



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 28, 2026

PRESENT FROM BOARD:

Randy Brown, Tawny Espinoza, Brandi Coleman, John Flanagan, Jeff Franklin, David McKendry, Tamara Krizman, Dave Hayden

GUEST(S):

Tammy Eret, Kylie Millican (Board Candidates)

EXCUSED ABSENCE(S):

Krista Ubersox

PRESENT FROM STRIVE:

Grant Jackson, Mary Anne Lawrie, Chris Bergquist, Kayla Purdy, Khristina Kukus

OVERVIEW OF MEETING
No conflicts of interest were identified.
Minutes from previous meeting were reviewed and approved.
Two candidates were officially welcomed as Board members.
Grant provided a short update on the status of the State budget.
Kayla & Khristina provided an overview of the Vocational Programs.
Financials were reviewed and approved.

A quorum was achieved at 12:02 p.m. and the meeting was called to order. No conflicts of interest were identified.

BOARD MINUTES FROM 3/25/2026

Minutes were presented.

It was M/S/P (Franklin/Coleman) to approve the Board minutes from 3/25/2026 meeting as written.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

The Executive Committee recently met with Tammy Eret and Kylie Millican and has recommended their nomination as new board members. By finalizing their onboarding early, both Tammy Eret and Kylie Millican will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the organization's operations and actively participate in the Strategic Planning Retreat scheduled for June 12.

It was M/S/P (Franklin/Coleman) to approve Tammy Eret to the Board of Directors.

It was M/S/P (Espinoza/Coleman) to approve Kylie Millican to the Board of Directors.

Tammy is a local attorney and municipal judge. She brings a wealth of legal expertise, particularly in special education law, and has a personal connection to STRiVE as a parent advocate. Tammy expressed great enthusiasm for the organization's mission.

Kylie is the Community health Partnership Coordinator at Community Hospital. With a professional background in healthcare advocacy and resource connection, Kylie is passionate about people access vital community services. As a mother of two, she values STRiVE's impact on the community and looks forward to participating in upcoming events and governance development.

PRESIDENT/CEO REPORT

Grant provided updates on legislative developments and financial matters, reporting that the Long Bill passed with a 2% across-the-board rate reduction. This reduction could potentially decrease to 1% if the state successfully sells Pinnacol. The financial impact is significant, as each percentage point represents approximately \$125,000 to \$150,000 for the organization's budget. While the final vote is expected within the next 20 days of the legislative session, the move from an initial 4% proposed cut down to 2% (or potentially 1%) is considered positive news for the organization's financial stability and could allow more funding for programs.

Regarding early intervention, the Joint Budget Committee plans to conduct a comprehensive review of the department following trust issues and financial mismanagement that occurred last year when millions were withdrawn mid-year from the state budget. By December, the committee will require detailed records from the Center for CDEC, including all contracts, agreements, and cost-per-child analyses. This deep dive into financial and operational records is expected to result in leadership changes within the early intervention department as the state works to restore oversight and financial accountability.

VOCATIONAL SERVICES OVERVIEW

Kayla presented a comprehensive PowerPoint overview detailing the various programs offered through Vocational Services. The presentation highlighted the organization's diverse range of employment support initiatives designed to help individuals build professional skills and gain independence.

790 PROGRAMS

- **Styles by STRiVE** - is a vocational program that equips participants with design, marketing, and storytelling skills through tools like Canva and Adobe, producing content such as newsletters, social media, and event materials. The program supports community initiatives through product creation and is currently exploring expansion opportunities.
- **Reception** - This program focuses on building practical workplace and interpersonal skills, such as professional communication, greeting visitors, and managing front-desk responsibilities, while existing vocational updates ensure current clients remain supported during this regulatory transition. Reception currently partners with the Grand Junction Housing Authority to provide participants with real-world experience in community-integrated settings. This partnership offers valuable

external placements that expand community integration and expose individuals to new professional environments and expectations. Future growth for the program is focused on increasing similar partnership opportunities across the community to further enhance participant development.

- **Employment Services** – This program offers hands-on, long-term support for community-integrated employment, with job coaches aiding in resume building, interview preparation, and on-site training to foster independence. The program is currently challenged by Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) waitlists, which prioritize higher-need individuals, causing reliance on alternative funding that lacks the milestone-based increases of DVR, potentially restricting program growth despite high demand.
- **Project Search** – This program is a partnership between STRiVE, School District 51, and Community Hospital that helps students in their final school year prepare for jobs. Participants complete internships in different hospital departments while receiving support from STRiVE staff. The program has strong job placement success, with many participants securing employment by or soon after finishing.

Botanical Gardens - This community-based program offers hands-on vocational training through roles in retail, environmental maintenance, and public education. Participants gain practical experience by managing gift shop inventory, operating the Clover POS system, maintaining the butterfly house, and performing landscaping work.

The program faces significant financial and operational strain due to aging infrastructure and high maintenance costs for city-owned assets managed by STRiVE. The resource-intensive nature of the butterfly program, combined with limited municipal support, creates a persistent budgetary pressure.

