



# FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Youth Council  
February 19, 2026

## SUMMARY MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT – Alysia Bonner, Michelle Engel-Silva, Erin Evans, Kurt Madden, Katherine Martindale (arrived at 4:11 p.m.), Terry Metters, Jr., Vasili Sotiropulos (arrived at 4:05 p.m.), and Michelle Tutunjian

ABSENT – Keda Buttles and Rick Watson

AGENDA CHANGES: None

ABSTENTIONS/RECUSALS/  
DISCLOSURES OF  
POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF  
INTEREST: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

---

Item	Description/Action Taken
1.	<p><b><u>November 20, 2025, Youth Council Meeting Minutes</u></b></p> <p>Blake Konczal, Executive Director, Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB), presented the November 20, 2025, meeting minutes for the Youth Council's (Council's) approval, or correction and approval.</p> <p><b>TUTUNJIAN/METTERS – APPROVED THE NOVEMBER 20, 2025, YOUTH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES. (UNANIMOUS)</b></p>
2.	<p><b><u>Youth Program Success Stories</u></b></p> <p>Martha Espinosa, Deputy Director Marketing, Grants and Business Initiatives, FRWDB, presented the success story of FRWDB's Second Quarter Business of Excellence Award recipient, Midas. She shared that Midas provided work experience to eight (8) young adult participants where they were able to build their technical skills, workplace readiness, customer service skills, and received clear exposure to career pathways within the automotive industry. Of the eight (8) work experience participants, two (2) individuals were hired for permanent employment. Ms. Espinosa presented a video showcasing Midas.</p> <p>This was an information item.</p>

3. **ValleyBuild Earmark Grant Contract Awards**

Ashley Matthews, Senior Special Projects Manager, FRWDB, presented for the Council's recommendation for FRWDB approval, the reallocation of ValleyBuild Earmark grant funds. She reported that the grant had been extended by six (6) months, to June 30, 2026. The proposed reallocation supported ValleyBuild by adding capacity to staffing, training equipment, and outreach to support the four (4) cohorts scheduled for Fresno, Madera, and Tulare Counties during the months of March through June 2026. Details of the reallocation were provided in the agenda item.

**MADDEN/BONNER – RECOMMENDED THAT THE FRWDB APPROVE THE VALLEYBUILD EARMARK GRANT CONTRACT AWARDS. (UNANIMOUS)**

4. **Consent Items 4A – 4C**

**BONNER/TUTUNJIAN – RECOMMENDED THAT THE FRWDB ACCEPT CONSENT ITEMS 4A – 4C. (UNANIMOUS)**

5. **Student Training and Employment Program Performance Overview**

Veronica McAlister, Associate Deputy Director, FRWDB, presented an overview of the Student Training and Employment Program (STEP) performance over the past two (2) years. This item was requested by Council Member Tutunjian at the November 20, 2025, Youth Council meeting.

Ms. McAlister shared that in the first year of the STEP program, there were 100 enrollments, of which all 100 completed their workshops. Of the 100 enrolled, 83 started a work experience (WEX) and 81 completed their WEX. In the second year of the program, 55 were enrolled, which exceeded the goal of 54. Of the 55 enrollees, 53 completed the workshops, 39 started a WEX, and 25 completed a WEX. Overall, for years one (1) and two (2) of the FRWDB STEP program, 155 individuals were enrolled and 122 completed a WEX. The third year of STEP started January 1, 2026, with three (3) enrollments. The goal for the third year is 80 enrollments.

Council Member Tutunjian asked if the STEP program was being marketed to the community colleges or with any of the disabled departments with other community colleges. Brittany Morris, STEP Program Supervisor, America Works, was in the audience and shared that as the provider of services for the STEP program, they were working with Fresno City College Disabled Students Programs, in addition to attending many career fairs.

This was an information item.

6. **Young Adult Discretionary Grants Report**

Ms. McAlister provided an overview on the following FRWDB discretionary grants: Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Corps, Growth Opportunities, One Fresno Youth Job Corps Program (YJCP), and STEP.

