Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
August 4, 2026

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Innovation Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2026 via Zoom 2:00 PM

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guests Attending
Seth Thurman	Tony Adams	Marla Rye
Anne Fugate	Robin Baldree	Meagan Dobbins
Billy Givens		Ginger Fussell
Selittia Johnson		Alyssa Spaulding
Kaitlin Salyer		
Kristi Spurgeon		
Brandon Phinx		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Innovations Committee met via Zoom on April 30, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. 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 Kaitlin Salyer and seconded by Anne Fugate. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

Federal Performance
Meagan Dobbins presented the third-quarter performance update. Adult measures were between 90% and 100% of goal, with final results expected in May. Dislocated Worker measures were at 100% except Measurable Skill Gains, which stood at 66.6% against the 66.96% passing threshold. Meagan explained that this measure includes participants in training from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, and is the only real-time measure shown. Many participants had earned their gains in April, so those results would not appear until the fourth quarter. She did not anticipate difficulty meeting the annual goal. Marla noted that although performance is reviewed quarterly, final performance is based on fourth-quarter results. Meagan reported that Youth Median Earnings had failed in the previous quarter but had already improved and was not expected to decline. She anticipated that all annual federal performance measures would finish at or above 90%. Upcoming state negotiations could increase Dislocated Worker goals because of the region's consistently strong performance, although Meagan hoped Adult and Youth goals would not be raised again.

CSP Report
Meagan then reviewed Career Service Provider performance. Following weak enrollment results in the prior quarter, staff began reviewing county enrollment activity weekly, increased the training cap from $2,500 to $4,000, and focused on short-term training opportunities. All enrollment goals were being met except Dislocated Worker, which improved from 43% to 71%. Closure results remained below goal because staff had prioritized enrollments. Meagan explained that closure goals are calculated at 80% of

enrollments and are intended for participants who have completed training and entered employment, not newly enrolled participants. Career advisors must balance new enrollments with timely case closures, which can cause one area to improve while the other declines. Natalie McLimore planned an all-staff training on May 7 covering effective case management, time management, and strategies for meeting enrollment and closure goals. Placement wages and cumulative performance remained on target. Seth stated that he appreciated the explanations and the plan for improving the remaining measures.

AJC Closure Update

Marla provided an update on the closure of eight American Job Centers approved by the board on February 11. The state was notified in early March, and landlords received 90 days' notice on April 1. Staff were planning for utilities, deposits, office cleanout, furniture storage, and continued service delivery after the June 30 transition. Workforce Essentials is working with Nashville State to identify meeting space in Humphreys County and exploring partnerships to keep its Cheatham, Robertson, and Williamson buildings open as general workforce centers. Marla noted that these locations could not continue operating WIOA-funded resource centers outside the American Job Center structure. Possible co-location arrangements were also being discussed with the New Cumberland Human Resource Agency, while a staffing agency had expressed interest in leasing space in Williamson County and providing staffing and training services.

Eligible Training Provider

Meagan Dobbins reviewed proposed additions to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Austin's Beauty College was the only new provider and requested approval for cosmetology, esthetics, manicuring, and instructor programs, all of which lead to credentials and are in Bright Outlook occupations. TCAT Nashville requested approval for a Certified Medical Assistant to Practical Nursing bridge program, and TCAT Hartsville requested approval for 14 programs. Meagan explained that several TCAT Hartsville programs had similar titles but differed in duration, cost, or whether an exam voucher was included. Seth Harper Thurman reported that construction at TCAT Hartsville was progressing well, with the expanded facility expected to open in late August. She also reviewed a request from 160 Driving Academy in Nashville to return to the ETPL. The provider was originally approved in 2022 but was later removed after failing to meet the board's 60% credential attainment and employment placement requirements. The academy had been off the list since February 2025. Meagan reviewed 31 enrollments completed during the appeal period and found that 19 participants earned a CDL and 16 obtained employment, resulting in a 61% credential attainment rate. She also reported improved documentation and consistent participant follow-up under Barry Briley's leadership. The provider had not increased its cost and remained in compliance with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Seth asked whether the board had previously allowed a provider to return after removal. Marla and Meagan recalled a similar situation involving another truck-driving school. Marla recommended allowing 160 Driving Academy to return while closely monitoring participant outcomes. Seth agreed that the provider appeared to have completed the required corrective period and demonstrated improvement. Brandon Phinx asked whether 160 Driving Academy could be connected with the Department of Labor's Adult Education division as it explored a Workforce Development Initiative related to commercial trucking. Marla and Meagan recommended first providing a list of

established ETPL trucking providers, along with information on participant activity and outcomes, to help determine the most appropriate referral.

