



# MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

## Youth Committee

Wednesday, October 8, 2025  
11:00 am

Remote Meeting via ZOOM  
Meeting ID: 864 6483 0496  
Passcode: 082661

### Meeting Minutes

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Roberto Duran, Jeury's Santiago, Linda Soucy, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Alicia Appugliese, Michael Bevilacqua, Brad Howell, Tia Gerber, Lauren Jones, Fermin Peralta, Tom Raiche, David Tagliaferri

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Lynda Buote, Cristy Gomez, Abby Seripais

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending today.

**II. Approval of Minutes from the June 11, 2025, Meeting (vote required)**

Chairman Williams asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2025, meeting as submitted.

**Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Linda Soucy, to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2025, meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.**

**III. WIOA Program Update**

Cristy said we are facilitating the WIOA youth group program with Haverhill Public Schools as they were awarded the RFP. We have started the recruitment process and Ana Gonzalez is working with this program. Haverhill High School has already referred 18 youth towards the goal of 34. The youth will be on target to start the program, and we are very excited to collaborate with Haverhill Public Schools in this capacity under WIOA. We will provide wrap around services to the youth participating in this program. They will provide youth with career readiness and 100 hours of internship related to their career pathways. We're looking forward to providing support to both the youth and to the Haverhill Public Schools team and making sure this program is a success. I will keep you updated regarding activities.

The two youth programs we had last year are completed. All nine in-school youth placed with YMCA of North Shore Haverhill attained their goals except for one youth who didn't complete the program hours but did attain the goal of graduating high school. All are now employed at the YMCA. This is the second quarter after program exit and based on WIOA guidelines, they are still employed and that's a wonderful outcome.

Nine youth completed the program successfully with CyberWarrior, however, some youth are still looking for employment. Cecelia Lunde continues to provide support and help them in their job search.

A reminder that once WIOA youth are exited from the program, we are required to follow up with them for 12 months. It's the responsibility of both the partner and MMVWB to ensure youth are doing well and getting the resources they need to be placed in a job. We are working with 18 WIOA youth from last year's program and will be working with 34 more this year.

Cal asked if we will meet the enrollment goal of 34 and Cristy said I am confident that we will meet the goal for the in-school youth program. They have over 100 youth enrolled in the Career Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) career pathways programs. As part of DESE requirements, schools with CVTE students are required to provide them with 100 internship hours. We will subsidize their wages through the WIOA program, and some will be subsidized through the YouthWorks program.

Cristy said for the overall WIOA youth numbers for this fiscal year, we are planning to have 109 enrolled youth, 23 will be carry-ins from last fiscal year and 86 will be new participants. As of the end of August, we have 23 enrolled youth of the 109 and with the 18 youth we will enroll in the next two weeks and the youth the Career Center have enrolled in September, we will bring those numbers up. I don't have September data yet.

Cal said how are we for WIOA money this year, have we hit serious cuts and Cristy said I don't have that information. We can ask Frank and Corina and I can let you know.

## **VI. YouthWorks and Connecting Activities Update**

Cristy said we enrolled 327 youth in YouthWorks programming this summer which was about 127 more youth than the summer of 2024. Most of our youth completed the program successfully. It was a great experience for the younger youth who participated in project-based learning with instructor Sherry Abruzese. Sherry is a teacher at Greater Lawrence Technical School and a Registered Nurse licensed to teach First Aid Certification. In the project-based learning program, 34 youth received their First Aid Certification that is valid for two years. We hosted this wonderful program for the third year in our office Tuesday – Thursday. Participants learned through different activities, played games, learned how to stay healthy, and learned meditation and art as stress coping skills. We also had speakers come in.

We had so many partners including Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Methuen Housing Authority, YMCA of Lawrence and North Shore - Haverhill, Boys & Girls Clubs Lawrence and Lower Merrimack Valley in Salisbury, Lawrence General Hospital, Lawrence High School and Haverhill High School among other youth servicing organizations and employers. These partners made it possible for us to over-enroll. Our goal for the summer program was 300. We processed 350 completed applications, but some youth could not participate due to summer school or they got jobs on their own.

The youth also completed the Signal Success program - the career readiness program created by the Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp). We piloted the new CommCorp Learning Management System platform during the PY 2024-25 year-round program. I'm happy to say we paid youth \$30,000 in stipends for completing the Signal Success modules. We paid over \$560,000 in stipends, incentives and wages to

the area youth. This summer, our employment partners were reimbursed with approximately \$11,000 for youth related expenses.

One of our partners, Suenos Basketball, was featured in CommCorp's monthly newsletter. Our CommCorp Regional Support Manager, Carlos Fuentes, visited the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence and as a former Boys & Girls Club, Dorchester youth, he knows the benefits of the work they are doing.

This year about 95% of participants completed the summer program successfully. Unfortunately, they could not participate in programming for more than 60 – 125 hours, depending on their tier, due to funding. Overall, the program was such a success. Feedback from youth was wonderful and the MMVWB youth team was amazing. We were able to facilitate the program without any incidents and very few youth who couldn't continue for various reasons. We are very happy with the outcome.

We are now recruiting for the YouthWorks Year-Round Program where we expect to enroll at least 210 youth. The application opened on September 29<sup>th</sup> for five days and we received over 200 applications. Youth are submitting their documents. Youth who participated this summer don't need to reapply and they and/or the partners will let us know if they will participate. We have processed over 100 youth of the 210 total. The deadline for youth to submit their required eligibility is tomorrow. Eleven youth will participate in a Driver's Education program again during the February school vacation and will hopefully receive their driver's licenses. This past year, we enrolled 11 who completed the program successfully. Some have received their licenses while others are still working with the school to schedule their tests. I can provide you with further information when the school provides me with an update of all youth participants.

