



**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2023, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.**

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guest Attending
John Zobl	Arrita Summers	Marla Rye
Mark Peed	David Rutledge	Andrea Dillard
Dan Caldwell	Ginger Jarrett	Meagan Dobbins
Chris West	Jessica Largen	Sherry Maynard
Greg Jones	Keith Carnahan	George Phillips
Shoshana Samuels	Paul Webb	Ginger Fussell
Corey Johns	Seth Thurman	Natalie McLimore
Anne Fugate	Tony Adams	Danielle Ellis
George "Bo" Callis		Liz McLaughlin
James Harper		Patrick Buford
John Alexander		Jordan Osborne
Kristi Spurgeon		Mayor Billy Vogle
Lynn Seifert		Katina Bass
Richie Brandon		Mayor Randall Hutto
Sellittia Johnson		Mayor Wes Golden
		Mayor Mike Pogreba
		Kim Rye
		Brandee Davis-Douglas
		Cinthya Rodriguez
		Jacquelyn Scott
		Lydia Bennett-Carnes
		LeeAnn Gilbert
		LaRissa Karuranga
		Rob Dancer
		Olivia Gonzales
		Bodhi Engler
		Jasmine Jones
		Trish Farmer
		Cathy Royals
		Clifton Harris
		Joel Silmon
		James Starnes
		Dedrick Moore
		Adam Smith
		Dianna Webb

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at the Martha O'Bryan Center in Nashville and with a virtual option on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 11:30 a.m.



The meeting was called to order by Chairman Zobl. Attendance was taken, and a quorum was declared. Chairman John Zobl asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mark Peed made the motion. Chris West seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla thanked everyone in attendance and introduced Jordan Osborne, who will officially join the Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board on January 1, 2024. She then announced that Dr. Lynn Seifert and Dr. Arrita Summers would be retiring, and their positions on the Board would be replaced as well. Marla recognized and thanked the mayors who were in attendance.

The September unemployment rate in the US is 3.8%. Tennessee is 3.2%. The NMTWA has the lowest rate in the state at 2.9%. The range in our 13-county area is 2.7%-4.5%. Cheatham and Williamson Counties are at 2.7%, and Houston County is at 4.5%. We have seven of the top ten lowest unemployment rates in the state of Tennessee. The Northern Middle area has one of the highest Labor Force Participation Rates of the nine workforce areas in the state of Tennessee at 66.4%. The state of Tennessee is at 59.4%.

Marla then informed the Board of a financial scam that happened in the Greater Memphis Workforce Area involving an ACH Batch Transfer. The TDOL is taking a closer look at this incident in order to strengthen internal controls. The Northern Middle area has cyber insurance covering this type of incident, but our internal controls are being strengthened to prevent this type of scam. The state has also been contacted for technical assistance as well.


Next, Kent Miller from Martha O'Bryan spoke about their program and new facility. He stated that they are located in the public housing area to be closer to their clients. The center has the goal of developing strategies to solve generational poverty. This program calculates the needs at the family level and provides direct support and benefits that are lost when an individual gains increasing employment.

Lyndi Berrones, Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives with the ECD, spoke about economic and community development. Her role is to take a deep dive into internal strategy and how ECD works together internally. How is information being processed, moved, and communicated from business development to our rural development teams and then pushed out through marketing efforts? Part of their role is to find businesses that Tennessee can assist, and the business would make a meaningful impact. For success, businesses need to know they can find the right people with the right skill sets at the right wages to fill job roles, or the business will fail. Not only does ECD work with new companies moving in, but they also work with existing companies in expanding and growing. During the pandemic of 2020, companies reassessed their locations, and during 2021, ECD announced 34,000 jobs and had \$12.9 billion in capital investment, which is more than double the amount for a normal year. Since then, capital investment has stayed high. Investment and preparation must be poured into a land site to attract companies to an area. This is an investment into the future of an area. Currently, industry is the focus of the ECD. The southeast area is now the new automotive corridor mainly because this area is "right to work" rather than unions.

Strategic Priorities

Manage Board funds to Support Career Pathways

Ginger Fussell reviewed the 23-24 budget. Northern Middle's grant utilization for Quarter 1 increased by \$986K over Quarter 1 of the prior year. A \$586k increase was due to this year's Summer Youth program. \$324K relates primarily to an increase in formula fund spending. The reduction in funding makes the budget a tighter this year. Overall spending is tracking at less than 25% of the 23-24 budget at the end of Quarter 1. However, Adult and Youth spending is outpacing budget time progression. Contractors were advised to pace themselves.



