



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – JULY 22, 2026 ELAINE DENTON, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Denton, Mr. Brown, Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Meaker

ALSO PRESENT: Chairwoman Watts, Ms. Block; also see attached list

Chair Denton called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. CNY WORKS: Rosemary Avila, Chief Executive Officer

a. INFORMATIONAL: Overview of Programs and Annual Report

(Attachment No. 1: CNY Works Program Overview 2025-2-2026)

- Local workforce development board serving as a hub of workforce development, convening job seekers, training providers, businesses, and other workforce development programs
- Mission is to be the single point of entry for Onondaga County for workforce development
- Goal is to bring businesses together, analyze future needs and demands in the area, and upskill and reskill individuals to be ready for jobs coming to the area
- Vision focuses on critical workforce, economic development, and education opportunities, working with community-based organizations, providers, and entities to meet demand
- Serves primarily job seekers and employers
 - Job seekers include those needing reskilling and upskilling, participants in the summer and year-long youth employment programs, and anyone underpaid or unemployed referred from unemployment insurance through the Department of Labor
 - Employers served through on-the-job training (OJT) or incumbent worker training, all tied to in-demand occupations designated by New York Department of Labor
- Considered part of the Central New York tier for in-demand occupations, shared with Oswego, Cortland, Cayuga, and Onondaga Counties
 - Focus sectors are healthcare, education, manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and construction; all grants and programs are heavily focused on these sectors
- Workforce development board has two elements: the board and the career center
 - Board level governed by WIOA federal requirements regarding board composition, typically 51% businesses and 49% others, including government, community-based organizations, and other entities
 - Builds on partnerships to connect job seekers with industries; collaborates with other boards
 - Board also composed of individuals representing in-demand occupations, including union representatives and higher education, some serving by memorandum of understanding with the state and federal government
 - Required board members include OCM BOCES, OCC, Centerstate, and labor unions such as IBEW 43 and the carpenters

- PY25 total requests received: 2,506
 - To access services, individuals go to cnyworks.com, fill out a service request, and receive an automated email; someone from the team follows up within three days
 - Program year runs July 1 to June 30
- Of those requesting services, 28.8% (722) were working and 71.2% (1,784) were not working
- Most requested service: job search assistance (49.2%), including resume writing, job applications, and mock interviews
- 44.2% seeking training assistance, which translates into an Individual Training Account (ITA)
 - ITA is a federal WIOA program providing tuition assistance for certifications, micro-credentials, or training leading to a job
 - WIOA is the resource of last resort; applicants must first exhaust other resources available in Onondaga County
- Training assistance also includes supportive services, covering childcare, car repair, boots, gear, textbooks, transportation, and bicycle purchases, among others, once other resources are exhausted

Questions/Comments:

- Ms. Denton: When you say exhaust all the resources, how do they show that
- Ms. Avila: Usually it's a letter from the provider or the entity, showing they've actually been denied, or that those resources are not available, or that they're not eligible; so it's proof of denial or unreceivable those eligibility
- Mr. Meaker: Could you define WIOA
- Ms. Avila: WIOA is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; it exists since being reratified in 2014, before that it was WIA, and now it's WIOA. It's the core pillar of a workforce development board, and it focuses on services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth, and then underneath those you have individuals with disabilities, justice involved, and everyone else who's eligible. To be eligible under WIOA you have to be facing a barrier or challenge getting back into the workforce; it's a very broad definition, and there are different criteria, but some individuals may not be eligible while others will
- Mr. Meaker: Of the 1,784 people that contacted CNY Works that were not working, how many of those got a job through CNY Works? Do you have that number
- Ms. Avila: That's a very interesting question. It's a little hard to track, because if they're still in the phase where they've contacted us and we're still working with them, we can't really prove that as an outcome. Other individuals may just have filled out a service request and we never heard from them again. So yes, we can track it, but I'm afraid it's not going to be accurate
- Mr. Brown: You mentioned people can sign up with the service request online. Do you take walk-ins? How does that work
- Ms. Avila: We don't, unfortunately, because everything is based on appointment
- Mr. Brown: So can someone call and make an appointment, if they can't use a computer
- Ms. Avila: We have a computer, and we have a resource room in our office; someone will walk in as a walk-in and be directed to the resource room, where they can fill out a service request and hear from someone in three days. If someone wants to walk in and just get a service or talk to someone there, they can get very basic information, but they don't receive services on a walk-in basis

Presentation continued:

- 23.9% of requests were for resource help, such as resume help for anyone verifying, checking, or updating their resume
- A large share of individuals come through referral networks; per WIOA, every WIOA recipient's local workforce board has to be co-located with the state Department of Labor

- Co-located with New York Department of Labor, which focuses on unemployment insurance; individuals receiving unemployment insurance who want training or supportive services get registered through CNY Works
- Reflected in the 14% figure attributed to OCM BOCES, and 1.1% attributed to workers' compensation, with 351 requests coming through that referral, described as a very impressive number
- ITAs (individual training accounts): 215 funded in PY25
 - Biggest sectors are CDL, nursing (LPN and RN), HVAC, electrical maintenance, construction, heavy equipment, welding, and other
- Two youth programs: one funded through WIOA, and the summer youth employment program funded through OTDA via county DSS, along with a year-round program called YEP (Youth Employment Program)
 - Summer 2025 program ran July 7 to August 22, seven weeks, with each youth working 25 hours; served 666 kids
 - 270 kids could not be served due to insufficient funding; usually a long waiting list
 - All youth complete a three-hour training on financial literacy and sexual harassment prevention, mandated statewide by OTDA
 - Worksites this year included photography, legal justice, coaching, veterinary work, and barbering; department tries to place youth outside the fast food environment and into career pathways or entrepreneurship, including interest in opening barber shops

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: You mentioned the ones that couldn't be served. Is it purely that the dollars aren't there, or do we not have enough employers? Would we be able to place them if the funding was present
- Ms. Avila: Usually we don't have enough worksites, although for the last two years we've been very lucky to have enough worksites; the roughly 270 not served this year was because of funding
- Ms. Denton: Where does that money come from
- Ms. Avila: OTDA, the state Office of Temporary Disability, funds it to DSS; DSS is the recipient and CNY Works becomes the sub-recipient. The model in New York State is that local workforce boards act as the sub-recipients running the program. For many years DSS has given CNY Works 100% of the allocation; that was not the case this year. It's a great program. We're grateful to the state that continues to fund it
- Mr. Meaker: Why was that not the case this year
- Ms. Avila: This year they kept some of the money; they did not give us 100% of the allocation, they kept a portion of it

Presentation continued:

- Quest Grant: federal grant with New York Department of Labor as recipient and CNY Works as sub-recipient; stands for Quality Jobs Equity Strategy and Training, a disaster recovery national dislocated worker grant
 - Awarded September 30, 2023; set to end this September
 - Goal is to strengthen and supplement workforce initiatives around Onondaga County, mainly related to I-81
 - Onondaga County was assigned as the sole recipient; focus has been on careers in infrastructure, construction, advanced manufacturing, and care economy
 - Care economy has meant childcare, which has been challenging to get off the ground; infrastructure, construction, and advanced manufacturing have been very successful
- Priority population includes underemployed, unemployed, low-income individuals, women and minorities, formerly justice-involved individuals, and members of the Onondaga Nation

- Priority industries include heavy equipment, heavy highway construction, logistics, transportation, and care economy
- Job readiness boot camp component: 60-hour, three-week intensive preparing participants for careers in construction and manufacturing
 - 90% completion rate so far; four complete cohorts run, with a fifth cohort graduating Monday at 100% graduation
 - 80% of participants have been justice involved; first cohort was 100% justice involved
 - Enrolled 42, 38 graduated; expected graduation number by September 26 is 80
 - Intend to run seven cohorts total; two more remain before September 30

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: Do you track job placement for this group
- Ms. Avila: Yes, we do. So far an individual has been placed at Salt City Construction, another has been offered a job as a roofer with a private company, and two are working in a union pre-apprenticeship program. These individuals do face significant barriers; some have just left prison a week prior and are in the boot camp. There's a strong partnership with the Onondaga County re-entry task force, which many referrals come from, and case management is a big part of tracking closely outcomes of job placement
- Mr. Brown: Do we engage with the employers in any way to say, we have these people, we're training them; what do you want them to be trained in? In addition, will they let us know beforehand, we don't want people with a record? I find that we do the training, people get through the program, we're happy they get the certificate, and then the employers won't hire them, and that becomes frustrating because the employers could have said that in the beginning. Do we have that conversation ahead of time?
- Ms. Avila: Yes. Embedded in the job readiness boot camp, employers come and present to participants, and that's how most hiring happens, including carpenters, unions, and laborers; there's also a solid partnership with the Syracuse Building Exchange. On the second part, CNY Works works with employers that are justice-involved hire friendly, and tries to educate the ones that are not on the benefits of hiring individuals with justice involvement
 - What the participants receive during the boot camp: job readiness, financial literacy, career tools, digital literacy, career exploration, and supportive services such as bus passes for transportation; VR headsets belonging to New York Department of Labor are used for career exploration mainly in manufacturing and construction, along with various career tools and some incorporation of artificial intelligence into the training
 - Currently recruiting for cohort six; cohort five graduated Monday, July 20
 - Anyone interested can be directed to the CNY Works website and note interest in the pre-employment boot camp on the service request

Presentation continued:

- Employer partnership and work-based training, also part of WIOA, includes on-the-job training (OJT) and incumbent worker training
 - OJT participants are placed at a job site but do not yet have the necessary skills, usually identified by the employer; CNY Works can cover up to 50% of hourly wages for up to a set number of hours in good faith the person will remain a permanent employee
 - 37 individuals placed in on-the-job training this program year; 13 in incumbent worker training
 - Incumbent worker training serves individuals currently performing a job who need a credential, certification, or training to stay active and up to speed, whether the business trains staff or an individual is trained directly
 - Partnered businesses include NFI Industries, Forge, and TKT General Construction, among smaller partners, reflected in the CDL trucking and advanced manufacturing industries

- CNY Works is one of 33 local workforce boards in New York State and one of 594 in the US and territories

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Knapp: The On-Ramp program, a state program, right? How do you work with or parallel? How does that work
- Ms. Avila: On-Ramp is a state program with its own construction and manufacturing focus, including Syracuse Build; CNY Works doesn't work very closely with them yet. There were initial conversations about creating a referral process with a station at On-Ramp, so individuals who wouldn't qualify or be eligible under On-Ramp would be served at CNY Works; that has not materialized, and CNY Works is still waiting to hear more from them
- Mr. Meaker: What type of advertising, or events throughout the county, does CNY Works do? With the office on James Street, does CNY Works expand throughout the county
- Ms. Avila: CNY Works is the one-stop shop required by law for the local workforce board; under current leadership, satellite offices have been established, with staff going on a daily schedule to OCC and OCM BOCES, conversations about enrollments, and current conversations with libraries, having already met with Liverpool, Manlius, and Central about a workforce advisor having hours at those libraries. CNY Works is in a strategic location near a bus stop on James Street, but the idea is to meet individuals where they are, especially in Liverpool, Manlius, Beville
- Mr. Meaker: That's what's most important to me, that the outreach is getting to the entire county to reach people who may not even know about CNY Works. I think you have about a \$6 million budget, correct
- Ms. Avila: About \$7 million
- Mr. Meaker: And the county's funding is about \$50,000, correct
- Ms. Avila: Correct
- Mr. Meaker: But it's still helpful
- Ms. Avila: Yes, we're very grateful
- Mr. Meaker: To have the entire county involved in one of my major concerns. I am glad that you are taking some focus on that
- Ms. Avila: Yes, it's a challenge for new Americans in particular, where someone may want services but can't drive or go very far. The goal is to keep expanding to Liverpool, Beville, and Manlius; expanding Tilly; the biggest limitation is staff, since removing a staff member from the office to do outreach means one less person serving individuals in the office, so there's a balance to strategize around maintaining focus and momentum
- Mr. Brown: From your perspective looking at workforce development, do you find the demand is higher for people looking for work but not enough employers, or employers looking for people that can't be placed? Which would you say
- Ms. Avila: After COVID it was the first scenario, with people not going back to the workforce; right now it's a sweet spot, with enough jobs for people to go into, though there's still a need to reskill and upskill more individuals for coming demand, watching the Micron project, supply chains, and Chobani closely; it may get to a point where more workers are needed
- Mr. Brown: Are employers looking for people with specific skills and traits rather than entry-level people, or is that not the case
- Ms. Avila: Entry level is always a challenge but less so because training can happen; the bigger challenge is getting people to mid to higher levels, since it's not always known whether an individual who's been there a long time can be promoted, leaving a vacancy to fill. Conversations with businesses go both ways, but the overall position is better than right after COVID
- Ms. Watts: With the forthcoming SNAP changes currently unfolding, anticipating people accessing employment who previously may not have, particularly in the New American community, with both

the ABAWD work requirements as well as folks who are losing access to SNAP altogether, what training is provided to frontline workers, since they're the ones interacting with people coming in the door? Technology access is a significant issue in many communities; what training is provided on work authorization requirements and paperwork requirements to ensure a dignified experience for people walking into CNY Works

- Ms. Avila: There's a partnership with DSS; every Tuesday and Thursday, two DSS staff are on site where individuals who receive a letter or notice come in for orientation, with a staff member speaking about all the services and what's needed to complete a service request. Anyone eligible under CNY Works programs needs to be a US citizen or a legally permanent status, or has TPS or work authorization; staff have been trained to provide referrals to anyone who does not meet that requirement to Interfaith Works or other community-based organizations to help navigate those challenges about workforce
- Ms. Watts: To clarify, for those losing TPS status, which is an ever-moving target, how is that being communicated with community members when they encounter that
- Ms. Avila: When someone comes in without TPS and is still looking for work, they have to tell CNY Works they've lost it; there's no mechanism to verify employment unless it's physical, and CNY Works doesn't go into a system to verify that
- Ms. Watts: Secondary question regarding summer youth employment, grateful the program exists, and it's a huge asset for community members in my district. One challenge is families not being aware of when the application opens, missing the opportunity because it fills up quickly. What efforts are being made to make sure community members, not just students but also parents, are aware when the application opens
- Ms. Avila: The application usually goes live in early April; this time, emails are being sent to previous customers or participants, information is shared with all school districts; counselors are helping those youth fill out those applications and bringing them in; it's posted on the CNY Works website; used social media in the past
 - Notable that in early April, telling parents to look out for the website; inquiries begin as early as before January, so families are told to watch the website starting then, with a mass communication also going out by email
- Ms. Denton: With the federal administration, are we seeing any cuts to this vital program, and is the state stepping up to fill those gaps? Any update
- Ms. Avila: Yes, received a shortage of 13%; expected 20%, lucky to say just 13%. WIOA funds are dispersed by the federal government to each state's governor, who in New York hands it to the Department of Labor; the state has also received a cut and has to cover its own needs as a result, but has been actively looking for federal grants to supplement those shortages and keeping CNY Works up to date

2. COUNTY LEGISLATURE:

- a. Resolution Calling on the New York State Legislature to Pass, and the Governor to Sign, the Good Food NY (New York) Bill, Enabling Municipalities to Engage in Values-Based Food Procurement (*Sponsored by Ms. Block, Mr. Knapp*) – David Knapp, County Legislator
 - Thanked Legislator Block for bringing this forward and allowing co-sponsorship
 - Important legislation New York State is considering; encouraged its passage
 - New York State's current purchasing system is strict low bidder wins, without much room for extra considerations, based purely on dollars and cents
 - Particularly for larger institutions like school districts, favors large conglomerate corporations that can take advantage of economies of scale, often blocks out local producers

- Example: schools and institutions forced to buy Washington State apples due to the bidding system, despite local apples being grown right down the street or elsewhere in the state, and not being as good
- From a sustainability standpoint, trucking apples 3,000 miles across the country doesn't make sense when local apples are available fresh
- Bill would give buyers flexibility to consider sourcing and how it would benefit local institutions and farms
- Onondaga County passed a best value purchasing program several years ago accomplishing something similar, allowing the purchasing department to consider these factors when scoring bids to help local companies compete
- New York State has also stepped up to give school districts and other institutions extra money to buy local; this bill is a missing piece of that puzzle; encouraged support for the resolution

A motion was made by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. DISCUSSION: Proposed ADA Committee, County-Wide Accessibility Standards and Oversight – Nicole Watts, Chairwoman

- Clerk gave a briefing a couple of months ago on ADA standards changing at the state level regarding access to meetings, agendas, online presence, minutes, and presentations
- Triggered a broader conversation about accessibility at the Legislature and desire to look more deeply at making spaces accessible to community members and the county at large
- Also reviewing outside boards and commissions; a Council for the Disabled went defunct essentially in 1999
- Looking to re-energize that committee under a new name using nomenclature that is more dignified and respectful for those impacted and needing accessibility opportunities
- Looking to better understand what that nomenclature ought to be, who ought to be represented on the council, and what it would take to be successful
- Coming to each committee because accessibility isn't just a health and human services issue, it's an everything issue; asked whether there's anything from a planning and economic development standpoint that should be considered as the council is set up

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Knapp: Our committee already oversees a few things out of the community development department, including the Shape Up program and Shape Up for Veterans program, both good programs to help with accessibility and keeping folks in their homes; not new programs, but ones that should be encouraged and continued, with ways to expand depending on what works
- Mr. Eriksen: Would a reference to that committee be something that could or should potentially be included in contracts for agencies this committee oversees
- Ms. Watts: Could be a suggestion for the committee to consider. The committee will be established by vote on August 4, assuming it passes, with appointments made the following month. Looking for the council to offer up ideas, identifying issues and suggesting what should be done to address them; if related to planning and economic development, expecting the council to bring suggestions to this committee
 - Wants to make sure the council has teeth and is a meaningful use of members' time to help solve these issues; legislative, community, and departmental participation have been suggested
 - Invited members to email herself or Legislator Block with anything else that comes to mind, noting the resolution is coming to Ways and Means next week and to session in August
 -

c. INFORMATIONAL: Data Center Study Update – Elaine Denton, County Legislator

- RFP for the data center study has been released; responses due August 5 by 3:00 p.m
- RFP states a decision would be made three to five weeks after proposals are submitted
- Governor has issued an executive order, a good first step, but it only applies to data centers, 50 megawatts and bigger
- The Legislature’s Responsible Data Centers Development Act would apply to projects over 20 megawatts; still needs the Governor’s signature
- Reminder that current moratoriums are temporary; the county’s data center study is a proactive measure to help local municipalities understand impacts, update codes, and create best practices depending on how communities want to move forward
- Will continue to follow the process closely and provide updates

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Knapp: Did you say August 5th
- Ms. Denton: August 5th is when proposals are due

C. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. Brown, to adjourn the meeting; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
DATE: **JULY 22, 2026**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Rosemary Aule Tru	CNY Works, Inc.