Cristy said YouthWorks Year-Round participants are expected to start work with the partners in November. The youth who worked during the summer will be able to start November 3<sup>rd</sup> and new youth will start during the week of Veterans Day or the week after.

Cal asked if the health and wellness certification is good for two years and Cristy confirmed.

Cal asked if there were any questions and there were none.

Cristy said our team is now working on Connecting Activities with the area high schools. They are working with 9/10 area high schools. We just heard that Pentucket Regional High School is interested in working with us. We facilitate most of our services at Lawrence High School's various campuses, Haverhill High School, and Greater Lawrence Technical School. We also provide services at Triton Regional, Newburyport and Amesbury Innovation High Schools. We reached out to Methuen High School but haven't heard back. We are working to connect graduating high school students with the Career Center for WIOA services or Northern Essex Community College.

Some High Schools have work-based managers on board who provide services as the one we provide. We try our best to provide additional support like field trips, workshops facilitation, and one-on-one student support.

This quarter we met with the MassHire MV Career Center new Executive Director, Alicia Appugliese, Career Center Manager, Juan Belliard, and their youth team. The meeting went very well, and we are happy to continue to collaborate with them to provide services to our area out-of-school youth.

Linda Soucy said there will be a new superintendent at Methuen High School at the end of the year and it may be a good time to outreach there, and Cristy said thank you and we will do that.

Cristy asked if there were any questions and Cal said it looks like it was a busy year and we're off to a good start. I agree with Linda about reaching out to Methuen's new superintendent. That's an excellent suggestion.

Cal asked if there were any questions and Ellen Weinhold said Cristy, you are doing a great job. I like the driver's education component, especially doing it during school vacation, I think that's amazing and Cristy said thank you. The youth get paid to attend classes during school vacation and we provide breakfast and lunch. We have funding for only 11 youth, but Commonwealth Corporation likes this component in our proposal. Hopefully we'll have enough funding to include this component in the next proposal.

Ellen said Linda, how did the Tier 1 program work out this year, and Linda Soucy said it's a lot of work and there is no funding capacity from MassHire to fund a person to run the program. We only did the program on Mondays and Fridays to make it easier on everyone. I had to be in there from 8:00 – 1:00. We do a big program. We invite guest speakers from the fields the youth are interested in. We did three field trips, including visiting the court system. It's a lot of work and I say again, I'm not doing it next year, and we'll see what happens.

Ellen said do Tier 1 youth get paid and Linda said yes, they get \$16.25 per hour and Cristy said if they complete the program successfully, they get an additional \$100 at the end of the program. They also have the Signal Success program where they get \$16.25 per module. If they complete at least 12 hours or 12 modules, they get an additional \$75. Linda said we provided three \$25 Chic Fil A gift cards for the youth in each Tier who finished the Signal Success program first. Cristy said all youth participants received T-shirts and pens last cycle and this cycle, they will receive sweatshirts.

Cristy said we applied for \$75,000 funding through the Secretary of Labor for a new initiative in which we would partner with an employer and create a youth sub-committee to talk to youth and employers about the needs of employers and to hear from youth. It is a pilot program, and they are funding only five programs. We are waiting to hear if our proposal is accepted. We partnered with YDO and are getting support from Lawrence General Hospital and the City of Lawrence. One commitment for next summer is that the partner institution will hire at least 5 youth during the first year, 10 youth in the second year, and 15 youth in the third year.

Cal said a lot of work has been done and I'll be happy to report this at the next Board meeting. Are there any questions and there were none.

## **VII. Partner's Information**

Linda Soucy said Methuen Arlington Neighborhood had over 100 youth per day this summer at Tenney Street Park. We offered yoga, karate and a summer basketball clinic run by Methuen High School's varsity coach. We had breakfast and lunch served by the Methuen Schools Department. We went on 7 field trips. One was a Boston Harbor Cruise. We went to Canobie Lake Park and Jay Gees Ice Cream. We held National Night Out. We had a basketball league with volunteer police officers as referees. We did the MMVWB Tier 1 program with career opportunities. They did resumes. Tier 2 and Tier 3 supervised the 100 youth along with our staff and staff from the City of Methuen and Man Inc., totaling 30 youth workers that were hired this summer. We are going to have possibly 6 working for the year-round program that help at the Homework Center. All the youth workers will start again for us on November 3rd.

Cal said nice job. It's a busy time and getting the youth off the streets and helping to curb the summer learning loss is huge and Linda said transportation is always an issue and being able to work in the neighborhood and not have a transportation issue is huge.

**VIII. Other Business**

Cristy said the youth team is collaborating with the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) to facilitate workshops for some cohorts they have with Lawrence High School. They are providing support for their activities, and we may be able to partner with them so they can support our Tier 1 programming and expose younger youth to advanced manufacturing careers. I will keep you posted on that.

Cal said is Northern Essex Community College (NECC) helping with these programs and Cristy said no. We refer youth to the college, and we bring youth to NECC for college visits there, but the youth team doesn't have a strong partnership with NECC for our youth programs through the Workforce Board, but Frank meets with them and keeps us updated on their initiatives and Cal said maybe that's something we can look at.

Cal said how about our folks in labor and getting youth involved in trades. The pipelines are being depleted. This is something we need to take a look at.

Cal said is there any other business and there was none.

**IX. Adjourn (Vote Required)**

Chairman Williams asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion by Linda Soucy, seconded by Ellen Weinhold. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Lynda Buote*

Recorder