



**APPROVED  
FEB 5, 2026**

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board  
Innovation Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
November 6, 2025, via Zoom 2:30 PM**

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guests Attending</b>
Seth Thurman	Anne Fugate	Andrea Dillard
Billy Givens	Tony Adams	Meagan Dobbins
Selittia Johnson	Robin Baldree	Kim Rye
Kaitlin Salyer		Alyssa Spaulding
Brandon Phinx		Marla Rye

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Innovations Committee met via Zoom on November 6, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. Chairman Seth Thurman called the meeting to order once a quorum was confirmed and asked for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. A motion to approve was made by Billy Givens and seconded by Kaitlyn Salyer. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

**CSP Report**

Andrea Dillard provided an update on federal performance measures. For Program Year 2025, Northern Middle is meeting or exceeding all federal performance benchmarks in Quarter 1. Five measures are currently passing at 90%, and 10 measures are passing at 100% or higher. These figures are preliminary and expected to be finalized in mid-November. While there is potential for slight improvement, the measures will not decrease. Preliminary Quarter 2 data indicate that three measures are currently below target. Staff anticipate that both adult measures will move into yellow or green status prior to finalization. Youth performance remains the primary concern, and staff are actively monitoring and addressing this area to ensure improvement before Quarter 2 becomes final. Overall, federal performance is trending positively.

Andrea next provided an update on the career services provider transition. Workforce Essentials officially assumed responsibility as the career services provider effective July 1, following the transition from EDSI and MAC. At the end of Quarter 1, Natalie and her team completed staffing efforts and focused on onboarding, training, and implementing new processes. In-school youth enrollment is currently five participants below the quarterly goal. Dislocated Worker enrollment is approximately 35 participants below the target. All other enrollment goals were met. Andrea explained that Dislocated Worker enrollment is solely reliant on individuals who have lost employment through no fault of their own and are eligible for unemployment insurance. Despite recent plant closures and rapid response activities, interest in Dislocated Worker services has remained limited, as many individuals return to

work quickly, decline services, or choose to retire. Natalie has received additional WARN notices, which may improve enrollment numbers moving forward. Andrea noted that lower Dislocated Worker enrollment provides budget flexibility, as funds can be shifted between Dislocated Worker and Adult programs with board approval if needed. Adult enrollment exceeded the quarterly goal by approximately 35 participants. Looking ahead, performance is expected to continue improving as staffing is now nearly complete and the team can focus more fully on process improvement and performance outcomes. No questions were raised regarding the career services provider update.

### **Eligible Training Provider Requests**

Andrea Dillard presented the Eligible Training Provider List. She noted that only existing providers are seeking approval to add programs at this time. With the exception of Tennessee Professional Training Institute, which submitted two programs, all providers are state-supported institutions. Most programs result in an industry-recognized credential or certification. Two programs lead to a completion certificate rather than certification. Andrea explained that these exceptions are allowable because the State of Tennessee does not require certification for employment in those occupations. One example provided was the Patient Care Technician program at Tennessee Professional Training Institute, which allows participants to obtain employment upon course completion without sitting for a certification exam, though certification is encouraged as it may result in higher starting wages. She felt confident in the programs presented and their alignment with workforce needs. She also reviewed two existing programs requiring reapproval due to cost increases exceeding 25%. The first program is offered by Trade On Demand, also known as Skilled Workforce, which provides construction training tied to the Titans stadium project. The cost increase reflects an expansion of the curriculum from a three-week program covering NCCER Core and OSHA certification to a six-week program, resulting in an approximately 180% increase due to doubling training duration. The second program is Volunteer State Community College's Certified Medical Assistant program, which increased in cost by 35%, from \$3,395 to \$4,595. Andrea asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the Eligible Training Provider List, and none were raised.

