



# WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD OF TULARE COUNTY EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES

Employment Connection Center – 4025 West Noble, Visalia  
Thursday, May 15, 2025

---

## **Employment Connection Committee (ECC) Members Present:**

Robert Kleyn-Chair, Jennie Bautista, Aleyda Montenegro, Victoria Guzman, Michelle Engle-Silva, Jonna Schengel, Jean Contreras, Danielle Beckett, Gwen Schrank, John Werner, Larriann Torrez, Darlene Tyndal, Carla Calhoun, Tami Olson

## **Employment Connection Committee (ECC) Members Absent:**

Teri Dobson, Melissa Abby, Misty Bond, Michelle Miller-Galaz, Randy Clem, Nuvia Varela

- 1) **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Robert Kleyn called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.
- 2) **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chair Robert Kleyn called for public comments; none were presented.
- 3) **CONSENT ITEMS:**
  - a) Employment Connection Committee Meeting Minutes
    - i. Approve February 20, 2025, Committee Meeting Minutes.

Motion by Larriann Torrez, second by Carla Calhoun to approve the Consent Items; carried

## **4) PARTNER PRESENTATION**

### Presentation by America Works of California, Inc.

Presenter: Marco Vasquez, Program Supervisor/Manager at America Works of California, Inc. Marco provided an overview of the Farmworker and Rural Individual Equity to Services (FRIES) program, which focuses on increasing access to employment-related services for farmworkers and rural individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The presentation highlighted key program components, successful strategies in connecting individuals and families to Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC) services, and how to refer eligible individuals.

## **5) ONE-STOP OPERATOR (OSO) ITEMS**

- a) Employment Connection Memorandum of Understanding – Update and Timeline

Edith Hernandez provided a reminder to return signed MOUs by June 20th. The partnership MOUs are updated every three years, and they were finalized in April 2025.

## 6) DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

### a) WIB Executive Director Report

Jennie Bautista shared updates from the recent board meeting:

- Qualification of RFP respondents scoring 80+ points to form a bench of approved providers.
- Contracts awarded to CSET and Proteus for youth and adult/dislocated worker services in distinct regional structures (East and West).
- Overview of changes, service region maps, and rationale for consolidation.
- Focus on enhanced coordination, rural access, performance tracking, and support for transitioning partners.

### b) Theory of Change – Employment Connection

Nicola Wissler mentioned that the Theory of Change was finalized and approved by the Board. The document outlines shared values, strategies (e.g., guided support, data-driven services), and expected outcomes such as equitable access to workforce development and breaking cycles of poverty.

### c) Discussion on Priorities for the Employment Connection System Integration

Edith opened the discussion by reviewing the initiative on providing more integrated services for common customers, an effort that began in December with the Employment Connection Committee (ECC). A work group identified service priorities, gathered input in February, and merged overlapping ideas to focus on practical improvements.

Jenny and Michelle shared the group's progress and outlined four priority areas:

- **Partner Relationship Building** – Strengthening collaboration through onboarding, cross-training, field visits, and enhancing the partner guide.
- **Customer Experience & Referral Data** – Improving tracking and follow-up of referrals, standardizing data collection, and establishing a work group to advance these efforts.
- **Training & Professional Development** – Coordinating consistent, customer-focused training, developing a training calendar, and considering a “training navigator” role to extend learning within organizations.
- **Strengthening Partner Commitments** – Encouraging system-wide engagement, consistent communication, and active participation in work groups.

The committee emphasized the need for intentional engagement to avoid repeating past challenges and to better connect customers with resources. Members expressed appreciation for the collaborative environment and noted the importance of sharing ideas across agencies.

Staff nominations are being sought for three work groups—Partner Relationship Building, Customer Experience & Referral Data, and Training & Professional Development—with names to be submitted to Edith by June 16. Two ECC leaders are also needed to co-lead the first and third groups. A sign-up sheet was circulated. Updates on work group progress will be shared at future ECC meetings.

d) Business Services Updates - None Presented

e) Employment Connection Center and OSO Reports (*Handouts*)

**7) ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

Members shared organizational news, new program offerings, and upcoming events including job fairs, expansions, new facility openings, and mental health initiatives.

**8) ECC Meeting Dates – 2025** – August 21, 2025, and November 20, 2025

**9) ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Robert Kleyn, at 11:43 a.m.