

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2023, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.**

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guest Attending
Arrita Summers	Anne Fugate	Marla Rye
Dan Caldwell	Greg Jones	George Phillips
John Zobl	Jessica Largen	Madison Plunkett
Corey Johns	Keith Carnahan	Kailee Bush
Mark Peed	Richie Brandon	Ginger Fussell
Chris West	Seth Thurman	Andrea Dillard
Lynn Seifert		Natalie McLimore
Kristi Spurgeon		Tanya Evrenson
John Alexander		Georgena Wilson
Paul Webb		Liz McLaughlin
George "Bo" Callis		Heather Davis
Shoshana Samuels		Liberty Ushman
Tony Adams		Katina Bass
David Rutledge		Stephanie Coleman
Ginger Jarrett		Kim Rye
Sellittia Johnson		Kimberly Groff
James Harper		Mayor Randall Hutto
		Heather Skelton
		Cathy Royals
		James Starnes
		Danielle Ellis
		Meagan Dobbins
		Lydia Bennett-Carnes
		Renea Rosson
		Patrick Buford
		Lee Harrell
		Greg Manogin

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at the Volunteer State Community College in Springfield and with a virtual option on Wednesday, August 9, 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. Chris West made the motion. Dan Caldwell seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla thanked everyone in attendance and recognized those who have put in work since the last meeting. She thanked the AJC recertification team, which included Sellittia Johnson and John Alexander, who visited each AJC in the workforce area. Greg Jones & Dan Caldwell attended the TN Blu-SkillSPAN meeting at Volunteer State Community College. Dr. Arrita Summers continues working with the Automotive Training Program in Clarksville. TDOL and Adult Ed had a summer academy in Chattanooga.

Dr. Lynn Seifert attended and had some special recognition. Dr. Seifert reported that Denise Brison, a Dickson County Adult Education instructor, was recognized as the Tennessee State Teacher of the Year. Marla added that Mayor Hutto plans to work on a Wilson County innovative pilot program with the Summer Youth Employment Program and the county government. Corey Johns will be working with this pilot program as well.

Marla introduced Stephanie Coleman, the Chief Talent Development Officer with the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. She is engaged in the TN Blu-Skillspan organization.

Partner Focus:

TN Blu-SkillSPAN

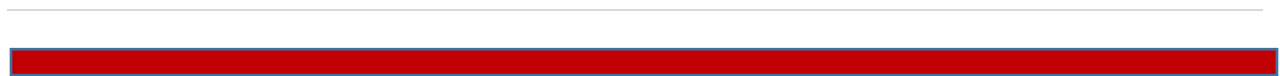
Stephanie Coleman informed the Board about the TN Blu-Skillspan organization. It is statewide and supported by the National Skills Coalition. They are committed to inclusive, high-quality skills training and equity. She reviewed how they are organized, which starts with the National Network and transcends to the grassroots/workers. They exist to examine where the skills gaps are in the Middle Tennessee Workforce. It focuses on middle-skills jobs, which are jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. As of 2018, in Tennessee, middle-skill opportunities are 56% of jobs. National Skills Coalition has determined that 92% of jobs require some digital skills, so this is also a focus for them.

The coalition is made up of approximately 65 organizations across the state. They are comprised of chambers of commerce, industry partners, community-based organizations, training providers, community colleges, advocacy groups, and labor groups.

TN Blu-SkillSPAN is co-led by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Martha O'Bryan Center. There is strong representation in each region, but they are also analyzing their leadership, ensuring they have all the right organizations involved, and ensuring regional representation in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

In 2019, BLU and SkillSPAN were launched in Tennessee as separate coalitions. In 2021, the two coalitions were brought under the same umbrella; in 2023, the co-leadership structure was launched. They are the only coalition of about 35 states that have moved these two under one umbrella. This structure brings together stakeholders that don't always have the same policy positions on workforce issues. This arrangement allows all stakeholders to work together, identify state policy issues, and brainstorm ways to increase the availability and access to good jobs for many people. Legislative areas they have been focusing on and accomplishing were discussed. The areas worked on were to get more individuals ready for what's next in their education and career.

