

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



State Workforce
Development Board



MISSION: To strengthen Utah's workforce development system to meet employer needs through innovative strategies that keep pace with economic change.

MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR



Reflecting on the past year, I am deeply proud of what the State Workforce Development Board and our partners have accomplished together to build accessible pathways to economic opportunity for every Utahn.

Our hands-on approach carried into our core work. Board members updated our bylaws and certification criteria, and visited American Job Centers in St. George, Lehi and Spanish Fork for recertifications, shadowing frontline staff to support job seekers. We deepened our focus on breaking down employment barriers through youth apprenticeship research with Talent Ready Utah, modified our WIOA Combined State Plan to incorporate Perkins V and aligned with Gov. Cox's strategic vision to ensure that Utah employers can fill critical roles with local workers.

This spirit of service also extended to our community. Partnering with Workforce Services for our annual service project, board members provided in-kind and monetary donations to the Utah Food Bank to help provide essential food resources to families. I was also privileged to present at the Utah School Boards Association conference, highlighting collaborative work connecting high school youth to hands-on career pathways, apprenticeships and virtual reality learning.

Thank you to our dedicated board members, staff and partners for steadfast commitment to Utah's employers and job seekers.

Megen Ralphs, M.S.

Chair, State Workforce Development Board
Employee Experience Leader, Leavitt Group Enterprises

MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR'S DESIGNEE



Under Gov. Cox's leadership, I have the privilege of witnessing the vital oversight and leadership the State Workforce Development Board provides for workforce development programs and resources in Utah. This year, the board's efforts directly supported

full alignment between federal WIOA requirements and Gov. Cox's strategic "Built Here" initiative. A major highlight was integrating Perkins V CTE strategies with the WIOA Combined State Plan. This integration of plans will help to improve connection of CTE pathways to target high-wage, high-growth sectors in demand by local employers.

The work done by the Apprenticeship and Career Pathway committees supported employer incentives to expand local apprenticeship pipelines and partnered to advance high school CTE and adult reskilling programs directly with high demand industries such as trades, healthcare and technology. Through the combined governance and community efforts, the board helps connect job seekers facing unique barriers to high-quality support across Utah. I express my sincere gratitude to our board members for their continued service and commitment to strengthening Utah's economy and workforce.

Casey R. Cameron

Governor's Designee
Commissioner, Department of Workforce Services

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2025-2026

ONE-STOP CENTER RECERTIFICATIONS

American Job Centers (AJCs) serve as the one-stop centers for Utah's public workforce system, connecting job seekers to training, career opportunities and supportive services while helping local employers find qualified talent. To ensure these centers deliver high-quality, accessible services statewide, board members conducted on-site evaluations to formally recertify comprehensive American Job Centers in St. George, Lehi and Spanish Fork.

As part of the recertification process, board members engaged directly with frontline teams to evaluate service delivery and system coordination. These centers highlighted strong inter-agency partnerships and cross-training initiatives aimed at improving career access for at-risk populations. This hands-on evaluation process ensures board governance stays grounded in community needs and continues to strengthen workforce access statewide.

AMERICAN JOB CENTER CRITERIA

To maintain high service standards across Utah's workforce system, the board completes a mandatory review of American Job Center criteria every two years. Following a comprehensive review, the existing standards were recommended for approval and re-authorized for all comprehensive and affiliate centers across the state.

SWDB BYLAWS

Demonstrating a commitment to strong governance and strategic alignment, the board formally voted to approve its updated bylaws. This action reinforced the board's organizational framework, committee structures and operational processes, continuing its solid foundation to advance statewide workforce priorities.

WIOA TOWN HALL

To gather public input and foster collaboration, the board hosted a virtual statewide town hall on the WIOA



Combined State Plan. The session invited job seekers, employers and community partners from across Utah to contribute, ensuring that diverse perspectives informed the state's strategic workforce priorities.

WIOA COMBINED STATE PLAN & PERKINS V INTEGRATION

To create a unified and efficient workforce system, Utah integrated the WIOA State Plan with Perkins V Career and Technical Education (CTE) strategies. This combined approach directly advances U.S. Department of Labor priorities by aligning education with industry demand, strengthening career pathways for youth and adult learners and expanding access to high-wage, high-growth jobs statewide.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT WIOA COMPETITION

The State Workforce Development Board actively participated in the grant award process for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds. The board made recommendations based on its review of applicant alignment to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan. Adult Education awards funds to 11 districts and organizations throughout Utah. These funds support marginalized populations in educational efforts that will allow them to obtain high-paying, in-demand jobs in America's workforce.

STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

APPRENTICESHIPS

CHAIR: WHITNEY HARRIS

CO-CHAIR: RICH FULLMER



This year, Utah's registered apprenticeship system reached new heights, surpassing 5,700 active participants — a remarkable 16% year-over-year growth. By establishing 46 new programs, the Apprenticeship Committee nearly doubled the state's annual average.

