



MINUTES

EWIB Board of Directors Hybrid Meeting

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Susan Adams; Ray Coombs, Jr.; Jessica Corneau; Ginger Frasca; Nicole Galo; Thayne Hutchins; David Jarvis; Chris Jewell; Mary Ellen Jukoski; Linda Ladas; Andrew McKillop; Courtney Murphy; Michael Phelps; Eric Protulis; Tina Rice (for Liz Li); Caleb Roseme & Paul Whitescarver.

Staff Present: Michael Nogelo, Guy Saporito, Carol LaBelle & David Allard.

Others Present: Dave Bechtel; Tony Benoit; First Selectman Kevin Cunningham; John Glover; Ayanti Grant; Kristin Hempel; Erin McBride; Mayor Peter Nystrom; Sen. Cathy Osten; Yamarie Perez; Denise Spellman; Rep. Kevin Ryan; Grace Suh; & Cyndi Wells.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Jewell called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made to accept the minutes of the June 10, 2025 EWIB Board of Directors meeting (**COOMBS/ROSEME**).

Action: Unanimously approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

EWIB President/CEO Michael Nogelo highlighted the following items:

- **Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) Economic Impact** – A recent EWIB press release celebrated the MPI placing 5,000 people into employment. An analysis by a noted economist found that this translates to 12,750 direct and indirect jobs, \$175 million in direct annual wages, and another \$200 million in indirect economic activity.
- **U.S. Labor Secretary Visit** – In August, U.S. Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer became the fifth consecutive Labor Secretary to visit Eastern Connecticut and learn about the MPI when she visited Electric Boat as part of her “America at Work” tour. Mr. Nogelo participated in the visit as a representative of EWIB and the MPI partnership.
- **System Coordination Challenge** – The WorkPlace (the Southwestern Connecticut workforce board) announced a \$1.5 million grant to unilaterally expand its youth program to one city in each Connecticut workforce region, including New London. Unilateral initiatives implemented without the blessing of the workforce board having jurisdiction responsibilities under federal law for a certain geography undermine efforts to ensure that workforce activities in each region are well coordinated. EWIB and other boards are working to reinforce collaboration among all five boards to bolster coordination statewide and within each region.

Grace Suh, Chief of Staff at the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), said OWS has talked with The WorkPlace about the importance of maintaining a collaborative and coordinated Connecticut workforce system. EWIB stands ready to support the OWS intervention and eagerly awaits its outcome.

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GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL (GWC)/OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY (OWS) REPORT

- Ms. Suh shared the following OWS highlights: a) The State Bond Commission approved \$5 million for OWS to conduct various Career Connect activities, \$5 million to implement the Career Accelerator pay-it-forward fund, and \$10 million (out of \$30 million authorized) for the Workforce Innovation & Sustainability (WIS) Program, which will invest in workforce initiatives; and b) OWS is working with the workforce boards to meet a legislative mandate to develop data standards for the submission of workforce board data to DataLinkCT (formerly P20 WIN).

Sen. Cathy Osten requested that data showing how bond funds are allocated to each region be publicized regularly.

Ray Coombs suggested that companies be invited to sponsor Career Accelerator participants.

CHAIR'S/PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- **Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP)** – EWIB Senior Director of Programs and Special Projects Carol LaBelle reported that the regional CYEP provided paid work experience to 406 youth at 118 worksites, with 94% of youth completing the program. Ms. LaBelle discussed the range of CYEP worksites and funders, and shared quotes from several youth participants illustrating how they benefitted from the program. Ms. LaBelle said additional funding would have enabled the program to serve more of the youth who applied.
- **EWIB Financial Update** – EWIB Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Guy Saporito reported that EWIB's projected FY26 revenue availability has been revised from \$16.2 million to \$17.1 million. EWIB's FY25 operating budget finished 8.3% under budget and FY25 total expenditures were \$16.4 million, the second highest in EWIB's history. EWIB recently surpassed \$200 million in cumulative revenue since its merger in 2003, with over 86% of that total directly invested in regional workforce development organizations and educational institutions delivering services to Eastern Connecticut residents and companies.
- **Federal Funding Update** – Mr. Nogelo said a bill passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee would level-fund WIOA and a bill passed by the House Appropriations Committee would eliminate or reduce funding for several federal job training programs. Possible outcomes include the Senate and House reconciling the differences between their bills, a Continuing Resolution to maintain current funding levels for seven weeks, or a government shutdown. Connecticut's federal congressional delegation supports adequate funding for workforce development, but EWIB can furnish economic impact data for legislators' conversations with their colleagues. EWIB's Executive Assistant position remains vacant due to funding uncertainty and EWIB is preparing for various funding scenarios. Ayanti Grant noted that Congressman Joe Courtney does not advocate for workforce funding cuts.
- **Preparing to Expand the MPI** – Mr. Nogelo said EB expects to increase its hiring in Groton in the next three calendar years to new levels. EWIB and its MPI partners have been examining each potential capacity bottleneck (e.g., EWIB staffing, American Job Center staffing, training facilities, and instructors). Student recruitment (primarily EB's responsibility) is another potential bottleneck. Funding is an overarching capacity constraint. If enough funding is secured and if that funding can support each MPI element, EWIB would still need to determine how much and how quickly MPI capacity can expand. Mr. Nogelo emphasized the importance of the MPI continuing to serve and benefit all regional manufacturers, and said EB also sees this as a priority.

Courtney Murphy acknowledged the challenge of achieving the training and hiring goals but expressed confidence that the MPI partnership will figure out how to accomplish the goals.
- **Labor Market Insights** – Mr. Nogelo presented information related to: a) Recent shifts in the state and national labor markets; b) The drift away from a "college for all" mentality and towards flexible learning pathways, including certificates; and c) Looming labor and skills shortages and the potential (and risks) of artificial intelligence to mitigate those shortages.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA) RSP** – EAMA RSP Director Tony Benoit reported that: a) EAMA RSP met in June and September; b) A survey of employer members revealed that members most value EAMA RSP for its responsiveness to their needs and its connections to other manufacturers; c) EAMA RSP will explore

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additional ways to communicate and connect, such as LinkedIn, discussion boards, and roundtables; d) Recent member events focused on youth engagement, safety, and networking; and e) The October 22 Annual Meeting will include a support partner fair, an introduction to the State's new Chief Manufacturing Officer, and a keynote address by State Comptroller Sean Scanlon.

Chair Jewell noted that workforce development has historically been EAMA RSP members' top strategic priority, but the survey revealed worker retention as the new top priority.

- **Eastern CT Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)** – Dave Bechtel reported that: a) The October 24 ECHP meeting will focus on strengthening connections between healthcare employers and education and training partners; and b) The next Healthcare Careers Expo will be held on November 21 at CT State – Quinebaug Valley.

OLD BUSINESS

David Jarvis asked about the involvement of regional companies in the new statewide Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) RSP. Mr. Nogelo said EWIB invited several regional companies to participate.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

MEETING SURVEY & ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jewell asked participants to complete a brief online meeting satisfaction survey. The next Board meeting will be held on November 25, 2025.

A **MOTION** was made to adjourn the meeting (**JARVIS/ROSEME**). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 a.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted for EWIB Secretary Caleb Roseme by David Allard.

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