Potential policy changes are being worked on, such as Martha O'Bryan, which is a pilot project that focuses on bridging the benefits cliff so that families have the incentive to further their economic mobility without fearing being in worse shape financially if they have the chance of a promotion. Another one is a past-due balance forgiveness program and more support for part-time students. This group also develops a set of policy priorities to track each year. The five policy priorities tracked for 2023 are expanding career and technical education and work-based learning opportunities, creating greater access to programs by expanding work supports, expanding access to high-quality short-term training, moving to one tuition level for community colleges, and closing the eligibility gap between Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect.



Summer Youth Employment Program

Marla informed the Board about the progress of the Summer Youth Employment Program. Currently, 328 young adults are working across the 13 county region, and we have 61% of all youth enrolled in the state of Tennessee. Three of the working youth joined the meeting to talk about their experiences. Liberty works at the Robertson County AJC, Madison works at the Board's administrative office, and Kaylee works with the Montgomery County mayor's office. The girls expressed their desire to work, be productive over the summer, and obtain work references for future jobs. They talked about what they enjoyed about the program, their future goals, and how this experience helped them. When asked how they learned about the program, they said through Facebook and parents. They each had friends in the program and would happily participate again if given the opportunity. Members of the Board mentioned the desire to participate but couldn't because the approval process took too long. They plan to participate next year if they get more advanced notice. Marla expressed her appreciation to EDSI and MAC for their efforts this summer.

Strategic Priorities

Manage Board funds to Support Career Pathways

Ginger Fussell reviewed the budget. Quarter 4 expenditures were \$4.3M, approximately \$1M higher than last quarter. Last quarter was approximately \$1M higher than its previous quarter. The successful final two quarters of the year compensated for the lagging first two quarters to bring us to a higher year of spending and grant utilization than our prior year. FYTD expenditures for the year were \$12.5M, approximately \$1.5M over last year. Current quarter expenditures are strong, particularly in the Adult and Youth fund streams. Considering our reduction in funding for the upcoming year, NM staff have begun conversations with EDSI, our largest provider, to pace themselves in obligating their reduced 23-24 pass-through. Ginger explained that last quarter, the Board granted an extension of our authority to request \$500k from last year of DW to Adult re-purposing. We are making that request to the state currently. Considering the amount of Adult needs to be anticipated, NM staff are asking for flexibility to request the re-purposing of \$1M from DW to Adult through June 30, 2023, for a combined total of \$1.5M.

Last quarter, we informed the Board that we would get Summer Youth funding, but we did not know the amount. The funding that impacted the current year budget was approximately \$539k, while the second phase, which began July 1 of 2023, was an additional \$1.7M. In addition to the \$539k increase, we requested and received additional funding on the COVID National Dislocated Worker grant, which ended June 30, 2023. EDSI was able to utilize \$123k of the additional funding. The \$15.2M budget reported at the May meeting grew in Q4 to \$16.2M. We will request approval of this increased budget. Grant utilization in 2022-23 was the highest in three years at 77%.

NM utilized 97% of grant funding expiring June 30, 2023. 100% of WIOA formula funding was used. The most significant portion of the unused funding, related to an additional funding request on the COVID National Dislocated Worker grant of \$400k, was made late in the year.

MPCR increased from 53.27% last quarter to 54.92%, which remains strong compared to the 40% required. This success is driven by the positive outcome of high percentages of expenditures spent directly on participants as intended. However, a less favorable driver is that staff turnover throughout the year out in the field has lowered the overhead costs of our largest provider, EDSI. Contract-to-date (30 months) EDSI met or exceeded all dollar-driven goals except In-School Youth. EDSI exceeded the Adult/DW MPCR at 57%. They met the Youth MPCR at 50%. They exceeded their Work Experience goal at 27% but did not meet their In-School Youth goal at 29%. Contract-to-date (30 months) MAC met or exceeded all dollar-driven goals except In-School Youth. They met the Youth MPCR goal at 50%. They exceeded their Work Experience goal at 38% but did not meet their In-School Youth goal at 38%.



