



COMMITTEE NAME: Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship

QUARTER: Q4 – October to December 2025

REPORTING PERIOD: September 11-December 3, 2025

IWIB QUARTERLY REPORT

Committee Charges (Purpose & Scope)

CHARGES

Charge 1: Fully integrate apprenticeship and other work-based learning strategies into state workforce development, education, and economic development strategies and programs.

Charge 2: Support the rapid development of new apprenticeship programs and/or the significant expansion of existing programs.

Charge 3: Support the development and recruitment of a diverse pipeline of apprentices.

Charge 4: Build state capacity to make it easier for businesses to start apprenticeship and other work-based learning programs and for workers to access these opportunities.

PRIORITIES

Priority 1: Support statewide efforts to build upon the existing apprenticeship infrastructure to better align partners, funding, and services to integrate and institutionalize within the Illinois workforce ecosystem fully.

Priority 2: Support efforts to strengthen partnerships between apprenticeship and the State and local workforce system.

Priority 3: Help Apprenticeship Illinois target data-driven, high-growth, high-demand industries with quality programs.

Priority 4: Utilize apprenticeships and other work-based learning strategies to align and support the jobs required for public and private investment at the federal, state, and regional levels.

Committee Membership Roster

Name	Title	Affiliation/Role	Term Ends
Anthony Fuhrmann	Director	LWIA 22	NA
Biswa Phuyal	Manager – Business and Workforce Development	IDHS-DRS	NA
Chris Toppin	VP HR	S&C Electric Company	NA
Chynna Hampton	Equity Director	AFL-CIO	NA
Corey Young	Dir., Apprenticeship & WF Solutions	Economic & WF Innovation - DO	NA
Craig Schmidt	Exec. Dir., School of Extended Learning	Governors State University	NA
Daniel Serota (<i>Chair</i>)	VP, Gov. & Public Affairs	Aon	NA
Danielle Kuglin-Seago	Manager, Project Hire-Ed	College of DuPage	NA
Elba Aranda-Suh	Executive Director	NLEI	NA
Erica Thieman	Director	ISBE	NA
Freddie Buckingham	Southern Region BSM	IDES	NA



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Name	Title	Affiliation/Role	Term Ends
Jackie Gallo	Senior Dir. of Programs	Revolution Workshop	NA
Jacob Sitati	Dir. of Policy & Advocacy	Chicago Jobs Council	NA
Jayne Vellinga	Executive Director	CWIT	NA
Julio Rodriguez	Deputy Dir. of the OET	DCEO	NA
Justin Arnold	Director	LWIA 17	NA
Ken Trzaska	President	L&C Community College	NA
Kraig Kistingner	Dir. of HR	National Tube Supply	NA
Larry Fitzpatrick	President & CEO	E&ES	NA
Lazaro Lopez	Interim Superintendent	HSD 214	NA
Lisa Burns-Wojick	Employment Services Placement Manager	Challenge Unlimited, Inc.	NA
Michael Perry	Dir., Employment & Ed.	AFSCME Council 31	NA
Nina Tangman	Dir. of Academic Affairs	IBHE	NA
Rahnee Patrick	Director	IDHS-DRS	NA
Sarah Hartwick	VP of Ed. & WF Policy	IMA	NA
Sheree Speakman	President	Talent First, PBC	NA
Sheryl Morris	Lead	Apprentice Amb.WG	NA
Stephen Lefaver (<i>Vice-Chair</i>)	Dir. of Apprenticeship & Training	NCIFTI	NA
Susan Meehan	VP & Dir., Early Careers	Zurich NA	NA
Terry Stroh	Director	North. Kane Co. Reg. Voc. System	NA
Whitney Thompson	Deputy Dir. for WF Ed.	ICCB	NA

Committee Work Groups

Work Group Name: Apprentice Ambassador Workgroup

Charges

1. Select a yearly cohort of apprentice ambassadors, each sponsored by a representative from their employer organization.
2. Promote the value of apprenticeship through intentional media outreach, highlighting success stories from the ambassador cohort.
3. Provide professional development to equip ambassadors with the skills needed to effectively represent and advocate for the apprenticeship model.