In previous meetings, the Northern Middle Board approved flexibility through June 30, 2024, to request of TDLWD up to \$1.5M for repurposing of Dislocated Worker Fund for Adult purposes. Of that amount, \$1M has been requested. EDSI will need to carefully and strategically pace formula spending for the rest of 23-24. They have presented a proposal to include a request for additional funding. Due to funding cuts, only a shift of DW to Adult budget has been granted.

Northern Middle has met the 40% MPCR requirement in preliminary calculations at 49.82%. The transition of four locations to the Labor Participation Rate Pilot project naturally lowers MPCR. National Dislocated Worker (Humphreys Flood) grant is included through August 31, 2023. MPCR in the prior quarter was 54.92%. The MPCR is not expected to remain this high through the rest of this year due to the pilot picking up traction and EDSI controlling their spending.

Of the 42-month contract with our providers, we are at 79% of the time elapsed in the contracts. EDSI has spent 79% of its budget, and MAC has spent 71% of theirs. Mid-Cumberland (One-Stop-Operator) is at 25% of the time elapsed in their contract and has spent 17% of their budget.

Due to the incident in the Greater Memphis area, Ginger stated she expects monitoring to increase. With the contracts ending for the three smaller contractors, monitoring is focused on EDSI, MAC, and Mid-Cumberland (One-Stop-Operator). Technical assistance is still being offered. TDLWD's annual PAR monitoring is ongoing, with a few remaining items. The report is pending. The Program Integrity Unit continues to send monitoring reports. No findings to date. The financial audit is upcoming.

The requested action items are approval of the 2023-24 financial report and to increase EDSI RESEA pass-through by \$174,994 effective 10/1/23-6/30/24. Mark Peed made the motion to approve the action items as requested. Chris West seconded the motion. With no further discussion the motions were approved unanimously.


Connect People with Career Opportunities

George Phillips presented the OSO report. The pilot program has kicked off, and the MPCR is 49.82%. Title 1 enrollments for Adults is 230, Dislocated Worker is 61, and Youth is 178. Adult Education has provided services to 2,950 people. George reviewed the Wagner Peyser statistics but was told the numbers may not be correct due to a glitch in VOS. For the second quarter in a row, AJC traffic count is up in the comprehensive centers but a decrease in the affiliate centers. Every county in the Northern Middle Area had a decrease in the unemployment rate. Staff turnover continues to be a problem. AJC staff has concerns with the pilot programs and feels efforts may duplicate efforts. Strategic planning is also needed to guard against duplication of services across AJC partners. RESEA Co-enrollments are a concern and need to be improved.

Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs

Marla Rye reported that the Board is involved in developing a workforce for construction of the new Tennessee Titans Stadium project in partnership with the Tennessee Builders Alliance. The project will be kicking off in the spring of 2024 and is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2027. The new stadium will be built in front of the current stadium, and when it's complete, the current stadium will be demolished. They are already reaching out about the ancillary jobs that come with a new stadium, such as food service, maintenance, janitorial jobs, etc.

Andrea Dillard informed the Board that the state has updated the Eligible Training Providers Policy and the Employment-Based Training Grants Policy. Andrea stated that the Board needs to ensure that any training WIOA customers are enrolled in results in a credential, 60% of the trainees are to obtain and retain employment, and produces an acceptable placement rate. Our updated policy matches the state's




updated policy. Providers stay on the list for one year and then get reviewed to see how they are performing. Once reviewed, they can be renewed for two years or have other parameters added. WIOA student and program completion rate must be at least 60% so that we pass our Federal Performance Standards. If providers aren't meeting all standards during their review period, they can be removed from the list. Once removed, they have to wait one year to reapply. The Board is allowed by law to raise the standards above the state policy.

The state is changing the verbiage of Consolidated Business Grant Policy to Employment-Based Training Grants Policy. This incorporates their criteria for OJT contracts, IWT, and customized training. One of the biggest changes is that now non-profits can participate in IWT as well as for-profit companies. Employers may not receive grants in consecutive years. There will be a 12-month waiting period to apply again. This is to give other employers an opportunity to receive the grant. The max a company can apply for is \$25K. The only way to apply for more (up to \$75K) is if it is as a consortium of three or more employers applying for a training grant. The final change is that a company has to have five full-time employees before they are eligible for IWT.

One of the current concerns is that we are providing a lot of training in the area of CDL drivers. The max allowed spent on training is \$6,000. When many people receive training at the maximum amount, it doesn't take long to deplete the funds. CDL is a short program and not eligible for other grants.

