

The WorkPlace
Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes
June 20, 2025

Attendance

Nicole Russo, Microboard	Jim Lohr, Carpenters Labor Management Program
John Loeser, M&A Integration	Yecenia Acosta, CT Department of Social Services
Jim Oddo, Executive Search Professionals LLC	Monette Ferguson, Alliance for Community
Mike Proto, Prestige Industrial Finishing	Empowerment
Victor Fuda, CT Department of Labor	Cindy Rafael, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Willie McBride, WC McBride Electrical Contractors LLC	George Anderson, Synchrony Bank
Brad Hardy, Citizens Bank	Matt Seebeck, The SoNo Collection

Board Chair, Nicole Russo, called the meeting to order at 8:17 a.m., confirming that a quorum was present.

President's Report

President and CEO Joseph Carbone delivered a comprehensive report, beginning with a tribute to Alexis Herman, the former U.S. Secretary of Labor and a longstanding supporter of The WorkPlace. Mr. Carbone reflected on Ms. Herman's national influence and her instrumental role in helping the organization secure a competitive grant that shaped its trajectory.

He also recognized Synchrony Financial for earning the number two spot on Forbes' list of the Top 100 Best Companies to Work For, commending their leadership and partnership. Mr. Carbone specifically acknowledged Board member George Anderson for his contributions to advancing the organization's work.

In his overview of the workforce and economic landscape, Mr. Carbone emphasized a forward-looking philosophy, encouraging the Board to view evolving labor market conditions—particularly those influenced by artificial intelligence and demographic changes—as opportunities for innovation rather than obstacles. He noted that Connecticut's economy is historically strong, citing the creation of nearly 7,000 new jobs in April and unemployment remaining under four percent for over three consecutive years. He credited Governor Lamont's policies for reversing Connecticut's former anti-business reputation and creating a pro-growth environment.

Mr. Carbone highlighted "structural barriers" to employment, particularly the challenges posed by an aging workforce and untapped "hidden talent pools." He provided updates on several key initiatives, including Platform to Employment (P2E), which continues to serve the long-term unemployed; the newly launched P2E Youth program, aimed at assisting 50,000 young adults under age 26 who are not in school or working; P2E Reentry, designed for returning citizens; the

Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program, which remains fully funded; Tech Ready and Energy workforce development programs; and a retail partnership with the Fashion Institute and The SoNo Collection to create career pathways in retail. Mr. Carbone underscored that these programs are holistic, often integrating wraparound services such as transportation assistance, certifications, and mentoring to ensure participants' success.

In funding and policy matters, Mr. Carbone reported that The WorkPlace has secured over \$2 million in increased state support, with notable investments in youth and reentry initiatives. He shared the strong results achieved through ARPA-funded partnerships, particularly in Stamford, where some program graduates now earn average wages exceeding \$100,000 annually. However, he expressed serious concern about proposed cuts within the U.S. Department of Labor and the dismantling of Job Corps programs without Congressional input, calling these moves "irresponsible."

Mr. Carbone also celebrated organizational milestones, announcing that The WorkPlace has raised over \$406 million in external resources over the past 25 years. He emphasized the importance of continuing to pursue non-formula funding through competitive grants, strategic partnerships, and fee-for-service initiatives to sustain the organization's holistic workforce development model. He set a new goal for the organization: raising \$500 million in total funds.

Board Business

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the March 21, 2025, meeting—with corrections to note the attendance of Pablo Colon and John Loeser—was made by John Loeser, seconded, and carried. Brad Hardy abstained, noting he had not been present at that meeting.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda, which included approvals from Executive Committee meetings held between April and June as well as selections for one-stop operator, occupational training, and WIOA youth services, was presented. A motion to approve was made by Brad Hardy and seconded by Matt Seebeck. The motion carried unanimously.

Board Member Renominations

The following members were nominated for new three-year terms: Willie McBride, Pablo Colon, Jim Lohr, Thomas Sportini, and John Loeser. A motion to approve these nominations was made by Brad Hardy, seconded by George Anderson, and carried.

Youth Program Panel Discussion

Chief Operating Officer, Adrienne Parkmond, moderated a panel discussion featuring three participants from the Platform to Employment Youth (P2E Youth) program: Daniel Velazquez, Jeremiah Velazquez, and Shani Kiriba.

Daniel Velazquez described his journey from high school into employment at Seaview Plastics and his decision to pursue welding school at the University of Bridgeport. Jeremiah Velazquez shared how the program helped him gain confidence and job skills that led to full-time work at Seaview. Shani Kiriba spoke about discovering her passion for technology and securing employment through the Tech Ready track.

All three participants highlighted the value of public speaking practice, interview preparation, and hands-on training. They expressed gratitude for the program's staff and credited the program with opening doors to new opportunities. Each participant was recognized by leadership as an "ambassador" of the program.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Carbone thanked the youth participants for sharing their experiences and emphasized that their success stories are essential for building future program support and community investment. Chair Nicole Russo encouraged all Board members to "lean in and say yes" to opportunities to support the organization's mission. She also noted that this meeting marked the official start of summer and encouraged members to stay engaged throughout the season.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 a.m.