She shared that the EMS Corps trains at-risk and justice involved young adults in EMS career pathways that could lead to careers as Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics, Fire Fighters, or could open the door to a career in healthcare. The first cohort started in Fall 2025 with 22 participants. The FRWDB goals was to start with 20 participants.

Growth Opportunities prepares justice-involved young adults for work through education and training, paid work experiences, mentorship, and leadership development. Orientations were currently underway for the first cohort, which was scheduled to begin in March. The goal is to serve 154 participants by the end of the grant, which is Fall 2028.

The YJCP is in partnership with the City of Fresno where they refer participants to FRWDB, mostly for supportive services. The end date for the program is May 31, 2026; however, Ms. McAlister reported that the City of Fresno had approached the FRWDB to continue this program.

Ms. McAlister provided an overview of the STEP program in the previous agenda item, but added that the program offered paid work experiences and subsidized employment to help participants build skills to help them transition to unsubsidized employment.

Ms. McAlister shared that the EMS Corps graduation will be held March 11, 2026, at 9:00 am. She provided a QR code for Council members to respond if they would like to attend.

This was an information item.

## **7. Rural West Marketing**

Ms. Espinosa presented a detailed overview of the FRWDB's marketing efforts for the young adult program, specifically on the west side of Fresno County, in response to the Council's request. She reviewed youth population data for Fresno County, noting there were 136,210 individuals ages 15–24, with 103,897 in the Fresno/Clovis metro area, 18,116 on the East Side, and 14,197 on the West Side. She stated the goal was to reach as many youth as possible through multiple marketing strategies in an effort to increase engagement with programs and services.

Director Sotiropulos arrived (4:05 p.m.)

She reported that from December 2025 through February 2026, FRWDB held 12 young adult focused events in Rural East (57%), five (5) in Fresno (24%), and four (4) in Rural West (19%). Outreach activities included informational workshops, community service promotion, and family-centered engagement. She emphasized the importance of consistency in rural communities to build trust.

Ms. Espinosa reviewed current youth-focused marketing campaigns, and highlighted messaging centered on gaining meaningful work experience. Campaign themes included “Earn Experience That Counts – Take the Next Step,” “Looking for Your First Job? Not Sure Where to Start? You’re Not Alone. We’ve Got You,” and “Everyone Starts Somewhere; Start Here.” She noted efforts to keep messaging fresh and relatable, including the use of anime-style graphics and featuring past achievement award winners. She also described a “Gingerbread and Goals” open house event in Mendota, which had an employer in attendance, the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

She shared a Channel 26 television commercial featuring a QR “flow code” to track engagement and website traffic. She explained that this allowed staff to measure how many viewers scanned the code. Workforce Spotlight segments air twice weekly, three (3) times per day during Great Day, highlighting both youth services and employer engagement opportunities. These segments were also shared on social media and YouTube.

Council Member Martindale arrived (4:11 p.m.)

Ms. Espinosa indicated that radio advertising included spots on La Buena and B95, along with social media banner placements. She also reported on Spotify streaming audio ads from August 2025 through January 2026, which achieved over a 94% completion rate, which means the ad was played all the way through to the end.

Director Madden asked which effort results in the most engagement. Ms. Espinosa explained that digital platforms such as Fox 26 and Spotify allowed for more precise tracking, while radio and in-person outreach were more difficult to measure. She stated that participants were asked how they heard about the program when they come into the One-Stops, but that data collection was not yet fully aggregated due to paper-based forms. Phyllis Stogbauer, Senior Deputy Director, FRWDB indicated that FRWDB staff have discussed the potential for electronic forms and dropdown selections to improve data comparison and analysis.

In reference to Director Madden's question, Diane Jensen, Senior Marketing Coordinator, FRWDB, reported that when individuals register at outreach events, they are asked how they heard about the event and approximately 75% of attendees indicated they heard about events through social media platforms, including La Buena, B95, and Fox 26.

Director Metters asked if there were examples of marketing/communication efforts that were found to be ineffective. Ms. Espinosa shared that FRWDB previously used La Preciosa radio station for its Spanish-language advertising but changed to La Buena after determining the La Preciosa targeted an older demographic. She stated the change resulted in stronger engagement and proved to be more effective in reaching young adults.