Andrea advised that approval of the Eligible Training Provider List was the only action item requiring a vote at this meeting to forward the recommendation to the full board. Seth Harper Thurman called for a motion to approve the Eligible Training Provider List for recommendation to the Board. A motion to approve was made by Billy Givens and seconded by Kaitlyn Salyer. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

### **AJC Operational Guidance**

Before moving into operational guidance, Marla paused to provide context from the Governor's Conference for Economic Development held earlier in the week in Rutherford County. She noted that Brandon Phinx and Kaitlyn Salyer also attended and highlighted the announcement of Tennessee Works, a statewide initiative to align workforce development efforts among state partners. Marla invited Brandon to talk about the program and how local workforce boards may be involved. Brandon Phinx described Tennessee Works as a streamlined, employer-focused approach designed to function as a one-stop entry point for businesses seeking resources from multiple state agencies. Rather than employers navigating separate agencies independently, Tennessee Works coordinates services across partners to develop a single, customized proposal that may include staffing, training, funding, and other

resources. The initiative is housed within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development but operates collaboratively with agencies, including Economic and Community Development, the Tennessee Department of Education, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and others, to ensure a cohesive response to employer needs. Kaitlin Salyer shared her enthusiasm for the rollout, noting the benefit of a more coordinated structure for chambers of commerce and others working directly with industry partners. She emphasized the value of having resources organized under one umbrella and commented positively on the strong integration of workforce development into the broader economic development conversation at the conference. Kaitlin asked whether there would be future opportunities for chambers and workforce partners to engage with the Tennessee Works team to better understand how to connect employers to the initiative.

Brandon confirmed that additional engagement opportunities are planned. He explained that the state is in the process of hiring an Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director for Tennessee Works and that Brooks Young is currently leading the initiative. Training opportunities are expected to be offered to help partners better understand the program's structure and implementation. Brandon indicated he would share information with Kaitlin as it becomes available. Marla added that Tennessee Works aligns closely with Northern Middle's recent efforts, particularly the co-located AJC at Nashville State Community College. She referenced the recent grand opening of the center, which included participation from the Mayor of Nashville, and emphasized the growing role of AJCs in working collaboratively with higher education partners to serve business and industry better. Marla noted that at a prior board meeting, she had presented an assessment of AJC efficiency and service levels, including a ranking of centers. An updated version of that assessment would be presented at the upcoming meeting. Based on the initial assessment and current staffing levels following WIOA funding reductions effective in July, operational changes have already been implemented. Specifically, the Stewart County and Trousdale County centers have been transitioned from full-time operations to part-time centers. Marla explained that operational guidance has been developed to ensure a formal mechanism exists for reporting such changes to the Department of Labor.

Marla further reviewed the operational standards included in the guidance, including general hours of operation, typically 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with extended evening hours at centers offering adult education services. The guidance also outlines observance of state holidays and procedures for inclement weather. Comprehensive centers follow state directives and gubernatorial closure orders, while affiliate centers may also consider local county government decisions. Additional considerations apply when centers are housed within facilities such as Nashville State Community College, where landlord closures impact operations. Marla emphasized that no action was required at this time and that the guidance would be presented to the full board for more detailed review.

### **Employer Services**

Andrea Dillard then provided an update on rapid response activity related to Dislocated Worker enrollment. She reviewed recent WARN notices received from employers, noting that some notices were issued before the start of the current program year but extend into the current period. In several cases, NM has already conducted informational sessions, workshops, or outreach activities. In some instances, affected individuals have not yet officially separated from employment, which may impact enrollment timing. Additionally, some layoffs occurred before staff could engage workers directly or

where acquisitions resulted in employees being absorbed by another company, limiting employer participation in rapid response efforts.

Andrea concluded with an update on IWT and apprenticeship funding. The board previously approved \$300K in grants for incumbent worker training. Since July 1, twelve employer contracts have been executed, totaling slightly more than \$216K, leaving remaining funds available for obligation. Andrea noted that an additional application had been received and was pending review. She also reported on state apprenticeship funding, indicating that approximately \$180K was awarded and fully obligated shortly after receipt due to strong employer interest and existing applications. If NM meets a 60% expenditure benchmark within the next few months, staff may apply for incentive funding through the Office of Apprenticeship, which could result in additional funds. Employers expressing interest are encouraged to submit applications so they can be considered if additional funding becomes available. Marla suggested coordinating a public check presentation in Rutherford County with employers that have received incumbent worker training funds to help increase awareness and participation in the program. Kaitlin Salyer confirmed support for assisting with that effort.

Marla also provided an update on federal funding status. WIOA programs have not been impacted by the federal government shutdown, as funding for the period July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, has already been awarded or made accessible to the state. Operations are continuing as normal. She noted that some divisions within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, including Labor Market Information, have been furloughed, resulting in delays in data releases, such as county-level unemployment rates. Title I workforce programs remain fully operational.

### **Adjourn**

Marla reminded members of the upcoming meeting scheduled for the following Wednesday in Franklin. With no further discussion, Seth adjourned the meeting.