For program year 2022, Andrea presented a chart that detailed information from an ETPL truck driving audit. Information from VOS showed lower numbers and lower percentage rates. After receiving the information directly from the schools, the chart was updated on students who have completed the program and obtained employment. According to the new ETPL standards, many schools from the VOS statistics would not be considered successful. Once the information from the schools is received, most would be considered successful, but some would still need to be removed from the list due to poor performance. Others would have a year to raise their second score or would be removed at the end of the second year. Last year, 530 individuals were enrolled in CDL training, which cost nearly \$3M. The updated ETPL standards will also ensure that the better results will be obtained for the money spent. For program year 23, \$540K has been spent on CDL training so far. Mark Peed asked if anyone knew what was causing some of the participants to not be successful. Andrea responded that one of the issues could be that the right people aren't being sent to the program, and in some cases, the participant completes the program but can't pass the final test after multiple attempts.

Andrea updated the Board regarding the Nightengale Nursing classes from the online school based in Utah. The school was contacted and reported that it is completely online and will not have nursing clinicals in the local area. In accordance with the Board's recommendation from the last meeting to not add them if they didn't have local clinicals, this provider was rejected and not added to the ETPL. One new provider, Wings of Eagles Aviation, is requesting to be added to the list. Previously, the Board decided that aviation classes could only be added to the list if the course resulted in a commercial pilot's license or add-on. There are eight new courses requesting to be added to the list. Four of them are from previous providers already on the list, and four of them are new with Wings of Eagles Aviation, which does result in something related to commercial pilots. Some are add-ons, and some are certifications. Our ITA would not cover the full cost, so the customer would have to figure out a way to cover the remaining cost. Nine former programs are requesting to be added to the list. Some were dropped from the list due to a lack of enrollments, and some missed the application review deadline. Each of these programs results in a credential and is also in in-demand occupations. Andrea recommends these programs be approved.



John Zobl requested a motion to approve the policies as presented. Greg Jones made the motion. Sho Samuels seconded. With no further discussion, the policies were approved. Next, John requested a motion to approve the ETP List as presented. Chris West made the motion. Mark Peed seconded. With no further discussion, the ETPL was approved. Marla clarified that since the new policy was approved, they would be in touch with the providers who don't meet the criteria. The providers will get the option to appeal to the state once they receive that information.

Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs

Meagan Dobbins informed the Board that both contractors exceeded their enrollment goals for the first quarter. ESDI is not exiting participants as needed and did not meet that goal for Adult and Dislocated Worker. They did meet their youth exit goal, but in order to relieve the increasing caseload, the older cases need to be exited. Placement wages are at a good rate for both providers. MAC has exceeded its exit goals, but its exits are not positive. Megan has asked Tonya to prioritize positive exits, and exits for both contractors will continue to be monitored.

Next, Meagan reviewed the Federal Performance Reporting Score Card. For Program Year 23 in Quarter 1, all Performance Measures were met at 100%. Beginning July 1, 2023, the targets increased, and we have higher scores. The Measurable Skills Gains measure is currently passing at 90% of the goal, but Meagan is confident it will be met at 100% by the time the quarter is finalized. Predictive reports for quarter 2 show that we are currently passing all measures at 90% or 100%.

Danielle Ellis of EDSI clarified that most of the CDL referrals come from the trucking companies themselves. They are sending their enrolled students to the AJCs for tuition assistance. Danielle stated that she has asked her team to pause issuing training dollars so they can look at their remaining budget to determine different spending limits. They honoring all current commitments. They have not made changes to dollars already committed to someone. The changes will impact new participants. They are also considering lowering the ITA cap to \$2,500 to ensure the award is substantial and all other resources are explored. The team is being asked to consider placing someone in a job with better wages first based on their current skills rather than sending them to training. Danielle spoke about a strategy of retraining their career advisors to assess someone and placing them based on their skills and talents rather than putting the participant through the process based on what they think they want. If training is necessary, they will not block their progress.

Marla Rye informed the Board that we have been in this contract with the current providers for 42 months. She states it is time to send out an RFP. An RFP could be written and presented to the committees in January 2024 and then released after approval. Shoshana Samuels asked if we knew of any providers that might bid on the contract. Marla stated that there are very few local providers. Most areas across Tennessee have a national provider. Shoshana Samuels made the motion to go ahead with creating an RFP for release. Mark Peed seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the Board passed the motion.

No one requested to make a public comment.

Adjourn

John Zobl reminded the Board that the next meeting would be February 14, 2024. With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

