



WDB Meeting Minutes (Hybrid)

March 19, 2026

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.

Members Present

Jenny Batista
Peggy Kershner
Nic Thomas
Cindy Line
Ashley Chambers
Kristina Houck
Ryan Breisch
Christy Pisker
Crystal Houser
Debra Millman
Christy Pisker
Ed Bernitsky
Kimberly Baskett
Dr. Michael Stauffer
Dr. Radha Pyati, Ph.D.

Members Absent

Marianne Brown Egolf
Kimberly Schneider
Patricia Shermont
William Dorward
Michael Fischetti
Alexia Pursley
Brian Noecker
Karyn Troxell
Barry Unger

WDB Staff Present

Amber Columbo
Rory Stevenson
Jesenia Santos

Guests Present

Pamela Menet	County of Berks Director of Community & Economic Development
Derek Harris	County of Berks Economic Development Coordinator
Nick Shirk	Education Data Systems Inc. Regional Director of Operations
Aidelsa Calaman	PA CareerLink® Berks County Site Administrator
Dilika Tissera	PA CareerLink® Berks County Adult & Dislocated Worker Program Director
Elizabeth Reddinger	PA CareerLink® Berks County EARN Program Director
Robert Kerecz	PA CareerLink® Berks County Employment Services Team Supervisor
Laurie Miller	Governor Mifflin School Board Representative

This meeting was held as hybrid, via MS Townhall and in-person at PA CareerLink® Berks County on March 19, 2026. WDB Chairperson, Ms. Batista called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m.

Ms. Columbo announced that the meeting was being recorded for minute purposes only and would be deleted after their completion. Board members were asked to state their names when commenting, making, or seconding any motion to assist staff in taking the minutes.

Ms. Batista asked the members if there were any items the board would like to have moved from the consent agenda. Hearing none the board will move to adopt the consent agenda. No objections. Ms. Batista asked if any members would like to abstain from accepting the agenda with one abstention from Ms. Kershner.

I. Executive Committee Report

Ms. Batista then invited Ms. Columbo to comment on the Budget vs Expenditures report. Ms. Columbo reported on the budget and actual expenditure results through January 2026, showing all expenses are within budget.

Next, Ms. Columbo presented a revised PY2025 budget with the following changes: (1) Youth Reentry grant ended December 31, 2025, \$9,883 wasn't expended (2) EARN remodel project was procured through the county, saving \$20,000 added to direct charges (3) The Emerging Workforce Study (TPMA contract) was adjusted to actuals (4) The Community Outreach under the Operator had a reduction due to staff vacancy (5) Tec Centro had a DE-Obligation due to not enrolling enough participants into training in the first half of the program year.

Ms. Columbo asked the committee for a recommendation to approve the PY2025 revised budget as presented. Ms. Millman motioned for a recommendation, and Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. All committee members affirmatively voted their approval. There were no objections, but two abstentions from Ms. Kershner and Mr. Breisch.

Ms. Columbo reviewed PY25 Quarter 2 statewide performance metrics. The State and Berks did receive the desired "green check mark" for Q2.

II. Planning Committee Report

Ms. Millman shared that the committee is working on a matrix of recommendations for the Berks Workforce 2030 to use as a guide to keep the 4-year plan on track. The recommendations should provide valuation guidance on the plan progression of objectives as we move into a required plan to update reporting in PY2026. Dr Weitz recommended that the WDB assessment of plan fulfillment should be prioritized into key performance sections.

III. Access & Opportunities Committee Report

Ms. Kershner referred the board to the "By the Numbers" report and provided a brief update. The numbers noted a decrease in business engagement in healthcare and construction utility industries, overall foot traffic and virtual utilization. The Spring Job Fair will take place on April 28, 2026, and will be held at the Redner's Event Center at the Reading Fightin' Phils Stadium from 1pm to 5pm. To date the goal is to have 80 employers; in attendance and access to two floors to adequately space out attendees.

Ms. Kershner reported PA CareerLink® on the move is taking PA CareerLink® services to community organizations and to different areas of the county so that it reduces the barriers for folks being able to access those services. Phase 1 of this initiative continues to build relationships and establish locations. Staff are taking their laptops to locations so job seekers can access their accounts, watch welcome orientations and answer any general questions about programming. A business services information section has been added for employers, so this initiative serves both employers and job seekers.

Ms. Menet stated the County of Berks, through its Department of Agriculture, will hold a special event at the Redners Event Center on June 16, 2026, at 5 pm and invited PA CareerLink® to attend.

IV. Youth Committee Report

Ms. Columbo reported that the 3rd "Career Fair for Undecided Seniors" is scheduled to take place on April 16, 2026, from 10am – 2pm. The career fair will be held at the County of Berks South Campus location. Invitations to school districts and business entities were sent out during the week of January 30, 2026. To date 11 out of 18 school districts and 14 employers will be participating in this event. The goal is to engage with over 100 students and have 20 employers present in addition to local colleges participating in this event.

V. Training & Industry Partnership Committee Report

Mr. Stevenson reported on the Training and Industry Partnership Committee and informed the board that the current obligation of the WDB's allocation of \$100,000 in IWT/RA matching funds for PY2025. To date, five applications have been confirmed totaling in the amount of 66,305.11 or = 66.3% obligated. Of these obligated funds, \$56,945.61 has been expended in reimbursements to approved employer applicants. Mr. Stevenson confided that he is currently working with new applicants, and he expects IWT/RA fund obligations to increase. He is actively working with approved applicants to process eligible reimbursement in a timely manner so that PY2025 obligated funds are fully expended by June 30.

Ms. Columbo shared that the Business Services Team (BST) has a goal of 20 on-the-job training (OJT) agreements for PY2025. Currently at the end of February 43% has been expended of the \$100,000 of those training funds. The team continues to engage with high priority occupations and businesses to help increase OJT contracts.

VI. Director of Workforce Report

Ms. Columbo shared her Director of Workforce report by reminding members of the monthly board member engagement sessions to help increase board member engagement and understand what board members do in their day-to-day roles. The next group will meet on April 13, 2026, at Penske.

Ms. Columbo reported on some grant news that the Workforce Board applied for a Veterans Employment grant through Labor & Industry to serve veterans and their spouses. The grant award is \$200,000 with a goal to serve 50 Individuals from April 1, 2026, through November 30, 2027. Our Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker (EDSI) will be the contractor providing services. The board also applied for an Industry Partnership Grant, with a focus to continue our Healthcare IP and allow for healthcare related work experience/internship opportunities. If awarded, this grant would start July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, with a continued partnership with GRCA.

Ms. Columbo shared a new Workforce Development Area quarterly report provide by the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations (BWPO), Department of Labor & Industry. This quarterly report captures participant and employer data from our Commonwealth System of Record.

Ms. Columbo reported that the industry specific micro job fair series held in February had a total of 603 job seekers within a 4-day span. Manufacturing had 288 jobseekers with 13 employers, transportation had 124 job seekers with 12 employers, healthcare had 113 jobseekers with 13 employers and lastly construction had 78 job seekers with 6 employers.

Following the Director of the Workforce Report, Ms. Columbo opened the market intelligence discussion.

Mr. Breisch shared that the monthly engagement sessions provided a great opportunity to network on a smaller scale with board members.

Mr. Thomas reported in the staffing world work trends have been steady and similar to last year.

M Pisker shared she has seen a need for electricians and in skilled trades. Her team has created employee resource groups to help target a younger demographic.

Ms. Batista stated she participated in a generational differences training which has helped her enhance her communication style when speaking to others.

Mr. Breisch announced the Literacy Council, Reading Area Community College, and Tec Centro will be having an event on April 30th to discuss with employers services they provide to help the current workforce.

Public Comment – Ms. Columbo then asked for any comment from the public. Ms. Miller recommended a book titled “The Anxious Generation” for anyone working with or teaching young people. There were no further comments from the public.

CY2025 Meetings - The next 2026 Berks Workforce Development Board Meeting will be held as follows:

- Thursday June 18, 2026 (In-Person @ PA CareerLink® Berks County)
- Friday September 18, 2026 (In-Person @ County of Berks South Campus)
- Friday December 18, 2026 (Hybrid: In-Person @ County of Berks South Campus & Virtual: MS Townhall)

Following a motion to adjourn, Ms. Batista announced that the meeting officially adjourned at 8:53 am.