Ms. Espinosa concluded the marketing overview by reiterating that outreach efforts included community engagement, television spots, radio advertisements, advertisements on a streaming platform, social media, and billboards, all with the goal of consistently increasing awareness and participation in FRWDB services and programs.

This was an information item.

## **8. Young Adult Demographics Report**

Ms. Stogbauer presented the Program Year (PY) 2025-2026 Second Quarter Young Adult Demographics Report for the Council's review. She noted that the report included the PY 2024-2025 data for comparison purposes, and stated that there was very little change between years. She indicated that this information was collected from participants during the eligibility process.

Director Madden suggested that on the Youth Ethnicity graph, it would be helpful to remove the "No Response" percentage and just have the percentages of those who did respond. Ms. Stogbauer noted that FRWDB staff would review the reports to identify revisions to improve clarity.

Director Metters thanked FRWDB staff for the additional barriers information at the bottom of the report, noting that it was helpful. Council Member Bonner asked how individuals with identified barriers were assisted. Ms. Stogbauer stated upon enrollment, an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) is created, which includes identified barriers. At that point, an individual receives referrals to assist them in obtaining the services or assistance they need. Provider staff review participants' ISS every month, as barriers can change, and address areas as needed.

This was an information item.

## **9. Rural West Young Adult Services Funding Allocations**

Mr. Konczal stated that based on discussions at the last few Council meetings, he conducted research to identify the number of young adults served and placed them into geographic context across Fresno County. He divided the county into West Side, Metro, and East Side regions.

He distributed a spreadsheet to the Council that showed 2024 population data for youth ages 15 through 24 and compared those figures to the percentage of youth funding allocated and minimum enrollment targets for each region. He explained that the FRWDB's total minimum enrollment goal for PY 2024–2025 was 1,063 youth, with 110 enrollments (10%) allocated to the West Side.

Mr. Konczal acknowledged ongoing discussions regarding West Side youth performance and stated that historical data across multiple providers and fiscal years indicated persistent underperformance in meeting enrollment targets. He noted that while no final conclusions would be made until a full report was presented at the next meeting, a preliminary review suggested current West Side enrollment targets may be unrealistic. He emphasized that allocating 16.29% of youth funding to serve at minimum 10% of total enrollments without achieving that target warranted further evaluation. He stated that FRWDB staff would return with recommendations based on multi-year historical data and would propose enrollment numbers and funding allocations that were more aligned with demonstrated performance trends. Mr. Konczal noted that data over approximately ten (10) years reflected similar challenges.

There was a discussion regarding prior service delivery on the West Side, including a period when services were primarily delivered through West Hills College. Mr. Konczal explained that enrollments were higher when recruitment occurred directly on campus but later declined during staffing and contractual challenges, including a mid-term contract termination due to lack of enrollments. He also noted that overall FRWDB funding had significantly decreased since the early 2000s, impacting service locations and capacity.

Council Member Martindale requested that any recommendations carefully consider historical successes, as well. Director Bonner raised a concern about reducing funding to underserved areas without thorough analysis of outreach efforts and engagement strategies. Mr. Konczal reiterated that extensive outreach efforts were ongoing and agreed to provide detailed data and multiple recommendations at the next meeting.

Additional discussions included potential collaboration opportunities with organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs and Neighborhood Resource Centers in Coalinga and Kerman to increase visibility and engagement. Council Member Martindale stated that there was an opportunity for FRWDB to utilize space at the Neighborhood Resource Center in Coalinga. Mr. Konczal stated that FRWDB staff would explore all possibilities and would return with a number of recommendations for consideration.

This was a discussion item.

**10. Agenda Items for May 21, 2026, Meeting**

Mr. Konczal shared that if Council Members had any items for the May 21, 2026, Youth Council agenda, to have the items to FRWDB staff two (2) weeks prior to the meeting.

**11. Meeting Feedback**

None.

Meeting adjourned at 5:09 p.m.