

CALIFORNIA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

May 6, 2026

Full meeting documents, public comments, agenda, and future meeting dates may also be found on the [CWDB website](#).

Members in Attendance:

- Board Chair Joanna Rees*
- Alysia Bell*
- Chancellor Sonya Christian, represented by designee Vice Chancellor Anthony Cordova
- Jamil Dada*
- Hala Hijazi
- Secretary Kim Johnson, represented by designee Libby Abbott
- Secretary Stewart Knox, represented by designee Abby Snay*
- Robert Redlo*

* indicates member participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom

CWDB Staff Participants:

- Kaina Pereira, Executive Director
- Diane Brown, Regional Specialist
- Michael Wiafe, Assistant Deputy Director, Workforce Policy and External Affairs

Regional and State Partner Presenters:

- Dave Thoeny, Executive Director, Mother Lode Job Training/Mother Lode Workforce Development Board
- John Wentworth, Recreation and Tourism Industry Sector Coordinator, Sierra Jobs First Region; President of the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation
- Jessica Pitt, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Healthcare Workforce at the Labor & Workforce Development Agency

- Libby Abbot, Deputy Director, Office of Health Workforce Development, Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI); Designee to CWDB Member Secretary Kim Johnson
- Dr. Jennifer Burrows, Healthcare Industry Sector Coordinator, Sierra Jobs First Region
- Tina Tvedt Schaible, Director of Grants and Project Implementation, Northern Coast Health Improvement & Information Network (NCHIIN); Redwood Jobs First Region

Agenda

1. Sierra Regional Update
 - a. Overview of Regional Tour
 - b. CWDB Staff Report
 - c. Regional Leader Report
 - d. Board Member Discussion
 - e. Public Comment
2. Rural Healthcare
 - a. Presentation
 - b. Board Member Discussion
 - c. Public Comment
3. General Public Comments
4. Adjournment

1. Sierra Regional Update

CWDB Executive Director provided opening context on the Sierra regional tour, discussed the multi-day visit across a large, rural geography and previewed follow-up discussions that would continue from the tour.

Regional Specialist Diane Brown delivered [the CWDB staff report](#) and introduced the regional speakers. She summarized the Sierra Jobs First region as seven counties—Amador, Alpine, Calaveras, Mono, Inyo, Tuolumne, and Mariposa—covering 19,253 square miles with a 2024 population of a little over 190,000 (approximately 10 people per square mile), emphasizing the region’s rural service-delivery context. Diane introduced Executive Director of the Mother Lode Job Training Board/Mother Lode Workforce Development, Dave Thoeny, and Recreation and Tourism Industry Sector Coordinator, Sierra Jobs First Region, and President of the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation, John Wentworth, as the regional speakers.

[Dave Thoeny](#) described how a small, rural workforce board operates across a large geographic area with limited WIOA formula funding and staffing, requiring creative

service delivery and extensive partnership-building. He explained that their workforce area covers four counties with widely dispersed communities, so they maintain multiple job centers to keep services within reasonable driving distance for job seekers and employers, and they use a lean team to run core operations. He also emphasized that rural regions often have “hardest-to-serve” populations due to distance and limited resources, and that standard performance measures (e.g., counting ITAs) do not fully capture rural innovation, braided funding, and systems-building work—calling for an equity lens in how rural workforce efforts are evaluated and supported. He noted the value of strong relationships and accessibility among rural partners, which helps the region move quickly, pilot innovations, and avoid duplication or waste.

[John Wentworth](#) introduced himself as serving (with an additional partner organization) as the Industry Sector Coordinator for California Jobs First for the Sierra region’s recreation and tourism sector. John explained that in the Sierra Business Council’s regional strategy for the seven-county Sierra region, recreation and tourism was identified as the leading economic sector, and his presentation provided background and initial insights on coordinating that sector’s regional work across all seven counties.

In board discussion, designee Anthony Cordova asked how partnerships with community colleges operate in rural areas, including counties without a community college district. In response, Dave Thoeny described a partnership approach grounded in shared problem-solving and a culture in which the workforce board “orchestrates” solutions rather than acting as the sole solution, while community colleges rely on workforce partners to provide industry voice, inform curriculum, and connect participants. He also emphasized that rural workforce impact is not fully captured by WIOA-only measures, given the extent to which rural regions braid funding and leverage partnerships to deliver services at scale relative to their population.

No public comment was received.

2. Rural Healthcare

Assistant Deputy Secretary of Healthcare Workforce at the Labor & Workforce Development Agency, Jessica Pitt, started the discussion on rural healthcare. She noted that healthcare is a priority sector for many California Jobs First regions, including rural regions, and highlighted California’s award of over \$233 million from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program. She introduced the panelists: Libby Abbott (Deputy Director, Office of Health Workforce Development, HCAI; Designee to CWDB Member Secretary Kim Johnson), Jennifer Burrows (Healthcare Industry Sector Coordinator, Sierra Jobs First Region), and Tina Tvedt Schaible (Director of Grants and Project Implementation, Northern Coast Health Improvement & Information Network (NCHIIN); Redwood Jobs First Region).

[Libby Abbott](#) (HCAI) presented an overview of the California Rural Health Transformation program (CaRHT), describing it as a five-year effort and reiterating the approximate \$233 million first-year award. She described the program's intent as building a connected, resilient rural health system so rural Californians can access person-centered care close to home, and outlined three components: workforce, technology and data infrastructure, and transformative care models, including hub-and-spoke networks linking rural hospitals, clinics, tribal partners, and specialty providers and reducing travel through local access and telehealth.

The panel discussed recruitment and retention barriers in rural healthcare—particularly the pull of urban wages and the pattern of clinicians relocating after completing service/loan repayment commitments. In response to questions about incentives, panelists emphasized “grow-your-own” pathways to develop healthcare workers from within rural communities. [Dr. Jennifer Burrows](#), Healthcare Industry Sector Coordinator, Sierra Jobs First Region, described strategies including reliance on the National Health Service Corps loan repayment and scholarship program, paired with recognition that providers often leave rural practice once loan repayment obligations end. She expressed optimism that K–16 pathway investments could strengthen longer-term retention by building local pipelines.

Panelists also described housing-related retention strategies. Dr. Burrows noted that Mammoth Hospital and Northern Inyo Hospital have purchased workforce housing, and that Mammoth Hospital was exploring down payment support tied to retention commitments; she also described local efforts to use organizational funding for loan reimbursement and referenced CaRHT planning concepts to support housing for resident physicians training locally as a retention strategy.

[Tina Tvedt Schaible](#) summarized Redwood Region's recent healthcare workforce efforts and how the region organized through California Jobs First to address shortages. She noted the region formed a 30+ member advisory council (tribal agencies, education, employers, EDD, and workforce partners across four counties) to develop a healthcare activation plan. She shared data showing major workforce gaps—over 1,000 nurses needed now (about 1,500 by 2030) and significant behavioral health clinician shortages, with additional projected shortfalls in related roles.

She also described aligning the plan with the state's rural health transformation work, including career pathways, technology improvements (e.g., Electronic Health Record system connectivity), and collaboration on new care models. She highlighted a clinical placement consortium to expand training by improving access to clinical sites (including coordination among colleges, employers, tribal organizations, and major hospital systems), and she closed with ways workforce boards can support students via barrier-removal

supports (childcare, housing, tuition/rent help) and learn-and-earn models for frontline roles.

No public comment was received.

4. General Public Comments

No general public comments were received.

5. Adjournment

All CWDB business having concluded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:02 p.m.