The organization is pursuing growth through expanded events led by a new coordinator and the pursuit of grant-funded projects, such as sensory gardens, to increase community engagement and revenue. These initiatives are designed to improve the facility's impact while fostering sustainable income streams.

Alida's - Is a hands-on food production and retail program where participants master culinary and small business skills, managing the full product lifecycle from seasonal food preparation to inventory management. Participants gain experience through storefronts, farmers markets, and partnerships with regional retailers and national parks, with plans for further expansion to increase revenue and opportunities.

508 PROGRAMS

- **Adventurous Minds** – This program provides specialized care for individuals with high medical or behavioral needs, integrating daily living support with community engagement through tailored, sensory-rich programming. The program fosters independence and inclusion through local outings and on-site sensory rooms, with plans to expand these spaces and increase adaptive recreation access.
- **Pixels** – The Gaming program uses structured play to foster social connections and reduce isolation in a comfortable, low-pressure environment. By combining video and board games with community outings like sports and movies, participants build essential communication skills and lasting friendships. Looking ahead, the organization plans to

host gaming tournaments and establish community partnerships to further expand social engagement and inclusion opportunities

- **Contracted Employment** - This program offers structured, hands-on vocational training through partnerships with local businesses like Innovative Textiles, where participants develop professional skills by performing production tasks. This initiative is designed for individuals who benefit from routine, with plans to expand business partnerships and diversify task opportunities.
- **Champions Corner** – This program offers a structured, slower-paced day program for individuals requiring higher levels of support, focusing on enhancing quality of life through flexible, participant-driven activities. The program fosters independence and social interaction by combining tailored in-house routines with regular community outings to parks, shops, and local events.

1505 CHIPETA

- **Healthy Body/Healthy Minds** - This wellness-focused program empowers participants to develop healthy habits through physical activity, nutrition, and mental well-being. Individuals engage in diverse activities like archery, fitness classes, and cooking, gaining practical skills for maintaining a healthy lifestyle while setting personal goals with staff support to build confidence and consistency. Looking ahead, the program aims to expand its educational impact by partnering with health professionals, such as dietitians, to provide expert-led learning opportunities.
- **Coffee Klatch** - This socially focused program supports individuals transitioning to a relaxed, retirement-style pace while maintaining active community connections. Through activities like bowling, arts and crafts, and local outings, participants prioritize social engagement and independent choice-making to preserve long-standing friendships and routines. Looking forward, the program plans to integrate more adaptive life skills to support evolving needs while ensuring participants remain independent and included in their community.
- **No Borders** – This program offers flexible, RSVP-based community engagement, focusing on evening and weekend activities to foster independence and social connection. The program features participant-driven social outings and group cooking sessions designed to build essential life skills.

2850 CHIPETA

- **Woodshop** – This program serves as a technical training hub where participants master woodworking and custom fabrication using tools ranging from saws to laser engravers. This model integrates vocational skill-building with retail exposure, as participants manage the sales process for their finished goods. Strategic growth will focus on diversifying the product catalog and leveraging local markets to deepen community employment ties.
- **Grounds Crew** – This program provides hands-on outdoor maintenance and janitorial training through partnerships with organizations such as St. Mary's Medical Center and Colorado Mesa University. Participants develop teamwork, safety, and work endurance skills, with future goals to expand partnerships for consistent employment opportunities.
- **Creative Creations** - Creative Creations is an art-focused program that blends creative expression with light vocational skill-building in a flexible and supportive setting. Participants work on diverse projects—including resin products, crafts, and decorative items—often collaborating with the Woodshop to customize and finish

high-quality goods. While primarily a day program, it offers short work-based activities that allow individuals to develop production and teamwork skills at an adaptable pace. By combining artistic discovery with regular community outings, Creative Creations ensures that participants remain active and engaged while building the confidence and technical skills necessary for future growth.

Sugar & Ice - Sugar and Ice is a popular, hands-on food and beverage program that provides participants with real-world experience in busy café settings and through its mobile trailer, which is a critical asset for practicing high-volume service. Participants build professional skills by earning food handler certifications, managing point-of-sale transactions, and working in fast-paced environments like local festivals and concerts. Its reputation for excellence is a highly-sought-after program with a consistent waitlist.

The Board complimented the programs for their creative, hands-on projects and strong community presence at local markets and gatherings. These successes were driven by smart partnerships and smooth coordination, including reliable staffing and transportation. Moving forward, the organization plans to grow these local ties and attend more events to keep providing great experiences for everyone involved, ensuring continued delivery of engaging experiences for all participants.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In March 2026, the organization recorded a strong operating income of \$110,987, largely driven by favorable one-time events and diligent cost management. A primary contributor was \$86,000 in insurance proceeds from hail-damage repairs; while these funds were recorded as immediate revenue, the related expenses will be amortized over several years, creating a temporary boost to the month's bottom line. Financial performance was further strengthened by a \$30,000 reduction in health insurance costs due to lower-than-expected claims and a lack of significant unplanned expenditures. With the addition of donation income, net income for the month reached \$113,012, marking March as one of the strongest—though unique—periods of the fiscal year.

