



Meeting URL: <https://sowib-org.zoom.us/j/87430644768?pwd=trSzR2KIgbpihvSalVmSktg6TePdbq.1>
Meeting ID: 874 3064 4768
Passcode: 530153

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum

	Dr. Gray (B) (V)	X	Jason Traylor (B)	X	Andy Owens (B)
	Robert Westerman	X	Ben Messner		Mike Hicks
X	Joe Benetti (B)	X	Debbie Sargent		Rod Sprinkle
	Dave Sanders (B)	X	Ali Mageehon		Brian Prawitz
	Rhonda Amer (B) (V)	X	Amy Kincaid	X	Nichole Moody (B)
	Laura McKeane (V)	X	Marie Simonds (B)		Rachel Pokrandt
	Susan Ray (V)				

Names in red -unable to attend, prior notice given.

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 pm by Joe Benetti. 9 of the 15 members (excluding vacancies) were present, making up 60% of the total members. Of the 60%, 71% represent Businesses.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS/CURRENT OPENINGS

No new board members currently.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION: Members of the public may now comment on any matter posted on this Agenda, which is before this Board for consideration and action today. Please clearly state and spell your name and state your address for the record. Each public comment will be limited to three (3) minutes.

No public comment was presented.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS

4. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:** Consent Agenda (Approved with One Motion)

a. Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2025

Debbie Sargent made a motion to approve the August 21, 2025 minutes and consent agenda and Andy Owens seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:** Board approval was requested for the 2.8% COLA increase effective January 1, 2026. This follows our established practices and procedures, and the increase has already been incorporated into the budget.

Andy Owens made a motion to approve a COLA of 2.8% increase for 2026, effective January 1, 2026 and Nichole Moody seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

STANDING REPORTS

6. **INFORMATION:**

Insurance Renewal; Nicole Lovette

Nicole Lovette discussed updates at renewal and business insurance coverages SOWIB carries as of October 1, 2025. It was discovered that we need workers' compensation coverage for our two out-of-state remote workers, and Nicole will get that added to the policy.

PRESENTATIONS

7. ***Financial Statements; Yolanda Brumfield***

SOWIB went live with our new accounting system as of July 1, and full financial statements are unavailable due to continued setup, mapping, and corrections, but a budget-to-actual report was provided for the board.

Reviewing the first quarter (as of September 30, 2025), total expenses were just over \$1.1 million, or about 15% of the annual operating budget. This percentage is not concerning, as spending patterns vary throughout the year.

Across major categories, spending is consistently around 15%:

- *Personnel costs: \$460,000*
- *Operating expenses: \$74,000*
- *Direct participant costs: \$156,000 (Now that our youth programs are in-house, we will see a lot more money in this line item versus it going to subcontractors).*
- *Subrecipient Costs: \$366,000*

- *Community Investments: \$19,000*

As of the most recent reporting date, we had \$1.6 million in cash on hand. Total revenues is approximately \$1.1 million (federal & state funding) and estimated total net assets stand at \$2.2 million. Overall, these figures indicate we are entering the fiscal year in a solid, positive financial position.

We've met the audit deadline for providing all required documents and testing is being conducted, with a primary focus on WIOA.

A question was raised about why Q1 expenditures are between 10% and 17%, particularly why personnel costs are only at 15% when one might expect closer to 20–25%. Sara explained that some positions were budgeted for a full 12 months but were not filled until August or September, resulting in salary savings and lower personnel spending during the first quarter.

8. INFORMATION: Director's Report; Sara Stephens

Grant Tracking

Since July, we've been awarded nearly \$2.7 million in new funding with an additional \$1.7 M pending, including a significant amount for a mass timber project and several rapid-response grants.

Working together Conference

Annual conference attendance was 485 people attended. Sara offered payment of registration, hotel, and travel reimbursement to any Board members interested in attending.

HR Updates- *Christina Foltz has retired and we have hired KC Upshaw as her replacement.*

Biennium Report - *The 2023-25 Biennium Report was sent to stakeholders this past week and Sara encouraged Board members to read it.*

Sector Partnership - *We're reviving our Sector Partnership strategy, and current focus areas include transportation partners in Coos and Curry counties, automotive partners, and local dental clinics.*

Postsecondary Attainment Steering Committee - *Ben Cannon, Executive Director of HECC invited Sara Stephens to serve on the statewide Postsecondary Attainment Steering Committee, responsible for shaping policy and funding strategies for post-secondary education and training to providing workforce perspectives.*

Business Collaboration

- Sara Stephens and Evan Porter met Rick Gaucher through the Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation steering committee tour and discussed maritime investments. Rick shared valuable insights on potential strategic investments in the Maritime sector.*
- Mr. Matsui, President of the Oregon Chip Terminal, met with us via a Governor's*

Office/Business Oregon connection, and gave us valuable insights into union longshoremen challenges and opportunities. We began building a relationship with Oregon Chip Terminal. The company, based in Japan, operates its only U.S. terminal here in North Bend, chosen for the unique strength of local wood products.