Annual CSP billing increased by \$1.8M compared to last year. Of that amount, \$1.1M relates to the current year pass-through of the COVID National Dislocated Worker grant to EDSI. Quarter 4 CSP billing, which includes COVID NDWG, increased \$777k compared to last quarter and was \$829k higher than Quarter 3 of the previous year, which did not include COVID NDWG. Ginger reviewed the billing progress and pointed out that EDSI spent 94% of their 30-month contract budget. MAC spent 89% of their 30-month contract budget, and MCHRA spent 84% of their 12-month contract budget. Marla explained to the Board that the OSO contract with MCHRA is now a regional contract between Northern Middle and Upper Cumberland. George Phillips will remain as the One-Stop-Operator for both regions.

Ginger updated the Board regarding the three smaller youth contractors. The contractors each received \$100k Youth awards. The three new youth providers contributed \$98k in billing during Quarter 4, \$220k cumulatively. At the end of their 12-month contracts, the providers collectively utilized 73% of \$300k in awards. JTG had the best outcomes fully utilizing their funding and meeting all three dollar-driven goals. Liberty's Station had high concentrations of paid work experience but utilized only 38% of its funding. Monroe Harding utilized 82% of their funding but did not meet MPCR or ISY targets.


The 2023-24 budget, initially presented in May based on year-end carryover projections, has been adjusted to reduce carryover and add Summer Youth funding. The net increase of \$1.5M is the combination of approximately \$800k reduction in carryover offset by the addition of approximately \$2.3M in Summer Youth funding. Ginger explained that last quarter, the Board granted an extension of our authority to request \$500k from last year of DW to Adult re-purposing. We are making that request to the state currently.

The EDSI staffing situation has improved somewhat; however, case management has suffered due to staff turnover. Priority has shifted to the training of staff to improve customer service. The current focus is on reducing caseloads for quality of service. Technical assistance and initial monitoring efforts related to the new Summer Youth Program have been given, which for Phase II follows guidelines outside of the usual WIOA guidelines. The smaller youth contractors programmatically completed grant close-out. Most youth were closed with positive outcomes. Only a few were transferred to EDSI's caseload. A contract has been finalized with MCHRA to conduct regional OSO services for Northern Middle and Upper Cumberland. TDLWD's PAR and Program Integrity Units are currently monitoring Northern Middle. On-site visits were conducted on August 1 and 2; the remaining procedures are in progress.

Ginger reviewed the requested action items. Consideration is requested for the 2022-23 Budget Revision, bringing the total to \$16.2M, adding \$539k from the Summer Youth Phase I and \$400k from the COVID NDWG. Authorization is requested to re-purpose an additional \$1M DW for Adult to 6/30/24. And approval is requested for the 2023-24 Budget Revision, bringing the total to \$14.4M (+\$1.5M net = -\$800K Carryover + \$2.3M Summer Youth). Marla added that there are about 2,000 active participants, and 75% of them are adults, which is why the flexibility to transfer the money is needed. She then explained that an adult worker cannot be a dislocated worker unless they have been laid off. Mark Peed reported that the finance committee approved these action items and motioned for the Board to approve them. Arrita Summers seconded. With no further discussion, the Board approved the action items.

Connect People with Career Opportunities

George Phillips presented his OSO report. He reported that the Summer Youth Program has gone very well. MPCR is 54.92%. In June, all comprehensive centers other than Sumner showed an increase in traffic. The affiliate centers showed a significant decrease. Dickson County has had an increase in traffic



over the last six months. Unemployment rates in each county have increased. Staff turnover continues to be an issue. Overall, it has been an excellent year with the KPIs. Marla added that Northern Middle has eight of the top ten lowest counties as far as the unemployment rate. Houston County is in the top 10 for unemployment rate at 5.3%.