Year-to-date (July through March), the organization is performing very strongly, with operating income of roughly \$610,000 and total net income around \$1.4 million. This is significantly higher than a typical year and is largely driven by one-time factors, including a sizable inheritance from a donor as well as additional grant and donation income.

Operationally, revenue is trending above forecast, though part of this is influenced by non-recurring items like insurance reimbursements. Chris explained that March 2025 stood out due to \$234,000 in ARPA funds (American Rescue Plan Act COVID relief funds from the state, calculated as a percentage of claims billed) and favorable health insurance reimbursement, while the organization typically runs deficits in late spring and summer months

Personnel costs continue to trend under budget due to unfilled positions. Although this yields short-term savings, the resulting staff shortage limits program capacity and reduces billable service revenue.

Operating expenses were stable in March, as typical costs like utilities and maintenance remained within normal ranges. With no major unplanned expenditures, such as large repairs or legal fees, overall costs remained well-controlled for the month.

March delivered a strong operating income of approximately \$111,000, though this figure was heavily influenced by temporary factors. A significant upfront insurance reimbursement and a \$30,000 drop in health insurance costs provided a substantial boost that is not indicative of our typical monthly operational run rate.

Net income for March reached approximately \$113,000, bolstered by additional donation revenue. This contributes to a year-to-date net income of \$1.4 million, an exceptionally strong performance driven primarily by one-time windfalls such as inheritances, grants, and major donations rather than standard operational growth.

Actual revenue is currently outpacing forecasts due to one-time reimbursements, while personnel expenses remain consistently under budget because of ongoing vacancies. Although overall performance is exceeding expectations, this strength is largely driven by non-recurring factors and temporary cost savings rather than a shift in core operational efficiency.

The balance sheet is stable and improving, with more cash on hand from net income and the collection of old payments. While debt has decreased, overall financial strength is currently strengthened by one-time revenue and temporary savings, offsetting ongoing staffing gaps and rising program costs.

VOCATIONAL FINANCIALS

Vocational services remain profitable with a \$300,000 year-to-date surplus, though performance varies by model. Group-based programs like Adventurous Minds are more sustainable due to favorable staff-to-participant ratios and lower relative wage costs. Conversely, individualized programs—including No Borders, Woodshop, and specific community initiatives—frequently operate at a loss because high staffing requirements and inconsistent attendance limit billable revenue. While the shift toward individualized care has increased revenue per participant, the accompanying rise in personnel costs has outpaced these gains, tightening margins across the department.

Individual vs. Group Billing and Financial Impacts

The core of the organization's financial performance lies in the balance between individual and group billing models. While individualized, one-on-one services command higher reimbursement rates, they are significantly more expensive to deliver due to dedicated staffing requirements, participant wage obligations, and associated payroll taxes. Group services serve as a financial anchor by leveraging shared staffing to drive operational efficiency. Despite lower reimbursement rates, the ability to spread fixed costs across multiple participants ensures more predictable and sustainable margins than individualized models.

Recent state policy changes have compromised the financial viability of individualized care. The shift to a 'workplace assistance' model lowers reimbursement rates while maintaining high staffing requirements, effectively eliminating the financial upside of one-on-one billing. This creates a direct conflict between adhering to the state's preference for individualized support and maintaining the organization's long-term fiscal health.

Attendance fluctuations and staffing constraints are primary drivers of revenue loss. The current model leaves us vulnerable to paying for idle staff time when participants are absent. To move toward a more sustainable baseline, we must address these gaps through strategic recruitment and participant engagement initiatives, such as attendance-based rewards, to ensure billable capacity is maximized

During financial and program review, the Board inquired about participant demand, Kayla identified Sugar & Ice and the Botanical Gardens as the organization's most sought-after programs. Sugar & Ice consistently maintains a waitlist due to its engaging, customer-facing café environment, while the Botanical Gardens is favored for its unique outdoor setting and strong community visibility through tours and events.

It was M/S/P (Coleman/Franklin) to approve the Financials as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Board Retreat is scheduled for June 12 from 12:00–4:00 PM. Cathy Story will lead the upcoming board retreat to strengthen board alignment and effectiveness through a structured working session. This intentional timing coincides with recent leadership transitions and broader strategic planning, focusing on clarifying roles in financial oversight and governance, establishing shared engagement expectations, and refining the onboarding process for new members. By deepening organizational knowledge and encouraging participation from both incoming and outgoing members, the session aims to build a cohesive, informed team.

At the Chair's request, newer board members identified organizational acronyms and financial oversight as their biggest onboarding challenges. In response, the board is working toward a more structured onboarding approach that includes targeted support such as one-on-one walkthroughs with finance staff and clearer explanations of key concepts, paired with opportunities for site visits and program exposure. This combination of practical learning and real-world context is intended to help new members build confidence more quickly and develop a stronger understanding of both the organization's operations and financials.

Brandi's Blessings is running a limited time, "buy one dozen, get one free" cookie promotion for \$12. Following the success of a previous engagement, a second cookie tasting event is planned for July at STRiVE.

It was M/S/P (Ubersox/Espinoza) to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnne Lawrie

Senior Executive Assistant

Minutes were approved (Coleman/Espinoza) on 6/2/2026