

**Workforce Development Board
Special Meeting
Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 8:30 a.m.
Location: Community Room
500 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA 95076**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:56 a.m., and a quorum was not established (no actions taken, presentation only). All participants attended in-person.

Board Members in Attendance

Ayyad, Alia
Bartels, Elyse
De La Garza, MariaElena
Detlefs, Peter
Herrera-Mansir, Carmen
Morse, Rob
Rodriguez, Francisco
Setzler, Katie
Siegel, Carol
Shields, Bryan
Vereker, Dustin

Board Members Absent

Delk, Marshall
Dodge, Daniel
Hernandez, Felipe
Holmquist-Gomez, Laura
Liebetrau, LeNae
Miller, Chris
Nagamine, Janet
Rodriguez, Annabelle
Roth, Shaz
Saavedra, Eric
Sumano, Raymond
Van Den Heuvel, Casey

Staff in Attendance

Diaz-Rivas, Brenda – WDB Associate Human Services Analyst
Gutierrez, Elizabeth – WDB Administrative Aide
Kieu, Nathan – WDB Business Services Manager
Paz-Nethercutt, Sara – WDB Sr. Human Services Analyst
Stone, Andy – WDB Director
Vaiz, Mary Lou – WDB Clerical Support

Guests

Armstrong, Rosie – Cabrillo College
Becerra, Ivan – WIOA
Gomez, Ramon – BOS
Mitchell, Jennifer – EDD
Muñoz, Beatrice – Santa Cruz COE-Sueños
Palone, Kriztina – Irvine Foundation
Springer, Haden – Irvine Foundation

**500 Westridge Drive
Watsonville, CA 95076
(831) 763-8900**

MEMBERS:

Rob Morse, Chair
Monterey Bay Epic Adventures

Elyse Bartels, Vice Chair
Business Owner

Alia Ayyad
Center for Employment Training

MariaElena De La Garza
Community Action Board

Marshall Delk
West Coast Community Bank

Peter Detlefs
County of Santa Cruz

Alma Diaz
Employment Development Department

Daniel Dodge
Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers

Felipe Hernandez
Fourth District Supervisor

Carmen Herrera-Mansir
El Pajaro CDC

Laura Holmquist-Gomez
Five Star Catering

LeNae Liebetrau
Department of Rehabilitation

Chris Miller
ScratchSpace, LLC

Janet Nagamine
Hikari Farms

Annabelle Rodriguez
Cabrillo College

Francisco Rodriguez
Monterey Bay Labor Council

Shaz Roth
Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce
and Agriculture

Eric Saavedra
Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education

KatieSetzler
Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Carol Siegel
Santa Cruz Seaside Company

Bryan Shields
Carpenters Local 646

Raymundo Sumano
Sumano's Bakery

Casey Van Den Heuvel
Sheet Metal Workers Local 104

Dustin Vereker
Discretion Brewing

DIRECTOR:
Andy Stone

There were no public comments.

Subject: Chairperson's Report

Roundtable introductions were conducted. Chair, Rob Morse, reviewed the WDB Mission Statement and noted that New Ways to Work (NWTW) would be presenting on the Strategic Planning process for 2025–2030. The purpose of the presentation is to inform the Workforce Development Board's direction over the next five years.

Subject: Opening Remarks

Robert Sainz, of NWTW, provided context regarding the importance of workforce development and its role in engaging various stakeholders, including educational institutions and community organizations.

Subject: Strategic Plan

Sainz stated that a strategic plan must be actionable. Over the previous three months, NWTW conducted interviews with youth groups, board members, elected officials, business owners, and community members to gather data.

Objectives for the session:

1. Identify the governance Board's role and key partners.
2. Define top priorities for the next five years.

The session included a review of nine priority themes and a one-hour breakout session to establish priorities. The outcomes will inform budgeting and alignment with the Board's goals.

Subject: Key Findings

Presenter, Ari Malka of NWTW, presented demographic and labor market data using various sources and methods. Key presentation areas included:

- Research Methodology
- Population Overview
- Santa Cruz County Snapshot
- Labor Market Snapshot

Subject: Emerging Priority Areas

NWTW identified the following nine emerging priority areas:

1. Job Quality & Economic Mobility
2. Workforce System Accessibility & Navigation
3. Skills Gaps & Training Alignment
4. Barriers to Employment for Underserved Populations
5. Youth & Young Adult Workforce Engagement
6. Employer Engagement & Industry Partnerships
7. Workforce Equity & Inclusive Economic Development
8. Digital Access & Technology Skills
9. Support for Small Businesses & Entrepreneurship

Subject: Breakout Activity

Participants were divided into two groups to discuss and prioritize the emerging themes.

Question: Which of the above emerging priorities are most important to address within the next 5 years?

Group 1: Alma Diaz, Andy Stone, Brenda Diaz-Rivas, Carmen Herrera-Mansir, Carol Siegel, Dustin Vereker, Elyse Bartels, Haden Springer, Jennifer Mitchell, MariaElena De La Garza, Ramon Gomez, and Rosie Armstrong

Presented by Dustin Vereker

Priority Areas	Goals
1 - Job Quality & Economic Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support apprenticeships Creation of high-quality jobs
4 & 7 - Barriers to Employment for Underserved Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote equity Remove biases Support living wage employment.
5 - Youth & Young Adult Workforce Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize soft skills development in early employment experiences.
3 - Skills Gaps & Training Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure skills are taught to fit & build confidence in workers. Align training to employer needs.
6 - Employer Engagement & Industry Partnerships 9 - Support for Small Businesses & Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create meaningful relationships with employers and industry partners. Educate employers on the benefits of WDB Develop industry partnerships and promote entrepreneurship using available funding sources. Create framework to encourage & facilitate sector partnerships.
Vereker's additional points included: The importance of funding diversification and foundational skills training in entry-level jobs which promotes sales skills, conflict resolution, sales, and negotiations.	

Group 2: Alia Aayad, Beatrice Munoz, Bryan Shields, Elizabeth Gutierrez, Francisco Rodriguez, Katie Setzler, Kriztina Palone, Peter Detlefs, Rob Morse, and Sara Paz-Nethercutt

*Presented by Bryan Shields

Priority Areas	Goals
1 - Job Quality & Economic Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote earn and learn models with apprenticeships. Partner with apprenticeships, entrepreneurs & CTE programs, non-profits that create opportunities for living wages. Increase advocacy for economic development. Change infrastructure, zoning, fees & taxes to attract businesses.
3 - Skills Gaps & Training Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build educational and training capacity. Partner with providers in soft and essential skills development. No bad experience-work on soft skills.

5 - Youth & Young Adult Workforce Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene with educators, schools, adult education, community colleges to knowledge share and to outreach. • Create incentive programs.
6 - Employer Engagement & Industry Partnerships 9 - Support for Small Businesses & Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn & learn models • Leverage powerful nonprofit partnerships • Utilize WDB's convening power with learning communities
<p>*Shields additional points included:</p> <p>Know what others offer to marry services to better serve population.</p> <p>Aim to bring back the 45% of community that commutes out of county.</p>	

Subject: Synthesis & Debrief

Sainz invited feedback from Board and interested parties. Comments were made regarding the high cost of doing business in Santa Cruz County and the challenges in attracting new businesses. Several members highlighted the importance of inter-agency collaboration and strategic convening.

Request was made for case studies demonstrating effective partnerships from NWTW.

Subject: Next Steps & Implementation Timeline

Next steps include finalizing the strategic plan by incorporating additional community input, including data on the migrant population. The final draft is targeted for completion by the May 28, 2025 WDB meeting.

Subject: Closing Remarks

Sainz emphasized the importance of identifying actionable strategies. A report summarizing breakout session findings will be prepared. Board members were encouraged to submit any additional data or insights.

Final identified top three priorities:

1. Job Quality & Economic Mobility - #1
 2. Skills Gaps & Training Alignment - #3
 3. Employer Engagement & Industry Partnerships - #6
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Subject: Committee Member Announcements:

Rosie Armstrong of Cabrillo College invited Board members to upcoming job fairs at Cabrillo College. Event information and a copy of the WDB Mission Statement will be shared via email.

Subject: Closing Remarks:

Chair Morse expressed gratitude to all participants for their engagement, noting that this was a strong beginning. He acknowledged the valuable perspectives shared—first from the county, and now from the board—emphasizing how these insights will help guide efforts over the next five years. He commended Andy for his skill in maintaining focus and direction, recognizing that while it is not possible to do everything, it is crucial to concentrate on key priority areas. Chair Morse also highlighted the power of convening as a tool for collective progress and encouraged everyone to be familiar with the Mission Statement, underscoring the importance of understanding what the board is collectively working toward.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Next Meetings: **Workforce Development Board-Executive Committee**
May 7, 2025 @ 8:30 am
Location: Workforce Santa Cruz County, Watsonville Career Center
500 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA 95076

Workforce Development Board
May 28, 2025 @ 8:30 am
Location: Community Room
500 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA 95076