

**STATE OF NEVADA
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
FULL BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 – 2:00 p.m.

Las Vegas location:

Nevada Department of Business & Industry
4th Floor, The Tahoe Room
3300 W Sahara Ave. | Las Vegas, NV 89102

Carson City location:

Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation
SAO Auditorium
500 E. Third St. | Carson City, NV 89713

**Phone Line: (775) 321-6111
Phone Conference ID: 962 656 010#**

**TEAMS Meeting ID: 219 840 762 52
Passcode: 5iY6k9T4**

MINUTES OF FULL BOARD MEETING

Present: Don Soderberg (Chair), Marchelee Sneed, Councilman Scott Black, Aubree Barnum, Robert Benner, Susan Brager, Irene Bustamante Adams, Drazen Elez, Edward Estipona, George Gault, Kenneth Goodrich, Haith Johnson, Kevin Landry, Ken Lawson, Anthony Machabee, Jerrie Merritt, Sara Millett, Leslie Mujica, Nancy Olsen, John Parel, Janel Thomas, Dr. Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert, Michael Yoder

Absent: Brittany Brown, Assemblyman Tracy Brown-May, Sarah Johns, Senator Dina Neal, Cheryl Olson, Jesse Wadhams

Also present: Kara Abe, Caleb Cage, Janiese Clyne, Ben Daseler, Arianna Florence, Kimberly Jadidi, Mechelle Merrill, Juanita Robles, Milt Stewart, Ahsha Tribble, Tiffany Vazquez

1. CALL TO ORDER – OPENING REMARKS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Soderberg called the meeting to order and lead the pledge of allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL – CONFIRMATION OF A QUORUM

Tiffany Vazquez took roll call and affirmed for the record that a quorum was present.

3. VERIFICATION OF PUBLIC NOTICE POSTING

Tiffany Vazquez affirmed that the meeting agenda and notice of the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) meeting on April 16, 2025, was properly posted pursuant to Nevada's Open Meeting Law, NRS 241.020.

4. FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT(S) NOTICE

No public comment in Carson City, Las Vegas, or online.

5. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – Approval of February 19, 2025, minutes**
Chair Soderberg called for a motion to approve. **It was moved by Susan Brager and seconded by Irene Bustamante Adams. The motion passed.**
6. **DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – Presentation by Caleb Cage on the Nevada Battery Coalition, an advocacy group representing the entire battery supply chain, focused on educating public and private sectors about related issues.**

Caleb Cage, Owner of Arc Dome Strategies, provided an overview of Nevada’s growing role in the national battery supply chain and clean energy economy. He introduced Nevada Battery Coalition as a trade association that was established in 2023 with three main areas of focus:

1. **Public Awareness** – Engaging with leaders, community members, and stakeholders to promote understanding of the battery industry’s significance.
2. **Industry Promotion** – Collaborating with legislators, regulators, and agencies at all levels to support industry growth.
3. **Workforce and Economic Development** – Assisting early-stage companies with workforce needs and connecting them with necessary resources.

Nevada is uniquely positioned with active and upcoming lithium mines and is the only state with companies operating in all seven stages of the battery lifecycle, including recycling. The industry supports over 22,000 clean energy jobs and contributes to national security, energy independence, and climate goals.

Caleb noted most member companies are in the entrepreneurial phase, ranging from single-person operations to those with thousands of employees in Nevada. Companies rely on trade associations, the Nevada Mining Association, and partnerships with higher education institutions for customized workforce development.

Key challenges include attracting skilled workers across a broad range of roles—from advanced manufacturing to office staff, particularly in remote areas. With about 20 member companies, workforce development remains a top priority.

Nevada is uniquely positioned with the only active lithium mine in the U.S., two more in development, and all seven stages of the battery supply chain present in-state. Federal support and significant investment under the Inflation Reduction Act have further strengthened the state's role in the national clean energy economy.

Susan Brager noted that many rural areas lack job opportunities, leading some students to feel discouraged about continuing their education. She asked, “How do we really make sure that some of the classes or systems that we have are taught so that we can diversify and have this technical expertise in this mining and lithium situation?”

Caleb Cage responded that a key challenge identified was aligning educational curriculum with business needs. OWINN plays a vital role through industry sector councils and collaboration with northern and southern workforce boards. Continued engagement and relationship-building with colleges and universities are essential responsibilities to support this effort.

Ken Lawson remarked that while colleges such as CSN, MSU, and others are eager to collaborate with employers to develop specialized curriculum for workforce upskilling, a major

challenge remains: the lack of available instructors—an issue that is even more pronounced in rural areas.

Caleb Cage acknowledged that instructor shortages are a capacity issue. Specialized courses, while valuable, often face turnover as industries hire the instructors due to their expertise, further limiting instructional capacity.

Kevin Landry mentioned the slide looking at Nevada supply chain showing under 22k total employment. He raised a question regarding short and long-term workforce projections, including the extent of current workforce development gaps. He also asked what efforts are underway across various channels to address these deficiencies.

Caleb Cage responded that we don't know what the projection is. He added that demand for lithium is expected to increase by 15 times between now and 2035, driven by advancements in technology, chemistry, and manufacturing. Currently, the gap between global lithium supply and demand is significant, with projections indicating that supply will not meet demand in the coming years.

Irene Bustamante Adams inquired whether there are plans to convene industry companies again this year, noting that last year's meeting was reported to be very productive. She also asked if the workforce projections include a detailed analysis of gaps in specific positions, such as production operators, and whether the current market supply aligns with the projected demand. Additionally, Irene requested information on the projected opening date for the Pioneer project in Esmeralda County.

Caleb Cage responded that Rhyolite Ridge by Ioneer in Esmeralda County and Thacker Pass by Lithium

Americas in Humboldt County have successfully gone through the BLM regulation process and will include on-site processing facilities. One of their initiatives is to contract universities to conduct a study on workforce needs and economic diversification. He emphasized that it is their responsibility to communicate real needs to sector councils and organizations to ensure effective planning and support. In addition, they are in regular conversations to have a Lithium Summit again.

Ken Goodrich asked “Is there any emerging technologies that you're aware of currently that could possibly overtake the demand for lithium and toward the benefits here in Nevada?”

Caleb Cage responded over the past decade, significant research, development, and industrial capital have been dedicated to lithium battery technology, giving lithium a substantial head start of about 10 years over other chemistries. While there are alternative options, such as vanadium for industrial-scale batteries, lithium remains the dominant chemistry in the market. Currently, lithium-based chemistries are the proven technology for batteries, and the demand for lithium is expected to continue rising, particularly as energy storage and protection needs grow. Despite the potential for other chemistries, lithium is projected to remain the primary focus for the foreseeable future.

George Gault emphasized that the focus of the board should extend beyond just the workforce performing the tasks at the shop. Consideration needs to be given to the broader needs, such as providing adequate housing and support for workers' families.

Anthony Machabee had a question regarding the recent decline in lithium prices over the past couple of years, seeking insights on its implications for the future of lithium mining in Nevada. His inquiry also addressed any concerns related to the impact of the price drop on the industry moving forward.

Caleb Cage noted that 85% of global lithium processing takes place in China, which has led to market manipulation through price suppression by flooding the market. This situation has impacted U.S. companies relying on private capital for developing mining and manufacturing projects, slowing private investment significantly. Some mining operations have stated that they will continue working on the regulatory and permitting processes but cannot begin actual operations until lithium prices rise again. However, projects further along in the regulatory process, such as Lithium Americas, are moving forward with the belief that the current low prices are temporary and will rebound due to increasing demand. The challenge of fluctuating prices in a market-driven economy was compared to gold mining, where price drops have historically led to town reductions and operational halts. Despite these challenges, the energy transition and growing focus on expediting mining permits are fueling confidence that lithium prices will rebound and the industry will recover.

