Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
APRIL 30, 2026

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Special Populations Committee
Meeting Minutes
Februry 5, 2026, via Zoom at 11:00 a.m.

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guests Attending
Corey Johns	Jordan Osborne	Marla Rye
Freda Herndon		Andrea Dillard
George “Bo” Callis		Ginger Fussell
Mary Lear		Kim Rye
Nathan Garrett		Alyssa Spaulding
Brandon Phinx		Meagan Dobbins
Kristi Spurgeon		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Special Populations Committee met via Zoom on February 5, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. With a quorum confirmed, Freda Herndon called the meeting to order. Bo Callis moved to approve the minutes, and Mary Lear seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

CSP Performace
Andrea Dillard reviewed career service provider performance Q2 goals, noting that while enrollment activity was strong in Q1, with adult enrollments exceeding expectations, but has since slowed during the second quarter. She explained that some fluctuation is typical during this time of year due to reduced traffic in the career centers over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday period. She also noted recent office closures and ongoing road conditions have likely impacted activity over the past two weeks, which staff will work to recover moving forward.

To strengthen enrollment activity, staff are implementing several strategies. Efforts are underway to increase coordination with training vendors, particularly short-term training providers, to generate more direct referrals into the program. Andrea also emphasized the importance of maintaining strong expenditure levels alongside enrollments, noting the need to support participant cost rates. To assist with this, the allowable training investment per participant has been increased from $2,500 to $4,000, with additional supportive services available as needed. Megan and Natalie are monitoring enrollment activity on a weekly basis to track progress and provide support to staff in areas where additional focus is needed. This approach is intended to strengthen consistency across service delivery and ensure progress

toward upcoming quarterly targets. Andrea reported that overall performance remains strong, with exits, placements, and wage outcomes all meeting benchmarks and continuing on track.

Marla Rye added that Natalie will present a corrective action plan at the next meeting outlining strategies to further support enrollment growth. She noted that encouraging participation in training can be more complex given the availability of Pell-funded programs in Tennessee, particularly with the anticipated expansion of Pell eligibility to short-term training, and staff are working to position services effectively within that environment. Andrea then provided a brief update on federal performance, noting that one measure is below target, related to second quarter youth median earnings after exit. She clarified that performance standards presented at the previous meeting reflected first-year targets and had not yet been updated to the higher second-year negotiated levels. The current standards are more rigorous, with the youth earnings target set at approximately $6,200 compared to the state target of $5,548. While the measure is currently below target, staff are reviewing supplemental data that may be submitted prior to finalization. She noted that final numbers will be confirmed in the coming weeks and may still reflect a slight shortfall. Preliminary third quarter data was also noted but is not yet complete and is expected to change as additional data is received. Freda Herndon asked how local standards compare to other workforce areas across the state. Andrea confirmed that in most cases, NM's performance standards are higher than the state benchmarks, with only a small number of measures aligned or lower.

Employer Grants, New Grant Opportunities

Andrea then transitioned to an overview of employer-focused grants and workforce initiatives currently in progress. She began with incumbent worker training, noting that the board allocated $300K, representing 20% of WIOA funds, to support employer training needs. To date, the majority of those funds have been obligated, with approximately $73K remaining, supporting an estimated 10 to 12 employers. She reviewed the state apprenticeship grant totaling $480K, with nearly all funds obligated and only a minimal balance remaining. Both the incumbent worker and apprenticeship grants must be fully expended by the end of June.

Andrea introduced a new healthcare-focused incumbent worker training grant received in mid-December in partnership with the Tennessee Hospital Association. The grant is being administered on a broader scale, supporting healthcare entities across the state. Eight employers have submitted applications, with contracts currently in development, the majority of which are located within the Northern Middle region. Marla added that this initiative directly followed discussions at the November board meeting regarding the need to strengthen relationships between workforce boards and hospitals. In response, staff pursued a statewide opportunity, coordinating with the Department of Labor and engaging hospital partners through the Tennessee Hospital Association. She noted that the effort has already resulted in strong engagement and will include outreach to connect participating hospitals with their respective local workforce boards.

