

Career Education and Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: October 14, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Department of Commerce, with some attending via Zoom

Board members in attendance:

Voting Members

Danny Games, Chairman
Len Pitcock, Vice-Chairman
Jeff Marcussen
Butch Rice
Cat Hamilton

Ex-Officio Members

Stephanie Isaacs
Dr. Charisse Childers
Hugh McDonald
Tracy Dowell
Ross White
Dr. Ken Warden
Cody Waits

Members absent:

Voting Members

Kris Carson

Ex-Officio Members

Jacob Olivia
Clint O'Neal
Dr. Mike Hernandez
Esperanza Crane
Dr. Collin Callaway

Guests

Senator Jane English
Derrick Daniels, OSD
Dr. Chris Heigle, Arkansas Northeastern College
David Patty, NWTI
Stacey Walker, Arkansas Northeastern College
Bryan Evans, NWTI
Mike Rogers, Chief Workforce Officer

Call to Order

Chairman Danny Games called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Games asked members to review the minutes from the previous meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jeff Marcussen and seconded by Butch Rice. The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 2 - SPAC Board Member

Derrick Daniels presented information regarding Matthew Beck for board consideration. A motion to approve Matthew Beck as a SPAC Board Member was made by Jeff Marcussen and seconded by Butch Rice. The motion carried.

Agenda Item 3 - Steelmaking Bootcamp Presentation

Dr. Chris Heigle, and Stacy Walker of ANC gave a presentation about ANC’s Steelmaking Bootcamp. Last year, ANC delivered over 6,000 clock hours of industry training, bringing participants from across the country and from Canada. The program conducted most of the training for BRS and Tenaris for new hire bootcamps and entry-level positions.

OSD has invested approximately \$250,000 per year to support training for individual companies and to help offset the cost of training through the bootcamp.

Agenda Item 4- Ammonia Refrigeration Project Presentation

Bryan Evans and David Patty from Northwest Arkansas Technical Institute (NWTI) presented on the Ammonia Refrigeration Program offered at NWTI. They shared that OSD has invested over \$8 million in the past three years in the ammonia refrigeration program and other training. NWTI has also received a HIRED Grant. The grant will support equipment and classroom upgrades, training fees, and instructor training stipends.

Eighty-eight individuals have graduated from the ammonia program, and NWTI has experienced a 53% increase in attendance this quarter.

Agenda Item 5 - Department of Labor Cooperative Agreement

Executive Director Cody Waits briefed board members about ongoing conversations with the U.S. Department of Labor regarding apprenticeship initiatives. Progress is temporarily on hold due to the federal government shutdown, but discussions are expected to resume once operations return to normal.

Director Stephanie Isaacs reported that the secondary technical center enrollment report will be ready in December.

She reported that apprenticeship expansion efforts are progressing well. OSD will utilize Federal SAEF funds to increase apprenticeship expansion.

The Grow Our Own program has seen tremendous growth. Over 40% of participants in the last grant meeting were part of the Grow Our Own initiative.

The ALIGN nursing program is 14 months into its funding period but has experienced slow disbursement. OSD recently hosted grantees to review progress, address spending challenges, and consider possible reallocations. In contrast, HIRED grant funds are being utilized at a faster rate.

Old Business

None

New Business

Executive Director Cody Waits discussed the Governor's 1033 Initiative, which targets three counties through a faith-based approach to workforce engagement. OSD is working with Justin Majors and the Existing Business Team to collaborate with Restore Hope on how best to support this initiative, which aims to serve approximately 500 individuals.

He also noted progress on a Department of Corrections Pilot project that provides entry-level manufacturing skills, GED attainment, and Future Fit training for Department of Corrections participants.

Secretary Hugh McDonald announced a new economic development project in West Memphis with Google that will construct a new data center. Dr. Heigle added that ANC's Wilson facility could serve as a potential training site, suggesting that it be offered to Google if they are interested in utilizing the space for AI training purposes.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Butch Rice and seconded by Jeff Marcussen. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Next Meeting: December 9, 2025, 10:00 AM, in the Rockefeller Conference Room of the Commerce building.