Our statewide outreach expanded significantly this year, marked by a youth pathway cohort at Decker Lake Youth Center that led to improvements in the systemic framework for incorporating training. We broadened our impact across healthcare and rural regions through strategic partnerships with the Association for Utah Community Health. Fueled by the Employer Apprenticeship Incentive Program's \$2,500 incentive per new registered program and enhanced statewide data integration, the committee continues to empower local employers and build sustainable career pipelines for all Utahns. There were 111 employer incentives approved across six key industries in Utah.



CAREER PATHWAYS

CHAIR: JAMES JACKSON III

CO-CHAIR: VACANT*



The Career Pathways Committee centered strategies on bridging Utah's critical labor shortages in high-wage, high-demand sectors such

as healthcare, trades and technology. Analysis of labor market trends highlighted a vital need to strengthen core employability competencies — including problem-solving, communication, time management, and adaptability — alongside technical skills. Key statewide partners, including Talent Ready Utah, UServe Utah, adult education, higher education and regional community organizations, advanced scalable career pathway initiatives to address these gaps.

Committee members explored expanding early career access through high school CTE credentials, APEX profession-based education grants, work-based learning, and wraparound support systems that assist adult learners and underrepresented populations in navigating training barriers. In alignment with the state plan, the committee prioritized cross-committee coordination with the Youth and Services to Individuals with Disabilities Committees. Rather than duplicating existing research, partners agreed to leverage shared labor market data and emerging AI analysis tools to clarify employer needs and refine strategic workforce goals. Moving forward, the collaborative framework focuses on expanding high-impact learning models—such as internships, apprenticeships, and service-to-career pathways—to equip individuals with industry-recognized credentials while building a resilient, highly skilled workforce across Utah.



OPERATIONS

CHAIR: GARY HARTER

CO-CHAIR: SHAWN NEWELL

The Operations Committee focused on strengthening system governance, modernizing facility evaluations and elevating employer feedback this year. A major milestone was driving progress on Utah's WIOA Combined State Plan, which incorporated Career and Technical Education programs (Perkins V) alongside federal workforce efforts. The committee also refreshed board bylaws in July 2025 and conducted a thorough review of established American Job Center criteria, recommending their reapproval to guide center quality and alignment.

Using these criteria, board members conducted comprehensive in-person evaluations to recertify three key one-stop centers in St. George, Spanish Fork and Lehi. These visits allowed members to engage directly with frontline staff through job shadowing and observe customer service delivery firsthand. To further align services with regional business needs, a subcommittee reviewed the employer business survey and gathered input from human resources partners. Through strong governance, direct oversight and enhanced partner feedback, the Operations Committee helps maintain an accessible, high-performing one-stop delivery system.



YOUTH

CHAIR: MATT LOO

CO-CHAIR: VACANT*

The Youth Committee has focused its efforts on aligning workforce programs with labor market trends, enhancing service coordination for at-risk youth, and addressing critical skill gaps through strategic partnerships. Key initiatives and milestones for the year include: Addressing labor market information, strategic collaboration, programmatic support and outreach, and innovation in career

exploration. As highlighted in the state plan, the committee initiated a collaborative approach with the Career Pathways Committee and the Services to Individuals with Disabilities Committee to align resources and share best practices.

Using economic data shared by the Workforce Services Workforce Research and Analysis Division, the committee identified the need to develop soft skills such as critical thinking, time management and conflict resolution. To bridge these gaps, efforts are concentrated on expanding work-based learning opportunities, including internships and apprenticeships, to provide youth with essential real-world experience. The committee supported expanding virtual reality tools to engage youth in interactive career exploration. This initiative is being shared at key career fairs and conferences, such as the Utah School Boards Association Conference, to highlight effective strategies for youth engagement. Through these collective efforts, the Youth Committee works to strengthen the bridge between education and industry and prepare youth to succeed in Utah's evolving labor market.



SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

CHAIR: STEVEN OLSON

CO-CHAIR: STACEY TAYLOR

The Services to Individuals with Disabilities Committee is focused on creating disability-inclusive workplaces, strengthening business partnerships and opening clear career pathways for Utahns with disabilities. A few major highlights included hosting two Employer Workshops on Hiring and Retaining Individuals with Disabilities and three Work Ability Career Preparation and Job Fairs, which brought together over 45 partner employers and over 700 job seekers. This year, the Work Ability Job Fair expanded to Moab, Utah, and there are plans to consider new locations in other rural areas. The committee also celebrated the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a statewide virtual session and actively engaged with local communities at

SWDB COMMITTEE REPORTS CONT.

events including the Utah Valley Job Fair, the Disability:IN Utah Summit and the 51st Annual Golden Key Awards.

