Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
April 30, 2026

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Innovation Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2026 via Zoom 2:00 PM

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

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Innovations Committee met via Zoom on February 5, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Kaitlin Salyer 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 Update
Andrea Dillard opened the Career Services Provider report, focusing on Q2 performance as of December 30. Enrollment numbers are currently below target, following a strong Q1 where Adult enrollments exceeded expectations. The decline in Q2 was attributed to seasonal impacts, including reduced traffic during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Andrea explained that Natalie McLimore, who oversees Title I programs, will present a corrective action plan at the upcoming full board meeting outlining strategies to increase enrollments before the end of the next quarter. She and Meagan Dobbins are monitoring enrollment activity weekly and providing regular updates. All other performance indicators, including exits, entered employment, and placement rates, remain strong and within expected ranges. Andrea emphasized the need to increase enrollments and accelerate spending on training and supportive services. She also noted recent disruptions due to weather-related AJC closures and ongoing road conditions, which have continued to limit customer traffic into the current quarter.

Federal Performance
She then reviewed federal performance measures for Q2. All measures are meeting or exceeding expectations, with the exception of Youth median earnings in the second quarter, which is currently below target. Efforts are underway to identify additional data that could improve this measure before finalization, though improvement may be limited at this stage. Marla clarified that while quarterly performance is monitored closely, official accountability is based on Q4 outcomes. She noted that current Q3 data already exceeds the 90% threshold, indicating positive momentum despite the Q2

shortfall. Andrea reviewed preliminary Q3 enrollment data, which currently shows some areas below target. She emphasized that the quarter remains open through the end of March.

Eligible Training Provider Requests

Andrea Dillard reviewed the Eligible Training Provider List, noting that there was one new provider requesting approval, Paula Anderson Coaching and Consulting, located in Memphis. Andrea explained that although the provider's business address is in Memphis, the training is delivered online. Because the provider has not yet been approved by the Memphis workforce area, the request had to be brought before the committee for local consideration since individuals in the NM region are interested in the training. She presented the provider's proposed Medical Coding Prep Course, a 4-month program that leads to a certification and is classified as a bright outlook occupation both locally and nationally. She also presented a new program request from TCAT Dickson for a Barbering class. That program is 14 months in length, results in a diploma that counts as a credential, and is also considered a bright outlook occupation locally and nationally.

Andrea then reviewed existing ETPL programs requiring additional approval because of cost increases above the 25% threshold. She reported that MTSU's Supply Chain Professional and Freight Broker Agent training would increase from $2,575 to $4,250, and Remington College's Patient Care Technician program would increase from $7,395 to $9,500. She also brought forward a third price increase that had come to staff's attention involving TSU's Certified Paralegal Program. Andrea explained that a Davidson County customer had been working for 2 months to enter the program and had completed all required steps, but the school had not updated its ETPL pricing after staff turnover. The cost had increased from $2,495 to $3,150, a 26% increase. Andrea noted that under normal circumstances the request would wait until the next board meeting because the school had not submitted the increase in a timely manner, but she recommended adding it now so the customer would not be penalized. She explained that the 12-month program leads to a certification if the participant successfully completes training and passes the examination. She also noted that one additional program, cybersecurity training at Lab Four Institute, was requesting reinstatement to the ETPL after previously being removed for poor performance. She stated that to her knowledge there were no current customers waiting to attend that training, but the vendor had requested reconsideration.

Billy Givens asked for clarification about the Paula Anderson request and whether the committee's approval would allow participants from the local area to attend training in Memphis. Andrea explained that the provider's office is in Memphis, but the course itself is fully online, so participants would not be traveling there. Billy then asked whether approval in one area would allow the provider to serve customers statewide. Andrea clarified that if a provider has already been approved by another local board, staff can generally activate it for local use without bringing it back through the committee, but in this case Memphis had not yet approved the provider, so local board action was necessary. Billy also asked whether approval of the TSU cost increase at the committee level would allow it to be included in materials for the full board meeting the following week. Andrea confirmed that if approved, the TSU item would be added to the sheet presented to the full board. Marla clarified that if a school in Memphis is already on the ETPL, NM does not have to reapprove it locally in order to use it. Andrea confirmed that staff can simply activate a previously approved provider for local use. Marla explained that the complication with Paula Anderson Coaching and Consulting was that the provider had

apparently not yet applied through the Memphis board, which is why the request was being presented locally. She also informed the committee that the state is discussing tighter controls on the ETPL, including limiting approved programs to high-demand sectors such as construction, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and education. Marla commented that such parameters would be helpful because the board currently has limited authority to deny programs unless they are underperforming or excessively costly. Andrea added that private-sector providers must first go through the Tennessee Higher Education Commission for a waiver before they can even apply, which can cost several thousand dollars, making denials more difficult without clear state guidance.

Billy asked another question about Paula Anderson Coaching and Consulting, noting that the agenda appeared to show 2 entries. Andrea clarified that there was only one new provider and one associated program, the Medical Coding Prep Course. Billy then raised a concern about whether approving the provider before Memphis could amount to getting ahead of the process. Andrea explained that the committee was not waiting on Memphis and that if Memphis had already approved the provider, the item would not have needed committee action at all. Billy said he understood, but added that he remained concerned about whether a provider could seek approval in multiple areas after being rejected elsewhere. Marla agreed that the concern was valid and said staff should determine whether there are checks in the system to identify whether a provider has been denied in another workforce area. She suggested that any approval could be made contingent on the provider not having already been denied elsewhere and, if so, that staff review the reason before proceeding. Billy commented that this would help avoid approving a provider simply because they kept applying until one board said yes.