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- Engage the cohort in employer-focused events, and support employer sponsors in leveraging the ambassadors to advocate for apprenticeship opportunities and their expansion.

Priorities

- Ensure statewide and cross-industry representation within each cohort.
- Strengthen partnerships with employer sponsors and apprenticeship specialists to amplify program visibility and impact.

Members: Sheryl Morris (*Lead*), Anthony Fuhrmann, Corey Young, Craig Schmidt, Danielle Kuglin-Seago, Daniel Serota, Jan Keresztes, John Hall, Larry Fitzpatrick, Lazaro Lopez, Sheree Speakman, Sean Glowacz, Taylor Black

Accomplishments This Quarter

Activity/Initiative	Description	Completion Date	Alignment with Strategic Priorities
WBLA Fall Quarterly Meeting	<p>WBLA convened for its fall quarterly virtually. The following topics were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WBLA voted to request to amend their Priorities 3 & 4. Priority 3 was amended to include broader language regarding promising industries. Priority 4 was amended to include broader language regarding state and federal legislation. WBLA voted to approve "Work-Based Learning in Illinois: Insights & Action" as a product of the committee. This is the final report and recommendations from the Work-Based Learning Workgroup. WBLA voted, to allow for confidential discussion of potential WBLA Catalyst programs, for a small team of members to be assembled to choose a Catalyst twice a year. WBLA will then vote to approve said Catalyst at its subsequent quarterly meeting. The first Catalyst would then be selected in November. WBLA whiteboarded potential next steps to increase the number and quality of work-based learning programming in Illinois. They covered recommendations 1–4 of the abovementioned report. <p>Outcomes from the whiteboarding discussions were compiled and shared with the committee at meeting's end. There were 36 attendees.</p>	September 11, 2025	Charges 1–4 Priorities 1–4
Apprentice Ambassador WG Monthly Meeting	<p>The workgroup met to discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only two applications were received up to this point. The workgroup decided to hold an employer information session to increase interest 	September 25, 2025	Charge 3 Priority 2



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	<p>in the program and to allow two ambassadors per business. Appropriate changes were made to the website and promotional materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 2026 curriculum was presented to the workgroup for feedback. All sessions will be monthly and virtual. Throughout there will be community of practice sessions, allowing for honest real-time feedback from the cohort. The workgroup decided to have two employer community of practice sessions for the sponsors to gain their perspective as well. 		
Apprentice Ambassador Employer Information Session	The Apprentice Ambassador Program hosted a virtual employer information session to increase interest in the program and answer any questions. The session was posted to ApprenticeshipIL.com as a reference point for any employers who couldn't attend. The session presented an overview of the program curriculum, purpose, goals, and changes for 2026. There were 11 attendees, including Educare West DuPage, Zurich North American Insurance, and McDonald's.	October 17, 2025	Charge 3 Priority 2
"Understanding PR with Ryan Huffer"	Ryan Huffer, City of Decatur, presented the final professional development session for the 2025 Apprentice Ambassador cohort. He presented his experiences in working with public relations, along with lessons that he's learned. He particularly emphasized the importance of saying "yes" to opportunities, and how to stay on message during an interview. The cohort then completed their end of year survey for the workgroup to review at their December meeting. There were 18 attendees.	November 12, 2025	Charge 3 Priority 2
"Work-Based Learning in Illinois: Insights & Action"	The final report and recommendations from the Work-Based Learning Workgroup was completed and underwent graphic design. The report was sent to WBLA and the IWIB via email. A memo was drafted co-signed by Dir. Kristin Richards (IWIB Co-Chair), Andrew Warrington (IWIB Co-Chair), and Daniel Serota (WBLA Chair) to request that the Governor's Office join the IWIB in disseminating the findings of the report. The IWIB will vote to approve the report as a product of the IWIB at their Winter Quarterly Meeting.	November 12, 2025	Charges 1, 4 Priorities 1–3
Apprentice Ambassador WG Monthly Meeting	The workgroup convened to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sheryl Morris discussed plans for 2026. The focus will be executing the program with polish, as great care has been taken to create the 	November 13, 2025	Charge 3 Priority 2