Andrea continued with an update on the Community Reentry Reinvestment Grant, which supports justice-involved individuals. Activities are currently underway in Humphreys County in

partnership with TCAT Dickson, local government, and economic development partners. A forklift training program has already been completed successfully, and additional training in flooring installation, including carpet, tile, and vinyl, is scheduled to begin soon. A second component of the grant is being implemented in Rutherford County in partnership with TCAT Murfreesboro and Nissan. This initiative focuses on work readiness and advanced manufacturing training for justice-involved individuals, with instruction taking place on the Nissan campus. The program is expected to begin in late February or early March. She also provided an update on the PROWD grant, which serves individuals transitioning from the federal prison system in Davidson County. The program is on track to serve 60 participants by September 2027, with 26 individuals currently enrolled. Services include training, work readiness, and supportive services to assist with successful reentry into the workforce. She concluded with an update on a pending federal apprenticeship grant application under the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula program. Awards are expected to be announced soon, with funding anticipated to support employer-based apprenticeship programs in targeted sectors such as IT, advanced manufacturing, construction, and transportation. If awarded, funding will be available through June 2027.

Andrea noted that, in addition to regular annual funding streams, the organization is currently managing multiple employer-focused initiatives simultaneously, reflecting a significant level of activity across workforce programs. Current participation includes 13 local employers engaged in incumbent worker training and 10 employers participating in apprenticeship programs. Marla highlighted the success of the healthcare partnership initiative, noting that funding was fully obligated within approximately one and a half weeks and includes participation from major healthcare systems such as Vanderbilt and Ascension Saint Thomas. She also shared updates on program implementation, including completion of a 20-participant forklift training cohort through the reentry program, upcoming launch of the flooring training initiative, and the start of the Nissan work readiness program scheduled for early March. Marla acknowledged the volume of activity currently underway and expressed confidence that these efforts will contribute to improved performance outcomes moving forward. She also noted that recent office closures due to weather impacted normal operations, although staff continued working remotely to maintain case management and administrative functions. She reiterated that staff remain focused on increasing enrollment and performance metrics in the coming weeks.

Freda Herndon asked for an update on staffing across the American Job Centers. Marla confirmed that the centers are now fully staffed, with only one remaining vacancy. She noted that a broader discussion on facility strategy and service delivery will take place at the next meeting, including potential recommendations regarding the American Job Center footprint beginning in July. Marla also shared that the state is undergoing organizational changes that will require American Job Center staff to reapply for positions, with a shift toward a regional staffing model that includes travel across multiple counties. She noted that this approach aligns with the direction local operations may take moving forward.

Bo Callis asked about the effectiveness of pilot outreach efforts. Marla clarified that outreach activities conducted at community partner locations, including libraries, TCAT campuses, and

community centers, have been productive and are reaching individuals who may not otherwise access services through traditional American Job Center locations. Bo then asked about the performance of centers previously operated by the state. Marla reported that the Sumner County center has experienced challenges and remains an area of focus for improvement during the third quarter. She noted that the state is no longer serving in a management role for Title I programs at that location and currently has limited staff presence. While the center remains designated as a comprehensive site, continued operation will depend on improved performance outcomes.

Freda asked about the outlook for program funding for Program Year 2026–2027. Marla reported that current expectations are for level funding, which she noted would be a positive outcome given prior reductions. She highlighted continued state investment in key initiatives, including the Tennessee Youth Employment Program, which has been funded at $8M, as well as additional support for reentry programming. Marla expressed confidence in the state's efforts to supplement federal funding with state resources and indicated that overall funding stability is anticipated across programs, including apprenticeship initiatives.

Adjourn

Marla reiterated that staff remain focused on improving performance outcomes and encouraged board members to attend the upcoming meeting in Clarksville, scheduled for 11:30 a.m., which will include a presentation from the Department of Labor on the Tennessee Works initiative. With no further questions, the meeting adjourned.