Minutes of the SOUTHEAST TENNESSEE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Smart Factory Institute at the P.I.E. Center |2215 Parker Street NE, Cleveland, TN
March 11, 2026 | 11:30 a.m. ET

Board members in attendance included Marshall Graves, John Proffitt, Blake Markham, Ethan Loyd, Wesley Skinner, Joe Coke proxy for Josh Ewing, Leslie Travis, Barbara Brakebill, proxy for Susan Hatto, Rebecca Ashford, Becky Sneed, proxy for Corey Raburn, Jennifer Thacker, and Bob White proxy for Tucker McClendon.

SETD and board staff included Michele Holt, Don Kellerman, Allison Schiavo, Reece Stevens, Alicia Zuidema, Maty Partin, Christi Chapman, Quinita Robinson, and Kelsey Rozzell.

Guests included: Bradley County Mayor Gary Davis, Doug Berry, Autumn Derrick, Carmen O'Hagan, Tamera Parsons, Wendolyn Davis, Jason Bell, Hannah Young, Gwendolyn Creech, William Saxton, Shavonne Smith, and John Squires, Cynthia Brooks, and Bo Drake.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Chairman Marshall Graves. He welcomed the members and elected officials. Christi Chapman called roll, and Michele Holt declared a quorum was present. As required by Tennessee law, Chairman Graves called for public comments, and none were brought forth.

Approval of the Minutes
Chairman Graves called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2025, meeting. On a motion from Ethan Loyd and a second from Blake Markham the minutes were unanimously approved.

Administrative Reports
Financial Reports
Chairman Graves called on Reece Stevens to provide the Financial Report. Reece continued to the January 31, 2026 Financial Report. Reece reported the budgeted revenues, in the amount of $5,108,481 and actual expenses for the year at $2,217,301. Actual expenditures for the period totaled 43**%**, resulting in a variance of -15.3%. He noted this variance is being monitored closely and is trending slightly behind for the seventh month of the fiscal year. This is attributed to staff turnover, and the recent restructuring of service provider being moved to the board level. Additionally, with seven months reported, the MPCR is at 47% and is within the 40% minimum.

Reece continued with the Financial Status Report and noted the FY25 carryover contracts are fully expended at 100%. The PY26 Adult and Dislocated Worker contracts are on track. He explained these are the initial contracts that when combined with the carryover funds support the bridge between the program year and fiscal federal year for the first quarter July-September of each year. Utilization of the FY26 Adult and Dislocated contracts is low, but expenditures were slow in the first quarter as stated previously. Other Grants are also reporting as anticipated. The NDWG is trending behind budget and is similar to other grants that are for direct participant services for eligible WIOA Dislocated Workers. The TYEP grant for youth work experience is slightly above budget as it was intended for the largest portion of that funding to be expended in the summer of 2025. The TYEP Vocational Rehabilitation grant was received later and is trending further behind. Several new grants have just been received and haven't been obligated and therefore have no expenditures. The contracts covering the infrastructure expenses are in line with the budget.

After some discussion, Chairman Graves called for a motion to approve the January 31, 2026 Financial Report. On a motion from John Proffitt and a second from Leslie Travis, the January 31, 2026 Financial Report was unanimously approved.

Chairman Graves asked Reece Stevens to present Budget Amendment III. Reece reported the amendment includes an increase to TYEP, the new Incumbent Worker Training grant, and a new federal apprenticeship grant for a total increase

of $281,979. This includes the total program and administrative line items which are used for staff salaries that support the grant.

Chairman Graves called for a motion to approve Budget Amendment IIII. On a motion from Jennifer Thacker and a second from Wesley Skinner, the motion was unanimously approved.

Committee Reports

Chairman Graves called for a motion to approve the committee reports for Operations, Youth and Opportunities Committees. These reports were made available in advance for review. On a motion by Blake Markham and a second by Jennifer Thacker, the committee reports were unanimously approved.

Chairman Graves called on Michele to provide a report on the recent Bylaws Committee. Michele noted the committee reviewed and made the following recommendations for updates to the bylaws. They are as follows:

- Removal of the requirement for three designated officers and reassignment of related administrative duties to the Executive Director.
- Addition of language establishing procedures for selecting a presiding member in the absence of the Board Chairman.
- Dissolution of the standing Youth Committee.
- Expansion of the Opportunities Committee to include oversight of all target populations, including youth programs.

On a recommendation from the Bylaws Review Committee, Chairman Graves called for a second to the updates of the bylaws for the Southeast Tennessee Local Workforce Board. Ethan Loyd seconded, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Southeast Workforce Update

Chairman Graves called on Michele Holt to provide brief administrative updates. Michele noted the workforce system continues to strengthen community engagement by expanding outreach efforts and delivering services directly within the community, resulting in less need to visit traditional brick-and-mortar facilities. Concurrently, funding strategies are being realigned to prioritize key initiatives, ensuring resources are directed toward the most impactful services and outcomes. To further support regional economic growth, the board is increasing engagement with business and industry partners through the expansion of sector-based committees, fostering stronger collaboration and alignment with workforce needs.

As previously outlined in the budget modification, the local area received funding to support federal apprenticeships, additional TYEP participants, and new funding for incumbent worker training. The local area will continue to pursue and leveraging additional funding opportunities to enhance service delivery and support these strategic priorities.

Southeast Workforce Board Assessment and Certification

Chairman Graves called on Tamera Parson with the University of Tennessee's Center for Industrial Services to present the current framework for board certification. She outlined the standards for governance, accountability, and performance management that will be reviewed during the assessment. Members were also informed of the upcoming self-assessment process and the timeline for evaluation, reinforcing the Board's commitment to transparency, continuous improvement, and alignment with best practices. After some questions and discussion among board members on next steps, the presentation concluded.

Local Planning and Economic Development Trends

Jonathan Connell, Economic Development Director for the Southeast Industrial Development Board at the Southeast Tennessee Development District, presented regional economic development insights and broader workforce strategy trends impacting planning efforts. Key challenges identified include limited infrastructure capacity, workforce depth in

technical sectors, and site readiness constraints, while opportunities exist in competitive labor costs, proximity to major supply chains, and emerging technologies.

In preparation for submitting the local plan modification, Michele Holt provided updates on federal and state initiatives and emphasized alignment with America's Talent Strategy, including priorities around industry-driven workforce solutions, system integration, and outcome-based accountability. These discussions reinforce the importance of strategic alignment between workforce development, economic development, and education systems to support long-term regional growth and competitiveness.

Election of Board Chairman
Chairman Graves addressed the Board and offered remarks reflecting on his tenure as Chairman. He then recognized John Proffitt to present the report of the Nominating Committee.

Mr. Proffitt reported that the Nominating Committee convened on February 26, 2026, and, on behalf of the Committee, placed into nomination Blake Markham for the position of Board Chairman.

Chairman Graves acknowledged the nomination and opened the floor for additional nominations. Barbara Brakebill moved to close nominations, and Leslie Travis seconded the motion. The motion carried, and nominations were closed. Chairman Graves then called for a vote. The Board unanimously approved the election of Blake Markham as Chairman for the 2027–2028 term.

Other Business
Chairman Graves announced future meetings were listed at the bottom of the agenda, and all locations were to be determined. He called for any other business, and hearing none, the board meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent after a motion by John Proffit and a second by Jennifer Thacker.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Holt
Executive Director