To strengthen local workforce capacity, the committee partnered with the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) to deliver workplace accessibility assessments and best-practice training on talent recruitment and retention. Youth empowerment remained a core strategic priority, demonstrated by the designation of a Work-Based Learning Specialist who is building

business relationships focused on youth. These initiatives work to reduce barriers to entry-level employment for youth. Through targeted employer education and active community engagement, the committee continues to increase access and opportunities in workplaces and drive sustainable career access across Utah.

**Note: During periods of committee leadership transition, board leadership and Workforce Services staff provide interim oversight across all committee initiatives.*

BUILDING ON OUR COMMITTEE INITIATIVES, the following service project and success stories highlight the board's direct impact on Utah's workforce.

The board collaborated with Workforce Services on a service project supporting the Utah Food Bank to address statewide food insecurity. Participants provided both in-kind and monetary donations, collecting 50 pounds of food and \$750 in cash. Contributions were leveraged through the Utah Food Bank—where every \$1 donated yields \$7.23 in goods and services.



SUCCESS STORIES

Learn more about how Workforce Development programs are changing lives by watching Workforce Win videos at: youtube.com/user/jobsutahgov

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Ashley enrolled in a program to earn an associate degree in nursing in September 2023 to build a stable career for her family. Supported by WIOA Adult for tuition assistance and her employment counselor providing consistent encouragement, she maintained a strong academic record. Later in her program, she navigated the unexpected passing of her fiancé. During this time, her employment counselor provided the necessary resources and flexibility to help her manage family needs and mental health.

Despite her challenges, Ashley successfully completed her degree in December 2025. Following graduation, she passed her licensing exams to become a registered nurse and secured full-time employment in her field within four months. She is currently working in health care

and has secured self-sustaining employment to support herself and her daughter.

ADULT EDUCATION

Paneh fled a civil war in Burma (Kawthoolei) at three years old, spending her childhood in a Thai refugee camp before moving to the United States on her own at age eighteen. Although she successfully built a new life and became a U.S. citizen eight years ago, Paneh was nervous to return to school because of language barriers and cultural differences. However, her deep desire for a better life, education, and future for her family motivated her to overcome those fears.

By connecting with her local adult education program, Paneh embraced her educational journey with a clear, determined mindset. She realized that learning was like planting a seed—requiring daily attendance, hard work and proper nourishment to grow. Supported

SUCCESS STORIES CONT.

by the adult education learning community, Paneh approached daily life difficulties not as barriers, but as opportunities to keep trying, keep learning and remain resilient. Through her persistent effort, Paneh developed strong English skills, built practical academic capabilities and cultivated the confidence to push past her comfort zone. Her daily commitment and work ethic allowed her to thrive alongside her peers, proving that consistency and dedication can turn initial hesitation into profound personal growth.

Today, Paneh is celebrating a fruitful harvest as a proud graduate. Prepared with new skills and determination, she is moving forward to fulfill a lifelong childhood dream of attending college while exploring future career and vocational opportunities. Paneh's success demonstrates how courage, perseverance and the right educational environment can empower individuals to plant the seeds of education and achieve their long-term dreams.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Hunter connected with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) after experiencing difficulty maintaining employment related to his autism. Although he found several jobs, he

often lost them within days. Hunter and his family began to question whether long-term employment was possible.

Working with Hunter, VR focused on his strengths and career goals and identified a manufacturing employer where he could succeed. VR partnered with the Workforce Development Division (WDD) to develop an On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunity. Before Hunter started, VR and WDD met with company leadership to discuss his strengths, support needs and the OJT program, helping establish a strong foundation for success.

Hunter gained hands-on manufacturing experience, developed job-specific skills and built positive relationships with his supervisors and coworkers. His strong work ethic and ability to learn quickly impressed the employer and he was offered permanent employment. Rather than requiring ongoing job coaching, Hunter successfully integrated into the workplace through the natural support provided by his supervisors and peers.

Today, Hunter continues to thrive as a valued member of the production team. His success demonstrates how VR, WDD, an engaged employer and a focus on individual strengths can create a pathway to stable, competitive integrated employment.

STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD VOTES

JULY 2025 – JUNE 2026



- Approval of updated SWDB Bylaws, July 2025
- Approval of the St. George comprehensive one-stop center, July 2025
- Approval of the Spanish Fork comprehensive one-stop center, Oct. 2025
- Approval of the Lehi comprehensive one-stop center, Jan. 2026
- Approval of the WIOA Combined State Plan modification amendment, Feb. 2026
- Approval of comprehensive American Job Center criteria, Feb. 2026
- Approval of affiliate American Job Center criteria, April 2026
- Approval to incorporate Perkins V into combined WIOA State Plan modification, April 2026

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program • Auxiliary aids (accommodations) and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities by calling 801-526-9240. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments may call Relay Utah by dialing 711. Spanish Relay Utah: 1-888-346-3162.