- c. The third highlight is Wurgraft Consulting and Development in Reedsport which is developing plant- and marine-based ingredients from concept to full-scale production, which will require significant infrastructure investment. This project could create up to 50 high-paying jobs in Reedsport.*
- d. SOWIB explored consolidation with Rogue Workforce Board, due to staffing changes, but the Board has decided to post the Executive Director position.*
- e. SOWIB Board membership seats are available, and Sara is going to move swiftly to get those seats filled quickly and will have some strong candidates by the next meeting.*
- f. SOWIB hasn't been directly affected by the federal shutdown, but it slowed progress in relation to our \$450,000 SAFE apprenticeship grant contract. Now that the government has reopened, we expect movement soon. The grant period began July 1, and we've been assured expenses can be backdated. Although we were unsure about 2025 federal WIOA grant funding, we do have executed contracts, previously approved in the May budget.*
- g. Due to a \$63M budget shortfall, the legislative finance committees are looking at a proposed 5% reduction to maritime, competitive strategies, and industry engagement funding which would result in an estimated \$37,000 impact.*
- h. SOWIB continues advocating at the legislative level to protect and sustain workforce investments due to the economic impact through increased tax revenue, consumer spending, and reduced reliance on social services.*

SOWIB Projects

9. INFORMATION: Program Updates; SOWIB Staff

WIOA, Rena Langston

SOWIB will be launching a new procurement process covering adult, dislocated worker, youth, and one-stop operator funds. We are planning for release in early March with an April 1 deadline, proposal review in April with board volunteer involvement, award announcements by May 4, and contract negotiations for July 1 start dates.

SOWIB partnered with 3 other boards on a Pacific Northwest Mass Timber Grant application under the EDA's Build Back Better Regional Challenge, requesting \$1.5 million over five years to assess workforce needs to develop training pathways, expand outreach, and train workers.

Rapid Response; Rachal Larson

Rapid Response is a required WIOA activity that provides immediate assistance to workers and businesses facing layoffs, closures, or job loss. The dislocated worker liaison works with state partners and providers to deliver on-site support to affected employees, including career counseling, training options, unemployment insurance assistance, and guidance for businesses navigating layoffs. Statewide updates indicate positive news, including avoided closures for some businesses, and ongoing efforts to improve outreach and engagement with employers. The program continues to focus on strengthening connections with businesses and increasing awareness of Rapid Response resources across the region.

Construction; Evan Porter

SOWIB has partnered with the housing sector focusing on ways to impact the construction workforce. Recent activities include participating in local housing conferences. The goal is to center industry voices, understand challenges and successes, and guide targeted, impactful workforce investments. Insights from this collaboration will help identify regional overlaps and opportunities, as well as inform future sector partnerships SOWIB plans to develop.

Apprenticeship; Laura Pumphrey

A formal request has been submitted to BOLI & OHA seeking an exception to allow apprentices and mentors to be employed by different training agents when necessary. Current rules require apprentices and supervisors to work for the same employer, which creates challenges for rural hospitals and small ambulatory surgery centers that cannot provide the full range of training experiences required for certification. Allowing apprentices to train across partner facilities would enable them to gain needed experience while leveraging existing employer travel support. If the request is not approved, a legislative solution may be pursued. Approval is expected at the December 11 meeting, with potential implementation on January 1. The program is growing steadily, with 13 registered apprentices, 13 employer training agents, and approval in 16 counties as of January 1. While there are initial challenges, the program shows strong momentum and significant potential to expand the surgical technologist workforce, particularly in rural areas.

Recruit HIPPO; TJ Cooper

Recent youth industry tours have exposed students to advanced manufacturing and local industries, including 7 Robotics, where students learned how robotics improve safety and productivity in manufacturing. At Fred Wahl Marine, they explored the complete boat manufacturing process, and at Convey, they saw how manufacturing lines are built for companies nationwide and how local participation is possible. Upcoming tours include construction in December and childcare and transportation in January. Since August, 477 in-school youth across three counties have participated in these programs. The initiative continues to seek industry partners for tours and work experiences to expand opportunities for young people.

Traditional Health Worker, Tina Carpenter/Melissa Isaborean, Common Thread

The team has collaborated with Traditional Health Worker (THW) partners to strengthen training, integration, and long-term sustainability while identifying major systemic barriers,

including limited funding, supervision capacity, and policy constraints. As the project ends, they developed a practical advocacy guide to help partners engage policymakers and influence improvements in funding, reimbursement, Medicaid integration, and THW-supportive policies.

Effective advocacy focuses on building coalitions, sharing real community stories, understanding the policy environment, and delivering clear, targeted messages. Key priorities include improving funding flows and wages, expanding supervision support, increasing certification and training access, and elevating recognition of THWs' value. With federal funding declining, strong advocacy is essential to ensure continued access to THW services, especially in rural communities, and to drive sustainable, systemic improvements.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Joe Benetti officially adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:23 PM PST.

Meeting Calendar Available upon request