Dr. Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert added that there are a lot of technical schools and high schools in southern Nevada that can be a tremendous resource.

Sara Millett highlighted challenges in hiring, including difficulties with employee relocation and cramped conditions. They hired 25,000 people last year, but 10,000 ghosted after orientation.

Marchele Sneed asked about the specialized training and credentials required for transporting certain materials.

Caleb Cage responded there is not one for it because the response capabilities are still being developed. It's built into the development agreement.

Michael Yoder added that Lithium America did a presentation and mentioned they were going to build housing that would have 1900 beds for employees.

7. DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – Presentation on Nevada TRIP website, funded by Disability Innovation Grant Funds, providing clear resources and transition planning information for youth with disabilities (ages 10-22) across Nevada.

Mechelle Merrill, Deputy Administrator of Programs, BVR discussed a new resource called the Nevada Roadmap launched on April 1st, designed to support students with disabilities, their families, and educators in navigating the transition from school to independent life. The interactive website avoids collecting personal identifiable information and allows access via a visitor pass for parents or teachers to explore student features. Users can select avatars, add support "passengers," and earn badges through a gamified experience. The platform includes emotional wellness and resource links, is disability-friendly (screen reader, captions, haptics), and available in English with plans for additional languages. It emphasizes self-advocacy, understanding disability documentation, and provides guidance tailored to different age groups. Development was informed by extensive partnership collaboration to ensure comprehensive support.

The platform offers a wide range of resources and interactive tools to support students with disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood. It is part of Nevada's workforce

development toolbox, connecting users to employment resources and Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Nancy Olsen suggested that with minor adjustments, it could also benefit students without a recognized disability.

Mechelle Merrill agreed and added to keep it accessible, a visitor pass option was included, while different registration types were created to help track user engagement.

Haith Johnson asked about user support—specifically, whether students have someone to guide them through the roadmap or if it is entirely self-guided. Clarification was sought on whether assistance is available if users get stuck or confused.

Mechelle Merrill responded that the roadmap is a hybrid tool—while it's fully online, each school district will have a grant-funded transition coordinator to support students. When a student requests help, the email goes directly to their district's coordinator. The program is being rolled out in phases, starting with Humboldt, White Pine, and Carson City, with full statewide implementation planned. Coordinators are being hired in all districts, and communication efforts like virtual postcards and classroom discussions will help raise awareness and provide support.

Susan Brager asked a two-part question: how students no longer in school will be made aware of the roadmap, and what will happen to the transition coordinator positions once the grant funding ends.

Mechelle Merrill confirmed to reach broader audiences, partners are launching coordinated media campaigns across their platforms. Regarding long-term funding, the grant covers coordinator positions through 2028, with hopes that school districts will sustain them afterward, potentially through hybrid funding models involving Vocational Rehabilitation.

Ken Lawson asked a two-part question: what types of disabilities are being seen among students, and whether job coaching is available for individuals with disabilities once they are hired.

Mechelle Merrill informed that the most common disabilities seen among students are learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders. Students with physical disabilities often have 504 plans. Job coaching is readily available through Vocational Rehabilitation, providing hands-on support to help individuals meet employer expectations after being hired.

Irene Bustamante Adams asked a two-part question: When will Clark County begin implementation, and how much time will they have to explore the roadmap? Secondly, what is the target population of students with disabilities, and what percentage are employed through Vocational Rehabilitation support?

Mechelle Merrill answered in early 2027.

Drazen Elez added that the project aims to not only launch a website but also address the capacity of service providers. Currently, many families struggle to access services without guidance. As the website reaches more students, especially in Clark County, there will likely be increased demand for these services. Efforts are being made to build capacity within organizations to ensure they can handle the growing number of inquiries and support needs.

Mechelle Merrill said the target population of students with disabilities in Nevada exceeds 19,000 individuals statewide. The exact number in Clark County is not specified.