After discussion, Billy made a motion to approve the ETPL recommendations, including the addition of the TSU price increase for presentation to the full board, with the contingency Marla described regarding Paula Anderson Coaching and Consulting. Marla clarified that the contingency applied specifically to Paula Anderson, and Andrea confirmed staff would have an answer before the full board meeting. Tony Adams seconded and with no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Following the vote, Marla reiterated her support for tightening the ETPL. She explained that many programs remain on the list despite never being used and said a more focused, accurate list would better help job seekers identify true demand occupations. She added that staff would follow up with both the state and Memphis regarding the provider question. Kaitlin then asked whether programs already approved on the ETPL but outside any future preferred categories would be grandfathered in or removed. Marla responded that the answer would depend on forthcoming state policy. She explained that ETPL responsibilities have shifted to a new person within the Department of Labor who is taking a fresh look at the scope of the list. Marla said her guess was that the state might wipe the slate clean and require all providers to apply again, though she noted that was only her assumption.

Rapid Response

Marla provided an update on WARN notices, noting a recent increase in activity across the region. Since January 1, more than 300 job losses have been reported in Northern Middle, primarily in Williamson and Rutherford counties. She explained that these figures can be misleading, as in the case of DLH where a contract transition will result in another company taking over operations and retaining many of the affected employees. Northern Middle will still conduct full rapid response services in those situations.

Marla shared feedback from a board member who recently experienced layoffs and expressed surprise that more dislocated workers had not yet entered the American Job Centers. She acknowledged that while staff are prepared to assist, it is ultimately positive that many individuals are quickly securing new employment. She referenced previous layoffs, including Bridgestone, where many workers either retired or were quickly rehired due to their skill sets. Marla also highlighted that unemployment rates across the region remain strong, with all counties below 4%, ranging from approximately 2.6% to 3.8%, indicating continued labor market strength despite the increase in WARN notices.

Employer Grants, THA Healthcare IWT Grant

Andrea Dillard provided an overview of additional employer-focused initiatives being administered alongside WIOA programs. She reported that $300K in Incumbent Worker Training funds had been allocated beginning July 1, with approximately 13 employers currently under contract and all but $73K to $75K of the funding already obligated. She then reviewed the State Apprenticeship Grant, noting that $180K had been awarded to support employers with registered apprenticeship programs, with nearly all funds committed except for $2.5K, and all funds required to be spent by the end of June. Andrea introduced a new Healthcare Incumbent Worker Training Partnership Grant awarded in December in collaboration with the Tennessee Hospital Association. She stated that all funds had already been obligated across 8 healthcare employers, including both in-region and out-of-region partners, with the goal of addressing workforce shortages and skill gaps in healthcare occupations. Marla added that the healthcare grant also served as an opportunity to strengthen relationships with hospital systems, following prior feedback that many were unfamiliar with the public workforce system. She explained that staff hosted a webinar to introduce workforce services and connect hospitals with local resources, and she expressed satisfaction with the strong and immediate response from employers.

Andrea continued with an overview of the Community Reentry Reinvestment Grant, which supports justice-involved individuals through targeted training programs. In Humphreys County, participants have completed forklift training and will next receive flooring installation training in partnership with TCAT Dickson, Nashville State Community College, and local economic development partners. In Rutherford County, a separate initiative with TCAT Murfreesboro and Nissan provides a 2-week employment readiness program focused on manufacturing skills that are transferable across employers. Andrea noted that approximately 60 individuals are expected to be served through these combined efforts. She also reviewed the PROWD grant, which focuses on individuals transitioning from federal incarceration in Davidson County. Staff provide on-site case management at a residential reentry center, assisting participants with training, supportive services, and housing needs. The program aims to serve 60 individuals, with 26 currently enrolled and receiving services.

She concluded with an update on pending SAEF apprenticeship funding, explaining that an application had been submitted and is currently under review by the state. If awarded, the funding will be backdated to February 1 and used to further support apprenticeship programs in targeted industry sectors. Marla asked if there were any additional questions. Kaitlin Salyer noted interest in identifying potential employer partners for the PROWD grant, particularly larger manufacturers. Marla agreed this would be beneficial and then reminded members of the upcoming full board meeting in Clarksville, which will include a presentation from the Tennessee Department of Labor on the Tennessee Works initiative focused on statewide workforce alignment.

Brandon Phinx added to the earlier discussion on targeted workforce strategies, sharing that the state is planning to expand the use of intermediaries within apprenticeship programs. He explained that intermediaries, often industry associations or similar entities, help connect employers, training providers, and the Department of Labor by offering subject matter expertise, coordinating resources, and supporting apprenticeship development and expansion within key sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare. He encouraged members to share potential intermediary partners for future consideration.

Andrea responded to a question from Selittia regarding access to American Job Center contacts, offering to provide a list of direct phone numbers and assist with connecting individuals to appropriate staff based on their needs.

Adjourn

With no further questions, Kaitlin called for a motion to adjourn. Billy Givens made the motion and Tony Adams seconded. With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.