Meagan then presented a proposed amendment to the ETPL policy. The board currently requires training programs to meet 60% credential attainment and employment placement rates, compared with the state's 40% requirement. However, state policy only reviews programs serving at least 10 WIOA participants in a program year. Because many local programs serve fewer than 10 participants, the amendment would allow the board to review their completion and performance outcomes as well. Marla cited a program with seven enrollments and no completions, credentials, or employment outcomes as an example of why additional review authority was needed. She stated that continuing to refer participants to programs with poor results would not be a responsible use of public funds. Anne Fugate supported the amendment and noted that low-performing or minimally used programs also create an administrative burden. Marla agreed that the amendment would address both participant outcomes and administrative efficiency. Kaitlin Salyer moved to recommend approval of all proposed ETPL additions, including the return of 160 Driving Academy. Anne Fugate seconded, and the motion passed without opposition for recommendation to the full board. Anne then moved to approve the proposed ETPL policy amendment, Kristi seconded, and the motion passed without opposition.

Rapid Response

Marla provided an update on employer services and Rapid Response activity. Approximately 787 individuals had been affected by layoffs during the program year. The most recent event involved Pave It Forward in Rutherford County, which laid off approximately 100 employees before issuing the required WARN notice. Because the company did not provide employee contact information, staff had limited ability to offer services directly. Marla noted that Rapid Response activity continued to be monitored and that the Finance Committee had recommended transferring some Dislocated Worker funding to Adult funding, where more participants could be served. She then reported that nearly $300K in Incumbent Worker Training grants had been awarded to 18 employers to provide upskilling for 223 participants. Staff planned to work closely with employers during May to obtain required documentation, complete expenditures, and close contracts before the end of the program year. She noted that collecting employer data on time remained a significant challenge during year-end closeout. The Apprenticeship Grant had supported 11 contracts and 114 apprentices. Most of the funding had already been expended, and the majority of contracts were closed, placing the grant in a strong position financially. A separate SAEF Apprenticeship Grant continued through June 30, 2027. Three employers had applied, but no funds had yet been contracted or obligated.

Healthcare Grants

Marla also reviewed the healthcare-specific Incumbent Worker Training initiative developed with Ferrol Thomas and the Tennessee Hospital Association following the board meeting in Franklin. The grant was designed to train healthcare workers statewide through hospitals and other Tennessee Hospital Association members. Because awards were not issued until January 1, 2026, staff had approximately two months remaining to complete the grants. Staff planned to visit participating hospitals to present ceremonial checks and coordinate public relations efforts with the Tennessee Hospital Association. Marla noted that the initiative aligned with the board's strategic plan. She then announced that the region had received a second round of Rural Healthcare funding. The initial grant supported Advanced

EMT-to-paramedic training through Vol. State in partnership with county governments and emergency medical agencies. The new grant would continue that training and add Austin Peay as a provider as it launched a paramedic program. The Clarksville location would improve access for participants from Stewart, Houston, and Humphreys counties who previously had to travel to Gallatin. The new grant period would run from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

26-27 WIOA Plan Modification

Marla then updated the committee on the local and regional workforce plan. The state issued planning guidance on March 11, and the plan was posted for public comment on April 10. Two partner representatives attended an April 20 listening session, but no public comments were received. The plan was submitted on April 24. The state found no deficiencies in the plan and requested only additional detail in two areas of the budget narrative. Once those revisions were made, the plan was expected to be recommended for approval. Marla was scheduled to present the plan to the State Workforce Development Board the following Friday with Ferrol Thomas of the Tennessee Hospital Association and Freda Herndon of Adult Education. Their participation would demonstrate collaboration with employers and community partners in delivering workforce services. Marla also discussed the state's pending federal WIOA waiver requests, which could significantly change workforce service delivery across Tennessee. One proposed waiver would allow regional planning councils to assume some responsibilities currently held by local workforce boards. Marla noted that the state had advised local boards to delay long-term service-provider procurements or include termination clauses, suggesting that structural changes were likely. She anticipated that current operations would continue for at least six months, with possible changes beginning in January or July 2027. The Commissioner had scheduled a meeting with workforce board chairs and chief local elected officials to provide additional direction. Chairman Zobel and Chief Local Elected Official Mayor Bob Rial were expected to participate on behalf of Northern Middle Tennessee. Marla stated that although the outcome remained uncertain, the region was positioned well to respond to change and potentially expand its influence.

Worksource Summit

Marla reminded the committee that the full board would not meet on May 13 because members had been invited to attend the WorkSource Summit as a professional development opportunity. Approximately 70% of board members had registered. She expected the event to provide additional information on changes affecting workforce development statewide.

Adjourn

Seth stated that the updates reflected a significant amount of strong work. Marla agreed that the region was managing substantial activity and change but remained well positioned because of its engaged board. She reported that Northern Middle Tennessee had received one of the highest board certification ratings in the state and planned to highlight the board's involvement during the upcoming state presentation. Marla reported that the Executive Committee would meet on May 11 to consider the ETPL recommendations. She also noted that the five remaining American Job Centers had to complete certification before June 30. Staff continued working with partners to complete that process and finalize other year-end requirements. With no further discussion, Seth adjourned the meeting.