Drazen Elez mentioned that Vocational Rehabilitation focuses on students ages 14-22 with disabilities, including those with 504 plans or IEPs. There are over 55,000 students with disabilities in Nevada, with 2,200 served by Vocational Rehabilitation last year. The goal is to reach all students with disabilities to provide employment guidance early, helping them secure jobs and careers more quickly.

Edward Estipona advised to consider a more unified branding approach, pooling resources for a collective campaign to avoid competing messages. It's crucial to address potential branding challenges. He highlighted the importance of marketing and communication efforts. Autism and other undiagnosed disabilities are part of the focus, with personal appreciation for the initiative, especially for those on the autism spectrum.

Mechelle Merrill added that the branding strategy involves using the NevadaTrip.gov platform to improve search rankings. Each partner will feature NevadaTrip branding on their website, linking back to the main site. A shared social media campaign will also direct traffic to the website, creating a circular promotional approach.

8. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – Approval of revisions to Bylaws

Chair Soderberg went over revision to the Bylaws.

1. Verbiage
 - a. Replaced 'state board' with 'GWDB' throughout document
2. Section 1.4 Areas Served
 - a. Removed cities and listed only counties for consistency
3. Section 1.5 Designated State and Workforce Agency and Contact Information
 - a. Updated formatting and added email addresses
4. Section 2.2 Terms of Office
 - a. Removed staggering terms info
5. Section 3.3 Quorum
 - a. Removed unnecessary verbiage
6. Section 4.2 Industry Sector Councils
 - a. Removed section as they are run by local boards
7. New Section 4.2 Other Standing Committees, Subcommittees, and Workgroups
 - a. GWDB Chair appoints chair and vice chair of subcommittees
 - b. Executive Committee appoints voting members
 - c. Subcommittee Chair can appoint up to 4 non-voting members
 - d. No more than 11 seats

Chair Soderberg called for a motion to approve. **It was moved by Jerrie Merritt and seconded by Irene Bustamante Adams. The motion passed.**

9. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – Approval of a new subcommittee named Employer Engagement and Economic Development

Chair Soderberg suggested a new subcommittee: Employer Engagement and Economic Development be formed to advise the workforce system on better engaging employers and keep the board informed on economic development across the state, which impacts their work. The

goal is to improve existing efforts and ensure board members stay updated on developments in economic growth. Responsibilities listed below:

1. Responsible for exploring methods and strategies for outreach to Nevada employers and integrating employer needs within the Nevada public workforce system.
2. Aim to foster collaboration between local businesses and organizations focused on economic development and workforce development
3. Provides guidance and input to ensure that workforce initiatives align with the needs of employers and promote economic growth.
4. This subcommittee will advise the Board on the status of the State's economic development efforts and how the Nevada workforce system can assist in these efforts.

Chair Soderberg called for a motion to approve. **It was moved by Drazen Elez and seconded by George Gault. The motion passed.**

10. DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ONLY – Future agenda items. Members may provide input and recommendations on relevant workforce topics they want to discuss for future meetings

Chair Soderberg asked if anyone in Carson City had anything for this agenda item.

Nancy Olsen expressed interest in presenting the findings of a recently completed research project on WIOA adult education fees.

Ken Goodrich shared that a successful presentation with EmployNV was delivered to the Southern Nevada HVAC Contractors Association, highlighting workforce services and addressing the technician shortage. Attendance tripled, and the event received strong engagement and praise for its quality and professionalism.

Irene Bustamante Adams shared that the City of Henderson completed a talent pipeline gap analysis based on the regional blueprint, identifying key employers and needed positions. A request was made to invite them to present their findings to the new Employer Engagement Subcommittee to help align workforce efforts with their goals.

George Gault added that a historical event took place in Mesquite last week, bringing together 12 state employees, from EmployNV, DWSS, Office of New Americans, LVGEA, GOED, and the Apprenticeship Council. The session delivered valuable information, was well received, and is expected to lead to productive follow-up.

11. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT(S)

No public comment in Carson City, Las Vegas, or online.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:37pm.