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<p>– 2026 Apprentice Ambassador Cohort Selected</p>	<p>program in years one and two. To ensure that none of the curriculum feels improvised, changes to the program will be held (barring emergency) for the 2027 curriculum. The workgroup will meet quarterly in 2026. Discussion will focus on logistics, improvements for 2027, and brainstorming employer engagement for the 2026 cohort. Morris showed the workgroup the completed plan — which outlines the steps needed to carry out the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sheryl Morris requested a co-chair for 2026. - The workgroup debriefed regarding “Understanding PR with Ryan Huffer.” - The 2026 Apprentice Ambassador Cohort was selected. <p>Info and bios for the 2026 cohort will be compiled into a booklet. An announcement will be posted to ApprenticeshipIL.com and individual social media highlights will be posted for each ambassador on ApprenticeshipIL social media. The 2026 cohort was contacted regarding their admittance. They will submit their signed apprentice/employer agreement forms and media liability waivers by the start of December.</p> <p>Sixteen Ambassadors make up the new cohort. They represent the following businesses: Zurich North American Insurance, German American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest, Aon, Educare West DuPage, Northwestern Medicine, Lake County Workforce Development, McDonald’s, Fermi Forward Discovery Group, United Airlines, Allstate, Accenture, Associated Constructors, and Birkey’s.</p>		
<p>Will Works Podcast – Featuring Hanna Val</p>	<p>Hanna Val, United Airlines’ Apprentice Ambassador, was featured on the Will Works Podcast, hosted by Joliet Junior College’s Patrick Hall. Sheryl Morris joined to provide some insight into the program. Click this link to listen to Val’s episode: “How United Airlines Invests in Its Next Generation of Talent.”</p>	<p>November 14, 2025</p>	<p>Charge 3 Priority 2</p>
<p>WBLA Catalysts Review Meeting</p>	<p>The WBLA Catalysts review team met virtually to review candidates and select the first Catalyst. A few of the following observations were made to the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The application should note the importance of concrete numbers to know the amount of customers served. 	<p>November 21, 2025</p>	<p>Charge 2 Priority 3</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The initiative should investigate whether awardees will be kept to employers or programs, as the judging criteria would be different. If both are to be highlighted, a possible solution would be to have one of the two yearly Catalysts be an employer and the other be a program. - The rubric worked well for team members who couldn't attend the meeting to give their feedback ahead of time, but the process needs refining for the next cycle. <p>A final two were selected, and a final decision on a Catalyst was made on November 24th.</p>		
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Challenges & Barriers

Engage with the work. WBLA requests IWIB support in sharing the following:

- [Submit a WBLA Catalyst](#). Do you know a person, team, or program that is doing great work in work-based learning? Let WBLA know.
- Read the final report of the Work-Based Learning Workgroup, "[Work-Based Learning in Illinois: Insights & Action](#)."
- Listen to Hanna Val, Apprentice Ambassador, and Patrick Hall's, Joliet Junior College, latest episode of the Will Works Podcast, "[How United Airlines Invests in Its Next Generation of Talent](#)."

Upcoming Activities/Goals for Next Quarter

- **2025 Ambassador Award Ceremony:** The 2025 cohort will receive their awards for their participation in the Apprentice Ambassador Program at the WBLA Winter Quarterly Meeting.
- **First WBLA Catalyst:** The first Catalyst will be featured by the IWIB and by WBLA. They will receive an award and a 10-minute guest speaker spot at the WBLA Spring Quarterly Meeting.
- **2026 Apprentice Ambassador Cohort:** The new Cohort will meet in January for their Kick-Off – a rundown of everything they'll need to know for the year ahead.
- **2027 Apprentice Ambassador Applications:** The website and application will be updated for 2027 in early 2026 to allow for the application to be open year-round.
- **Next Steps for Work-Based Learning Expansion:** WBLA will continue to brainstorm ways to push the needle forward to increase the number and quality of work-based learning programming in Illinois.