Natalie McLimore updated the Board about the Tennessee Alliance for Economic Mobility (TAEM) program with Martha O'Bryan. She said that they have put out a commercial on the local cable channels to attract participants to the program. The commercial used a real client's testimony. With the TN Self Sufficiency through the Tank Project, she is starting to receive transitional benefits. Since receiving a \$25M grant, support can finally be offered, and childcare is included. They strive to do co-enrollments so families and caregivers have extra funds available to help and push them into employment, which is a sustainable solution for long-term results. This will push them over the benefits cliff.

Currently, 207 families have been enrolled in the program. The goal is to serve 900 families over a three-year time period. They anticipate a huge enrollment time period next month because of partnering with the school system.

Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs

Andrea Dillard reviewed the recommendation from the Innovation Committee regarding the Eligible Training Provider List. They recommended approving the two new providers, Excel Barber and Style College and Nightingale College. Nightingale College is a private institute with numerous nursing courses. It is digital learning with clinicals on-site, but their corporate offices are located in Utah. The Innovation Committee recommended their approval be contingent based upon clinical sites being established in the Northern Middle area. They recommended approval of three new programs of existing providers being added and the recertification of three programs that were on the list previously but missed their renewal date. Mark Peed made the motion. Chris West made the second. Dr. Arrita Summers asked if their instructors would come from out of state to teach or if they would find someone local. Andrea stated that the classes are online, but she understood they would send people to teach the clinicals. She felt that this wasn't definite and they could hire someone local as well. The Board voted to approve these requests.

Andrea informed the Committee that all WIOA Federal Reporting Score Card performance measures have either 90% or 100% passing scores. Quarter 4 shows the estimated scores that will be finalized, and those are all passing. A predictive report was run for the first quarter of the new fiscal year and shows passing scores. These scores are from participants who exited the program a year ago. The current issue of having high caseloads with participants who need to be exited and may not be working will affect our scores in the future.

Because of the contractors' high carryover numbers when they took over, they were given the exit goal that 80% of new enrollments needed to be exited. EDSI did not meet the exit goal throughout all four quarters. Exiting participants positively continues to be an issue, as well as staff turnover. MAC performed well in regards to exits.

Andrea shared with the Board the WARN Notice, which details closures/layoff activities of businesses in the Northern Middle Workforce Area. The notice presented happened between January and July of this year. Almost 1,300 workers have been affected. In previous years, advanced notice has been given, but currently, notice might happen on the day of the layoff, which doesn't leave time to meet with employees. These individuals are eligible for the Dislocated Worker program; some are going to the American Job Centers for assistance.



Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs

Marla told the Board that KPI Goals are currently being set by the state now. Final negotiations will happen tomorrow. Northern Middle is at the top or near the top of every list. NM carries the state in numbers compared to its counterparts, but we are second when it comes to funding. Because we perform well, the state continues to request higher performance, but funding has been reduced. These challenges will be addressed during the negotiations tomorrow.

Every three years the AJCs have to be recertified. John Alexander and George Phillips lead the recertification team. John reported that George Phillips (OSO) led the committee. Georgena Wilson (Title III), Allen Senseney (Title II), Sellittia Johnson (Title IV VR), John Watz (Title I & Board Staff), and John Alexander (Board & State) were members of the committee. They went to each AJC throughout the 13 counties, Ft. Campbell, and the Mobile Coach. They used the state checklist to check for meeting guidelines. They met all the guidelines except for an occasional missing sign, which was corrected. Marla requested a vote to approve the recertification of the centers. John Zobl asked for a motion. Corey Johns made the motion. Dan Caldwell seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the Board approved the recertification.

Marla informed the Board that at the last legislative session, the state passed a new bill that any open meetings have to offer an open comment period. Marla stated that going forward, information would be posted on the meeting public notice that if someone wanted to address the Board, they would have to request to do so before the meeting. At this time, it was requested that if anyone had any comments they would like to make, they could do so now since this was a new process. John Zobl made the comment that he thought Marla and the group were doing a great job.

Adjourn

John Zobl reminded the Board that the next meeting would be November 8, 2023. With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned.