Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 15, 2026
8:00AM - 9:30AM
United Way Building - The Rochester Room
Board members also attended via Zoom

Attendees: Mary Beth Artuso, Bert Brinkerhoff, Leslie Collison, Anthony DiTucci, Heather Gole, Janelle Harris, Glen Jeter, Edward Kurowski, Michael Nevins, Gary Rogers, Jose Rosario III, Melisssa Suchodolski, Richard Turner, Kearston Vanderstyne, Randy Andre, Dr. Robin Cole, Rodric Cox-Cooper, Rick Donovan, John Brach (Proxy for Mayor Malik Evans), Lia Festenstein, Dr. Shirley Green, Judy Honan, Ana Liss, Grant Malone, Joseph Morelle, Angelica Perez-Delgado, David Scott

Absent: Dana Abramson, Marco Altieri, Sergio Esteban, Tyrone Reaves, Dr. Charlene Wilson, Shawn Futch, Dr. Roosevelt Mareus, Tiffany Owens, Dr. Patricia Stovall

Staff: Dave Seeley, Tricia Campbell, Viatta Carter, Marisol Cruz-Melendez, Jeanine Frenz, Theodore Jordan, Lee Koslow, Behiye Mansour, Mary McKeown, Kyle McCarthy, Janelle Snow, Andrew Zalikowski (NYSDOL)

Guests: Janine Corea, HR Works

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Melissa Suchodolski at 8:02 AM.

Welcome New Board Member:

Dave Seeley welcomed our new board member:

- Leslie Collison, Senior Director, Talent Acquisition & Employment Services, University of Rochester

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the June 16, 2026 meeting minutes was made by Bert Brinkerhoff and seconded by Rodric Cox-Cooper. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee:

Review of Program Year 2025, Quarter 4 Financials:

Jeanine Frenz noted we are currently in the midst of our annual DOL financial audit. We anticipate the audit to wrap up at the end of September and do not expect any findings.

At the end of July, we received our initial allocation of funding for PY 26 for Adult and DW. We anticipate receiving the balance of the funding after October 1st.

Financials:

Revenue:

- WIOA: Total YTD revenue through 6/30/26 for WIOA is $6.2M; 34% is Adult, 18% is DW, and 35% is Youth. Also included in this funding is $250K of incentive funding and $100K of RETI funding.

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- SCION: Funding for the Disability Resource Coordinator is on budget.
- SYEP: We fully expended all the Summer 2025 Youth Employment funding.
- In School Youth/ROC Your Job: This program came in at $3.9M, far exceeding our original budget projection of $2.85M.
- EDA Recompete: This grant ran through January 2026 and is closed out.
- Monroe County: Employability assessments were $120K and STEP was $342K.
- Private Foundation Revenue consists of funding from ESL ($739K) and the Farash Foundation ($194K).
- Miscellaneous Revenue: Consists primarily of $114K from the Career Pathways Program through FLPPS, $89K from MACNY (grant through Empire State Development), $10K from a close out from a prior year grant (FEC) and $20K of interest.

Program Expenses

Direct Expenses:
- Both Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and OJTs were under budget.
- Wage Subsidies are at $5.5M; the majority of this is from SYEP ($1.4M) and Roc Your Job ($3.5M).
- Client Services are over budget, driven primarily by MACNY ($89K), SYEP and other Youth activity.

Service Provider Payments:
- Overall, service provider payments are on budget.

The majority of Marketing Expenses are related to Youth.

Operational Expenses:
- Salaries and benefits are on budget, with benefits expense accounting for 29.5% of salary cost.
- Rent, travel and professional fees are all on budget.
- Office expense is over budget because of the CRM software and an upgrade to our document management system.

The P&L shows approximately $14.4M in revenue, $14.3M in expenses and a positive net revenue of about $87K. Year-end accruals have been posted to these financials but there will likely be some minor year end audit adjustments.

A motion to approve the Review of Program Year 2025, Quarter 4 Financials as presented was made by Grant Malone and seconded by Richard Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

Items for Board Consideration:

Incumbent Worker Training Grant Policy Amendment:

Current Policy:
- Does not include a minimum number of employees required for a business to be eligible to apply.

Proposed Revision:
- Business must have at least two employees, including at least one employee other than an owner, partner, or person with a controlling ownership interest in the business.

Justification:
- Ensure that employees, not owners, will benefit from IWT.

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- Align with IWT goals of employee upskilling & career advancement.
- Maintain flexibility & preserve access for small businesses.

Revision was positively referred by the Workforce Innovation & Performance Committee, at its August 17th, 2026 meeting, to the full WDB for consideration.

Proposed Resolution, as amended during the discussion:
The Rochester Workforce Development Board hereby approves an amendment to WIOA Policy 403 - Incumbent Worker Training Program - requiring an eligible grant recipient to be an employer with at least two employees, including at least one employee who is not an individual with a controlling interest in the business.

A motion to approve the proposed resolution, as presented, was made by Edward Kurowski and seconded by Jose Rosario III. The motion passed unanimously.

WIOA One-Stop Operator Contract Extension:

Background:
- At its June 2025 meeting, the Board awarded a contract with Action Collaboration to serve as its WIOA One-Stop System Operator.
- This role helps RochesterWorks convene local workforce system partners to increase the effectiveness of workforce programming and coordination.
- The Board authorized up to three (3) annual renewals.
- RochesterWorks has conducted its annual monitoring review and is recommending a one-year renewal.

Proposed Action:
- The Executive Committee (subject to WDB Board ratification) approves a one-year extension of Action Collaboration's contract to provide WIOA One-Stop System Operator services.
- Term: 7/1/2026 - 6/30/2027

Proposed Resolution:
The Rochester Workforce Development Board authorizes RochesterWorks to renew Action Collaboration's One-Stop System Operator for a term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027, in an amount not to exceed $8,000.

A motion to approve the proposed resolution, as presented, was made by Randy Andre and seconded by David Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

Work Experience Payrolling Contract Award:

Background:
- RW utilizes staffing agencies to on-board and serve as the employer of record for paid work experience program for both participants - Adult Career Center and Youth participants.
- RW Released an RFP on 8/11/2026 soliciting proposals to provide this service for Adult and Youth work experience participants.
- It received proposals from five firms, which were scored by an RFP Committee.

Proposed Action:
- The Board awards contracts to two firms to provide employer of record and payrolling services:
  - TES Staffing - to approximately 730 Youth Participants (SYEP & ROC Your Job) - an estimated annual amount of $5.6M.

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    - Beyond Talent Edge - to approximately 50 Adult Career Center participants (Work Exp Tryouts) - an estimated annual amount of $200,000.
- One Year contract with up to three renewals.

Proposed Resolution:
The Rochester Workforce Development Board authorizes RochesterWorks to execute fee-for-service Work Experience Payrolling contracts for a term beginning October 1, 2026 and ending September 30, 2027, with an option for up to three (3) one-year renewals to the following organizations for the following services:

- TES Staffing to provide employer of record and payrolling services for approximately 730 Youth participants, with an all-in budget of $5.6M.
- Beyond Talent Edge to provide payrolling services for an estimated 50 Adult Career Center participants for Work Experience Tryouts, with an estimated annual amount of $200,000.

A motion to approve the proposed resolution, as presented, was made by Bert Brinkerhoff and seconded by Anthony DiTucci. The motion passed unanimously.

The following Board members abstained from the vote: Glen Jeter, Mike Nevins, and Janelle Harris.

Finger Lakes ON-RAMP Update:

- RochesterWorks is leading the Finger Lakes One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (FLX ON-RAMP), an initiative of NYS.
- We have been awarded up to $39M to build, start-up and operate career navigation programming to job seekers looking to be connected to careers in advanced manufacturing through short(er) term training opportunities.
- Training will take place primarily at the MCC FWD Center at its downtown campus.
- RW is in charge for the first 1-2 years, after which the new program would be governed and run by an independent 501(c)3. We will continue to provide career programming.

Finger Lakes ON-RAMP Update, Grant with NYS:

- RochesterWorks, effective 8/26/26, has a signed incentive proposal totaling $10.1M for the first year of the program, including many of the start-up and capital costs.
- We are working with ESD to provide everything necessary for their upcoming Board meeting in October, after which - if we are approved - we will work towards a finished Grant Disbursement Agreement.
- A very extensive process to identify MWBE and SDVOB goal opportunities for the project (30% and 6%, respectively or eligible costs). Currently, this is about $2.1M in costs.
- The grant administration is very labor intensive.

Finger Lakes ON-RAMP Update, Programming:

- Advisory Committee met for the first time last week (9/8). It is made up of industry partners, MCC, and RW.
- Goal is to have a soft launch in Q4, using existing MCC FWD Center programming.
- Executive Director search will begin in mid-September (WDB will award contract for search firm on 9/15) with a goal of starting on 1/1/2027.
- RochesterWorks is starting to ID workflows that will overlap with ON-RAMP, to start allocating expenses later this year, which is what our current year budget assumes.

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ON-RAMP Project Management Consultant Contract:

Background:
- Will provide RW with increased capacity to manage and implement the start-up phases of the Finger Lakes ON-RAMP program.
- Services include but are not limited to: project management and coordination, organizational development, grant and compliance support, startup and operational support, and e-communications and stakeholder engagement.
- RFQ was released in May, 2026 and RochesterWorks received three proposals.
- Scoring team rated Make Communities the highest score (92.7 average).

Proposed Action:
- Board authorizes RochesterWorks to enter into a contract with Make Communities for a term of September 1st, 2026 to November 30th, 2027 for a maximum amount of $150,000.
- Board also retroactively approves the release of the RFQ.
- Funding source: NYS Empire State Development.
- Provisionally approved by Executive Committee on 9/1.

Proposed Resolution:
The Rochester Workforce Development Board retroactively authorizes RochesterWorks to release the Request for Qualifications for Project Management Consulting Services to support the recruitment and placement of an Executive Director for the Finger Lakes ON-RAMP program; and it further authorizes RochesterWorks to execute a consultant/project manager service contract with Make Communities, with Thrive Community Consulting as their partner, for a term beginning no earlier than September 1st, 2026, and ending no later than November 30th, 2027, with a maximum amount of $150,000.

A motion to approve the proposed resolution, as presented, was made by Gary Rogers and seconded by David Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Search Contract Award - ON-RAMP Executive Director:

Background:
- RW released a Request for Qualifications on 8/19/26 seeking executive search services to support the recruitment and placement of the inaugural Executive Director of Finger Lakes ON-RAMP.
- It received two qualified proposals and based on the scoring of the RFQ the review committee is recommending a contract award to JK Executive Strategies.
- Tentative targeted start date of the Executive Director is 1/1/2027.

Proposed Action:
- Board retroactively approves the release of the RFQ.
- Board authorizes RochesterWorks to enter into a contract with JK Executive Strategies for a maximum amount of $50,000.
- Funding source: NYS Empire State Development.

Proposed Resolution:
The Rochester Workforce Development Board retroactively authorizes RochesterWorks to release an RFQ for Executive Search Services to support the recruitment and placement of an Executive Director for the Finger Lakes ON-RAMP program; and it further authorizes RochesterWorks to negotiate and execute a contract with JK Executive Strategies for executive search services for the FL ON-RAMP Executive Director, on terms consistent with the RFQ and using available NYS Empire State Development ON-RAMP implementation funds, for an amount not to exceed $50,000.

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A motion to approve the proposed resolution, as presented, was made by Grant Malone and seconded by Rodric Cox-Cooper. The motion passed unanimously.

RochesterWorks Updates:

Good News!

NHRA ROC Benefit Auction
We are pleased to share that RochesterWorks has been selected by the Rochester Chapter of the National Human Resources Association (NHRA) as the beneficiary of its annual Benefit Auction, which will be held on Thursday, November 5, at Midvale Country Club. For three decades, the local NHRA chapter has raised funds for community-based organizations. Last year, the chapter donated more than $36,000 to the Taproot Collective's youth employment program. We will use the proceeds to provide additional supportive services for Career Center customers that are not funded by WIOA.

Because RochesterWorks has not historically conducted an annual fundraising appeal, this opportunity will also help us build infrastructure for future fundraising efforts. It provides a welcome opportunity to introduce RochesterWorks to a new audience and share real-life examples of how our services are changing lives.

Inclusive Leadership Award
RochesterWorks has been named one of 14 finalists for the Greater Rochester Chamber's 2026 Inclusive Leadership Award.

The award recognizes organizations that have created meaningful and lasting workplace cultures where employees feel acknowledged and valued. Our selection reflects the culture our staff has built together: one where people feel welcomed, respected, and empowered to contribute.

Regardless of the final result at the September 16 ceremony, being recognized among organizations from across the region is an accomplishment we can all be proud of.

Career Center Groundbreaking, August 4th:

Thank you to those you came to the groundbreaking ceremony.

Project includes:
- Phase 1 (Asbestos/demolition): in progress
- Phase 2 Bid Openings: 9/10/26
- Final construction begins: December 2026
- Move-in: September 2027

Strategic Planning Update:

Board awarded contract to CGR at June meeting.

Community Engagement Phase
5 focus groups have been held since mid-August.

- Job Seekers (Youth and Adult)
- Employers
- Community Partners
- Board Members

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1:1 interviews with eight organizations
Survey of RW Staff

Goal is to present final strategic plan at the December WDB meeting.

Strategic Planning Committee will begin meeting in September.

Program Update - School to Work Navigator Program:

Janelle Snow, Youth Program Supervisor, began her presentation noting the School 2 Work pilot has concluded. The program focused on outcomes related to Placement in Employment, Career Exposure, and Career Pathway Training Program Enrollment, with two staff members assigned to Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School and two to Edison Career & Technology High School.

Placement in Employment
Although the pilot began in September 2024, implementation in the schools did not fully begin until early 2025. Between that time and the end of August, 210 students were placed in employment opportunities. Students were connected to unsubsidized employment through job fairs and other efforts, as well as subsidized employment opportunities through RochesterWorks programs and community partners.

Career Exposure
Career exposure efforts focused primarily on in-demand, high-wage careers that do not necessarily require a college degree. Students participated in a variety of activities, including career assessments, virtual reality career exploration, employer site visits, career and resource fairs, career demonstrations, and a court tour and mock trial. Various career exploration platforms were also utilized to help students identify careers that align with their skills, interests, and aptitudes. Overall, the program provided 1,160 career exposure touchpoints, which included some students who participated in multiple activities.

Career Pathway Training Program Enrollment
A total of 23 students were connected to career pathway training programs aligned with in-demand, high-wage careers that do not necessarily require a college degree. Opportunities included precision measurement certification through the MCC Forward Center, healthcare career training, and automotive training and work experience through a partnership between Rock Your Job and Edison Tech. Partnerships with the Urban League and Center for Youth also provided wrap-around support for students with additional needs.

The presentation continued with a recap of the Summer 2026 program. Building on the previous summer's program, students participated in six weeks of paid employment and career exploration, with each week focused on a different industry: public sector employment, healthcare, optics, manufacturing, real estate and entrepreneurship, and construction. Students participated in hands-on activities, employer and worksite tours, and other career exploration opportunities. Personal and professional development activities, including resume building, networking, and healthy relationship workshops, were also incorporated throughout the program.

WIOA Program Year 2026 Performance Review:

Earlier this month, we learned that RochesterWorks met all 15 WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance for Program Year 2025. These are the core measures the state and federal government use to assess our workforce programs, including results for the people we serve after they leave our programs. Meeting an indicator means reaching at least 80% of its negotiated goal. In fact, we were above 100% for 11 indicators, and above 95% for the remaining 4.

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This result reflects the work of staff across RochesterWorks - from the teams who welcome and advise customers - to those who connect people with training and employers, support youth, build partnerships, and keep our programs running. We are also grateful to our partners at the NYSDOL Rochester office and various other subrecipients who play a huge role in this effort.

Neighborhood Career Connector:

A new initiative of RochesterWorks, the Neighborhood Career Connector (NCC) Program, expands access to workforce services by bringing career assistance directly into neighborhoods throughout Monroe County. Through co-location at trusted community partner sites, referrals, outreach, and onsite services, Neighborhood Career Connectors engage individuals who may face barriers to employment or have limited access to traditional workforce services.

The program provides career coaching, employment resources, referrals to training and supportive services, and workforce education in a community-based setting, helping residents connect to meaningful employment opportunities and career pathways.

FLREDC ACHIEVE Program:

RochesterWorks spearheaded a regional grant proposal as part of the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, bringing together workforce system partners from across the region. If included in the region's submission and ultimately funded, the initiative would provide additional resources to expand the ON-RAMP model to other strategic industries, including construction and potentially other priority sectors.

Staff Listening Session:

Over the course of the past year, RochesterWorks engaged staff in a series of listening sessions with the support of an outside consultant, TogetherNow, to better understand staff concerns and areas for improvement. Key themes included internal communication, career development, and staff wellness. The feedback identified areas that can be addressed, and progress is already being made toward implementing positive changes.

Adjournment: 9:36AM

Melissa Suchodolski made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:36 A.M.. The motion passed unanimously.

WDB Meeting Schedule:
December 15, 2026
March 16, 2027
June 15, 2027

Approved:

_____
David Seeley

_____
Date

Submitted by: Mary McKeown

Reviewed by:
David Seeley: Approved 11-2-26
Jeanine Frenz: Approved 11-4-26

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