



**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
OF TULARE COUNTY
EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

Thursday, February 26, 2026

Employment Connection Committee (ECC) Members Present: Robert Kleyn-Chair, Mary Rodarte, Michelle Engel-Silva, John Werner, Krishna Adams, Aleyda Montenegro, Michelle Miller-Galaz, Carla Calhoun, Johanna Schengel, Esbeydy Ruvalcaba, Nuvia Varela, Tami Olson

Employment Connection Committee (ECC) Members Absent: Teri Dobson, Victoria Guzman, Misty Bond, Paul Prado, Jean Cardenas, Larriann Torrez

- 1) **Call to Order:** Robert Kleyn-Chair called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

- 2) **Public Comment:** Robert Kleyn-Chair called for public comments; none were presented.

- 3) **Consent Items:**
 - a) Employment Connection Committee Meeting Minutes
 - i. Approve November 13, 2025, Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by Aleyda Montenegro, seconded by Esbeydy Ruvalcaba, to approve the Consent Items; carried.

- 4) **Partner Presentation:**

Able Inc.
Keith Stump, Executive Director of Able Inc., presented an overview of the organization’s life skills programs, job training and internship opportunities, and competitive integrated employment programs.

- 5) **One-Stop Operator (OSO) Items:**
 - a) Employment Connection Center Updates
Employment Connection Site Coordinator and leadership joined a panel discussion about center activities, customer experience, system integration efforts, program updates, and upcoming priorities.

b) System Integration Workgroup Updates

- **Partner Relationship Building – Aleyda Montenegro**
Focus on improving onboarding and cross-training, enhancing partner guide “partner at a glance”, creating networking opportunities. A recommendation for ongoing system-wide training and stronger collaboration.

- **Customer Experience & Referral Data Collection & Use – Mary Rodarte**
Key Challenges Identified, lack of awareness of partner services, staffing gaps causing delays, language barriers, routing inconsistencies.
Proposed Solutions, improve partner guide, expand use of scheduling tools, increase communication and accountability, develop customer satisfaction surveys.

- **Training & Professional Development – John Werner**
Emphasis on cross-training across agencies, system-wide training calendar, identifying training needs through surveys, goals to improve service delivery through better staff preparedness.

6) **Information/Discussion Items:**

a) WIB Interim Executive Director Report

Jennie Bautista provided program and system updates:

- **STEP Program (Student Training and Employment Program):**
 - Serves youth ages 16–21 with disabilities
 - Additional funding of ~\$350,000 approved
 - Goal: Serve 80 additional students
 - Encouraged partner referrals and collaboration
- **System Performance Metrics:**
 - Shift from activity-based metrics to outcome-based results
 - Introduction of system-wide “report cards” to measure impact
- **Robert Kleyn-Chair** retiring and was recognized for over 10 years of service and leadership as Employment Connection Committee Chair.
 - Contributions included:
 - Disability training initiatives
 - Accessibility improvements
 - Strengthening partnerships across the system

b) Business Services Updates – Ryan Leasure

- **Recruitment Assistance - Job Connect, Tulare County Job Fair:**
Over 979 attendees, 28 employees, 226 open positions, 23 positions filled (outcome still pending)
- **Rapid Response:**
9 business engaged, 40 potentially impacted employees, 7 orientations for 36 receiving services
- **Industry Sector Partnerships:**
Tulare-Kings Industrial Partnership: Emphasis on: Early student exposure to careers, work-based learning and hands-on training, closing skills gaps.
Ag Skills: Focus Citrus talent pipeline & Ag sector summit (Fall 2026); Ag Career Exploration event (September 24, 2026)
Tulare-Kings Healthcare: Focus areas: Planning the 14th annual Growing Health Leaders event, hosting a Healthcare Job Fair (May 13), Talent Pipeline Management: Shifting focus to low-volume, high need jobs

c) Employment Connection Center and OSO Reports (Handouts)

7) **Roundtable Discussion:** None were presented

8) **ECC Meeting Dates – 2026**

May 14, 2026, August 13, 2026, November 12, 2026

9) **Good of the Order/Adjourn:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Robert Kleyn-Chair at 11:34 a.m.