforce Development Board Bylaws. This includes aspects such as member composition, roles and responsibilities, and reimbursement policies. The following WDB members have volunteered to join the Ad-Hoc Bylaws Committee: Steve Hobbs and Jorge De Nava.
18. **Adjournment:** The Chair, Ms. Leslie Abasta-Cummings, adjourned the meeting at 3:32 p.m. A tour of West Mark was conducted following the meeting.