

Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes

Date: September 9th, 2026

Time: 12:00 AM – Approximately 1:45 PM

Location: Santa Cruz County Government Complex (2150 N Congress Dr, Nogales, AZ 85621)

[illegible]

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Several members were noted as absent. Quorum was confirmed shortly thereafter.

Members Present (Partial List):

- Dina Sanchez
- Luis Bus
- Skylie Estep
- Elizabeth Kinder
- Tom McAlpin
- Pedro Sete
- Marcel La Para
- Ana Quick

Members Absent (Notable):

- Karen King
- Fernando Sandoval
- Luis Parilla

A quorum was reached.

C. Call to the Public & Public Comment

No public comments or requests to speak were received.

D. Adoption of Meeting Minutes

The board approved the minutes from the July 8, 2026 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Budget Report – Finance Department

Patricia Asque presented the **final FY2026 WIOA budget numbers** (through June 30, 2026):

Youth Program

- Awarded: \$699,272
- Spent: \$542,967
- Available: \$156,305 (usable through June 30, 2027)

Adult Program

- Awarded: \$388,471
- Spent: \$380,316
- Available: \$8,155 (plus additional FY26 adult funds: \$211,703)

Dislocated Worker

- Awarded: \$367,779
- Spent: \$269,417
- Available: \$98,362

Administration

- Awarded: \$103,195
- Spent: \$94,142
- Available: \$9,053 (FY26 deadline passed)

Rapid Response

- Awarded: \$490,080
- Spent: \$114,110
- Available: \$375,970 (FY26 deadline passed)

Board discussion highlights: • Rapid response funds are difficult to spend due to strict usage restrictions.

- The state is exploring flexibility allowing these funds to be used for training.
- The board may support using job fairs to leverage allowable rapid response spending.

F. Presentation – WorkEd Consulting: AI & Green Jobs Study

Consultant Mason presented progress and findings from the countywide study on AI, green jobs, and workforce strategy.

Key Findings

- Santa Cruz County has strong workforce assets but lacks coordination.
- Employers face hiring/retention challenges; residents face childcare, transportation, and other

barriers.

- Training does not consistently lead to jobs; employer involvement must improve.
- AI will augment—not replace—jobs and may expand entrepreneurship.
- Regional opportunities: South32 mining expansion, border modernization, tourism, small business growth.

Five Strategic Priorities Identified

1. **A connected workforce ecosystem**
2. **Industry-aligned career pathways**
3. **Leveraging regional competitive advantages**
4. **Preparing workers/businesses for AI**
5. **Continuous workforce improvement**

Local Plan Modification (Due Oct. 30)

- Consultant recommended moving beyond a “check-the-box” update.
- The current plan lacks metrics, goals, and clear strategies.
- Board members emphasized the need for measurable outcomes and clearer board roles.

Board Discussion

- Concern about overlapping workforce initiatives (South32 + County + WorkEd).
- Consensus: coordination is needed to avoid duplication and stakeholder fatigue.
- Youth workforce development should be strengthened at earlier grade levels.

G. Introduction of Prospective Board Members

Three candidates introduced themselves:

- **Yara Castro** – First Things First (early childhood education)
- **Maria Luisa Cota** – Pava Transportation (CDL hiring needs)
- **Manuel Felix** – AZ Cyber Initiative (youth cybersecurity/tech pathways)

Board members supported forwarding names to the Board of Supervisors for appointment consideration.

H. Attendance Policy Compliance

- The Chair requested an update on members who have not met attendance requirements.
- County Manager Mauricio Chavez reported the item is under legal review due to federal funding implications. A Supervisor vote is expected at the next board meeting.

I. One-Stop Operator & Partner Reports

One-Stop Operator Report

- Continued employer preference for experienced applicants.
- Seasonal unemployment increases observed; re-employment is challenging.
- Job fair set for **October 14**, new location: **City of Nogales Recreational Center** (limited space).
- Transportation from Primer Alta will be provided every 30 minutes.

Title I Programs

- 10 youth followed after graduation; 4 placed so far.
- Outreach at Sahuarita Food Bank due to local youth seeking employment outside the county.

Title II Adult Education

- No additional questions.

Title III – Employment Services / Veteran Services

- Unemployment clients have increased; many exhausting benefits without returning to previous employers.
- Veteran representative position currently vacant; Pima County staff covering temporarily.
- Plans to provide comparison data at next meeting.

National Farmworker Jobs Program

- Report submitted; board requested comparison data for future review.

Job Corps

- Job Corps program continues under normal federal operation following national legal resolution.
- Several Santa Cruz students completing programs and seeking job placement locally.

J. Executive Director Report

- Zaida reported:
- State Department of Labor interviews scheduled with board leadership.
 - MOU/Infrastructure Funding Agreement has full partner consensus and is advancing to the Board

of Supervisors.

- Invitation shared for **Office of Economic Opportunity Listening Session** (Sept. 15, 9–12 PM).

Multiple board members publicly commended Zaida and the Arizona@Work staff for strong performance.

K. Board Member Roundtable

Notable updates:

- **Community College:**

- Electrician cohort launched (16 students).
- Automated Industrial Technology cohort underway (12 students).
- RMA, EMT, and future HVAC/Heavy Equipment programs developing.

- **Supervisor Davis:**

- Emphasized minimizing duplication of workforce efforts.
- Encouraged public attendance at upcoming JTED and workforce planning presentations.

- **County Management:**

- Explained Proposition 417 (expenditure limit adjustment) appearing on November ballot.
- Measure does not raise taxes but allows the county to legally spend incoming revenue from the mining sector.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned.