



COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Hilton City Center, Denver, CO

NOTE: You must have a name badge to attend any meetings, sessions and receptions.

TUESDAY | JUNE 3, 2025

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. | **Welcome Reception** | Denver Ballroom Pre-function, Lower Level 2

WEDNESDAY | JUNE 4, 2025
MEETING ROOM: Denver 1 (Lower Level 2)

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | **Breakfast** | Penrose Ballroom (Lower Level 1)

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | **Agenda Overview, Ice Breaker, and Approval of Minutes (Denver 1)**

Diane Watkins, Committee Chair, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

1. Overview of Agenda
2. Ice Breaker
3. Approve Minutes: [View February Meeting Notes](#) | [View March Meeting Notes](#)
Dawn Dovre (SD) made a motion, Chris Barron (WA) seconded, minutes approved.
4. Thank you to our 2024-2025 Committee Leadership Team!

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | **Welcome & Updates**

- **Scott B. Sanders**, President and CEO, NASWA
- **Marcia Hultman**, Secretary, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation
- **Joe M. Barela, Board Chair**, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Scott Sanders (NASWA) provided policy updates affecting state workforce agencies and highlighted NASWA's advocacy efforts with USDOL. He mentioned upcoming hearings on UI fraud and encouraged committee members to have talking points prepared. NASWA will share legislative updates with the Committee. He also mentioned that employee morale is top of mind for board members.

Marcia Hultman (SD) spoke about the value of the communications committee and her early history with the Committee. She also highlighted the value that communications professionals bring to their agencies with both internal and external outreach.

Joe Barela (CO) spoke about his background in workforce development and provided an overview of CDLE. He also emphasized how critical communications messaging is and encouraged members to contribute content to the NASWA newsletter.

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | **Welcome to Colorado! | CDLE Showcase**

Cher Haavind & Jessica Smith, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

- [Link to Presentation](#)

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. | **Beverage Break**

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. | **Workgroup Updates**

Workgroup & Resources Updates – Need Members!

Onboarding Workgroup: **Lisa Fitz-Coy (NASWA)**

Lisa Fitz-Coy (NASWA) provided updates on the workgroup's efforts to welcome new members and encourage members to participate in the committee and attend meetings. Lindsey Lindsay (CO) agreed to serve as a point of contact for Region 5.

Outreach Workgroup: **Erin Turbitt (WY)** – Lead *(new)*

Erin Turbitt (WY) and Greg Mette (NASWA) provided updates on the workgroup's monthly social media campaigns. Cher Haavind (CO) suggested creating additional campaigns around family leave.

Resources Workgroup: **Dawn Dovre (SD)** – Lead

Dawn Dovre (SD) provided updates on the workgroup's goals to conduct a survey, provide resources on crisis communications, and reorganize content in the Teams resource channel to be easier to navigate. The workgroup also established a naming convention to streamline file names.

AI Workgroup: **Patrice Kendrick (TN)** – Lead

Patrice Kendrick (TN) provided updates on the workgroup's goal to gather use cases on communications AI. Committee members are encouraged to complete the survey, as NASWA will be compiling a report on how states are using AI in communications, to be able to present an AI showcase in September. NASWA will ask the onboarding workgroup to share the survey with Committee members.

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. | **Sharing State Practices**

Meeting attendees can select a topic below on which to share practices. Each state will have 5 – 10 minutes to share and can use a PPT presentation, website, video or other format. This sharing of state practices allows the best leveraging of our collective membership to hear what works, what doesn't and provides ideas to take back home to implement.

All materials are saved in the Teams resource channel in their specific topic folder.

States Sharing Practices:

Outreach Campaigns

-Erin Turbitt (WY): [Forge Your Future Campaign](#) | [Video](#)

Wyoming used [Kalen Marketing](#) to develop a campaign to highlight in-demand occupations across Wyoming's growing industries, including manufacturing, construction and trades, hospitality and tourism, and healthcare.

-Cheryl Myers (GA): ["EVA" Employee Virtual Agent](#) | [Video](#)

Technical College System of Georgia rebranded its virtual agent that provides one-on-one interactive assistance at one-stop centers, campuses, and libraries in 7-8 counties across

Georgia. They created the “EVA” avatar and a video campaign and are planning additional campaigns (less than \$10K) to bring awareness to the service. They use Adobe Premiere to create the animations (using AI to mimic facial animations).

-Andrew Rainville (VT): [Strategic Emails, Strong Engagement](#)

Vermont highlighted its various email campaigns targeted at specific audiences. They collaborate with program staff to gather content and have generated a strong click rate. They currently send out a weekly jobs newsletter, a quarterly apprenticeship newsletter, a monthly career explorer newsletter, and a newsletter for employers that includes employer spotlights (sent every two months). In the future, they are planning to refine some of the newsletters and also introduce a Veterans Newsletter.

-Patrice Kendrick (TN): [Rural Works Campaign](#) | [Website](#)

Tennessee developed a comprehensive campaign to highlight rural healthcare career opportunities. Assets included a press release, a toolkit, a commercial, and a website. The toolkit includes a branding guide, 15 and 30-second commercials, one-pagers, a rack card, and social media videos.

-Tara Hutchison (AL)

Alabama's workforce agency recently reorganized and is undergoing a rebranding campaign. They have released an RFP and are hoping to show some progress by the September meeting. Alabama is also working on recruitment initiatives for the state, to fill 12,000 vacant jobs. They held an in-person job fair with all state agencies (70), 1,400 job seekers attended, and they tracked success by reviewing new hire data.

-Cher Haavind & Jessica Smith (CO): [Compliance Quarterly](#)

Colorado developed quarterly, branded outreach to streamline important compliance information to stakeholders (sent to 250K employers). Communications were previously siloed with separate lists and a lack of consistency. Initiatives include a quarterly newsletter (significant 9% click rate), a live webinar on Zoom, and a livestream on YouTube.

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | **Hosted Lunch** |

Penrose Ballroom (Lower Level 1)

1:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | **Sharing State Practices continued**

Social Media Best Practices

-Diane Watkins (DC): [Guidance for PIOS](#)

DC held a joint training with the mayor's office on social media best practices for each platform they have an active presence on, with examples and dos and don'ts. Additional training topics included Instagram collaborations, serious versus fun posts, collaboration between departments, participating in trends, and more. They use Sprout Social for social media management. Georgia uses Loomly.

-Chavonnie Ramos (HI): [DLIR Social Media Strategies](#) | [Video](#)

Hawaii showcased their social media content strategy and examples of content they share. They are active on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube. They promote events, behind-the-scenes success stories, career tips, and explainers. Division heads route social media content through the PIO. Including closed captioning in videos is a best practice.

-Cher Haavind & Jessica Smith (CO): [Live Wire Podcast](#)

Colorado initially launched this podcast internally to enhance employee engagement and recently began sharing it externally via social media. The podcast features high-profile guests such as Governor Polis and the President & CEO of the Colorado Chamber of Commerce.

They produce podcasts in-house. The podcast is hosted by Cher Haavind and is shared with staff before being posted externally. They don't distribute on podcast platforms yet, but share them on YouTube and Instagram.

-Stacy Johnston (NM)

New Mexico has begun recording informal video interviews with employees and posting them on social media as a recruitment tool. Videos are recorded on a smartphone. They also do a Facebook live video during job fairs. They have seen an increase in the number of job seekers attending job fairs as a result. They also started an employer series webinar that has been very successful. This is sent to all businesses in their UI database. New Mexico has 24 social media channels managed by a team of four.

Media Relations

-Fabian Estrada (AZ): Media Relations Best Practices

Arizona has implemented media relations advice received at previous Communications Committee meetings and has successfully built relationships with frontline staff and with reporters. Their media placement across regions has increased, which has resulted in increased participation in hiring events. They held a successful first-time Apprenticeship Summit, which featured a video message from the Governor, high-profile speakers, and a radio station covered the event. Alabama noted that they use Metro Monitor for media tracking, and it was very affordable. States also use Google Alerts, Cision, and there was consensus that Meltwater was not a favored platform.

New Technology

-Chris Barron (WA): New Website

Washington launched their new website in early 2025. Their UI benefits webpage received a ClearMark award for effective plain language. They eventually hope to merge their PFML website with their main website. They conducted extensive user testing and stakeholder research. The website features a centralized login page, a glossary feature, and an improved search function (through YEXT). Translations are done by employees, not by AI. Washington offered to share their plain language policy. Anthrotec built their website. Web updates go through communications, and plain language training is required to post online.

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | **Beverage Break**

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | **Gen AI Training with Microsoft** > Joint Meeting with Technology and E&T Committees | **Penrose Ballroom (Lower Level 1)**

This joint committee session provided an overview of generative AI and how it can be used for decision-making and policy evaluation, as well as how to best support staff in their responsible use. Additionally, there was an opportunity to share state use cases and discuss the opportunities and challenges AI presents to state workforce agencies. The content for this session was driven by the work NASWA and Microsoft Philanthropies are doing together to offer no-cost training on leveraging AI tools for state workforce agencies. This initiative has provided interactive online training to front-line workforce development staff, empowering them to increase efficiency, enhance service delivery, and improve career guidance for customers.

5:30 p.m. | **Committee Networking Mixer** | West of Surrender

THURSDAY | JUNE 5, 2025
MEETING ROOM: Denver 1 (Lower Level 2)

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | **Breakfast | Penrose Ballroom (Lower Level 1)**

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. | **Day 2 Welcome (Denver 1)**

Diane Watkins, Committee Chair, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | **Guest Speaker: Colorado Broadcaster's Association**



Justin Sasso, President and CEO, Colorado Broadcasters Association | [BIO](#)

For over 15 years, CDLE has partnered with the Colorado Broadcasters' Association (CBA) through the Non-Commercial Supporting Announcement (NCSA) program to run cost-effective, statewide radio and TV campaigns. CDLE has launched nearly a dozen campaigns on topics like family leave, workforce services, and veteran hiring. Justin will share how the NCSA program works, lessons from successful campaigns, and tips for engaging with your state's broadcasters' association. Cher Haavind, Deputy Executive Director for CDLE, will showcase several Colorado campaigns and the results they've delivered.

[Presentation](#)

Sasso discussed the CBC's partnership with CDLE to secure media coverage across the state. The program provides radio and TV spots at a flat rate. They have stations share data on what was aired. Members of the Association are incentivized to run community content at optimal times due to FCC regulations (directive to serve communities).

Radio reaches 82% of adults in the U.S., especially in cars, and local radio news is trusted. A.M. radio is still highly listened to by Spanish speakers. Rural, non-English speaking, and low-income were specific demographics that CDLE was targeting.

CDLE creates landing pages for specific campaigns to track effectiveness. Colorado's broadcast investment was \$70K with a value of \$754K, a \$10 to \$1 ROI.

CBC also assists with digital media buying. They showed examples of CDLE's digital campaigns. Broadcast paired with digital (social media and Google ads) increases recall and conversions. They found that industry targeting was more robust on Meta and YouTube versus LinkedIn when trying to reach small business owners.

This program has value for state government agencies with shrinking marketing budgets. Sasso recommended that states interested in pursuing this program in their states reach out to their state association to ask for a budget estimate and ask for a media kit. When proposing to their leadership, states can show examples of ROI. This program is more effective than PSAs that don't have reporting metrics and may not be run at optimal times.

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. | **Beverage Break**

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | **Sharing State Practices Continued**

New Technology

Laura Leonard (NC): Felix, GenAI Chatbot

North Carolina's chatbot assists people with UI. This is a joint project with South Carolina as they share a benefits system and is funded by an Affordable Access grant. EY helped them with project management. They worked with UI staff to identify pain points. The chatbot only assists with filing and does not answer questions about status, recertification, or work search requirements. Communications helped to develop the name and the communications plan. The Felix avatar is the state bird and was designed in-house. They have a KPI dashboard that shows metrics and can be used to develop content to address pain points. Their Support Center analysts review the chatbot responses. Their communications plan included demos, internal communications, and social media "meet Felix".

Employee Engagement & Recruitment

-Dawn Dovre (SD): State Employee Recognition Week Strategies

The governor issued a Proclamation recognizing the week. Managers were encouraged to participate in a kudos board, and pictures of offices were posted on the intranet.

Commissioner Hultman sent out a gratitude message, and she created crocheted fruit trophies for staff. They also announced their Governor's Awards of Excellence that week.

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Facilitated Discussion on Mass Layoffs (Denver 1)

Introduction and discussion to kick off breakout discussions on these topics:

- Resources for Those Affected by Layoffs – Facilitator: **Chris Barron, Vice Chair**, Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department
- Employee and Internal Communication – Facilitator: **Dawn Dovre, Past Chair**, Deputy Secretary, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation

Discussion of strategies for sharing your agency's impact with elected officials and other stakeholders – Facilitator: **Diane Watkins, Committee Chair**, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

- Resources for Those Affected by Layoffs
 - Media Relations/Outreach
 - Business Outreach
 - Legislative Outreach
 - Digital Outreach: Web Development/Social/Graphic/Email
- Employee and Internal Communications
 - Engagement
 - Retention / Recruitment

Chris Barron (WA) provided some statistics on the impact of layoffs in Washington. They have been hosting hiring events for laid-off Federal and state employees, crafting press releases with updates, and fielding a lot of media inquiries. It presents an opportunity to pivot from negative coverage to positive coverage of services/solutions available. Their Commissioner sends all-staff emails with updates monthly and hosts quarterly town hall meetings.

DC has also done in-person and virtual job fairs, is conducting outreach campaigns, splitting the cost with other agencies, and news stations have publicized rapid response events. Their unemployment rate is climbing, they are working to find supportive services for the homeless. They are encouraging leadership to provide mental health resources for staff.

SD is conducting rapid response webinars monthly, hoping to place the recordings on their website. Employees are uncertain about the future and have questions. They have been touring the job centers across the state. The Governor's office prepared canned responses for agencies to use in response to media inquiries. It is challenging to promote recruitment and engagement in the current environment.

GA has state funds to do some paid outreach for rapid response. How states are promoting rapid response events: social media, press releases, local workforce boards, targeted emails from federal workers filing for UI, including info on webinars in hiring events.

Some states have not messaged anything on cuts so far. The consensus among the Committee is that it is better to be transparent and open about layoffs and budget updates.

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | Strategic Goals Discussion

Diane Watkins, Committee Chair, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

- **SUMMIT Communications Breakout Topics**

The following topics were discussed as potential breakout sessions at the September SUMMIT:

- AI guidance for staff: training on writing/editing – Comms guidance on using AI tools (Dawn Dovre, SD); WA working on guidance now; when to use disclaimers, etc.
- Creating efficiency in your team – Communications teams' organizational charts – how small or large teams work on restructuring and managing workloads (Chris Barron, WA)
- Importance of communications: how it should be built into agency infrastructure; why communications should be brought to the table in the beginning; demonstrating value of the comms division; WA quarterly report example
- Website accessibility to be implemented by April 2026 – ensuring states have good understanding of requirements (Chris Cannon, TN)

- **MOTION: Create a new committee Award Workgroup** that would be charged with developing an award name, nomination criteria and eligibility for recognition of state workforce agencies' communications efforts. This award will be presented during the Winter Policy Forum Workforce Innovation Awards Ceremony each year, and all nominations, including the winner, will be collected and presented on the NASWA website as resources for all members. The winner would be highlighted each year in a press release announcement. The idea to develop this new award was approved at the February 2025 winter Communications Committee meeting.

It was determined that an Award Workgroup would be beneficial. Cher Haavind (CO) volunteered to chair the workgroup. Other members include: Diane Watkins (DC), Laura Leonard (NC), Stacy Johnston (NM), and Chris Cannon (TN).

- **Virtual Meeting (July/August) Topics**

A virtual meeting will move forward with a topic TBD. Potential topic: Measuring the impact of communications

- **2025 State of the Workforce Report**

- **Election of Vice-Chair Elect in September**

11:45 a.m. | Wrap-up and Adjournment

Diane Watkins, Committee Chair, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

Upcoming Association Year 2025 Meetings

Fall Meeting

September 9, 2025

Dallas, TX

SUMMIT dates: Sept 10-11