



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

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guest Attending</b>
Anne Fugate	David Rutledge	George Phillips
Arrita Summers	Keith Carnahan	Natalie McLimore
Chris West	Seth Thurman	Marla Rye
Corey Johns		Andrea Dillard
Dan Caldwell		Renea Rosson
George "Bo" Callis		Liz McLaughlin
Greg Jones		Dianna Webb
Ginger Jarrett		Jamila Peltyn
James Harper		Sellittia Johnson
Jessica Largen		Tanya Evrenson
John Alexander		Patrick Buford
John Zobl		Tiffany Robertson
Kristi Spurgeon		Anthony Glever
Lynn Seifert		Ginger Fussell
Mark Peed		Matt Von Lunen
Paul Webb		Katina Bass
Richie Brandon		Kimberly Goff
Sho Samuels		Mayor Randall Hutto
Tony Adams		Cathy Royals
Tylesha McCray		Christel Brown
		Rob Dancer
		Heather Skelton
		Kim Rye
		Meagan Dobbins
		James Starnes
		Danielle Ellis
		Trish Farmer
		Ross Herndon
		Ashley Crisp-Randle
		Phillip Wallace
		Kevin Rye
		Cierra
		Jane Hamrick

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at Williamson Inc. and with a virtual option on Wednesday, February 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. Dan Caldwell requested a correction that his name be added to the present members for the meeting. Chris West made the motion to



approve with the correction. Lynn Seifert seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved as corrected.

Marla began by introducing Matt Largen with Williamson Inc. Matt welcomed everyone and mentioned several programs in Williamson County. Marla then recognized a few board members. She introduced Corey Johns, who replaced GC Hixson. Corey Johns, Executive Director of Joint Economic & Community Development Board of Wilson County, introduced himself and gave a brief history. Marla then recognized that this was the last meeting for Tylesha McCray and thanked her for serving on the Board. Tylesha then introduced Sellittia Johnson, who will be her replacement, and briefly explained her work achievements. She went on to recognize Paul Webb and thank Mayor Hutto for attending. She then drew their attention to a handout from the Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association highlighting economic development work happening in Middle Tennessee.

### **CSP Performance Review/Extension of Contracts**

Andrea Dillard began by giving an update on the performance of EDSI. EDSI is exceeding their enrollment for Adults and Dislocated Workers. They exceeded their youth enrollment goal last quarter but have not met it for Quarter 2, which ended December 30. They continue to fall behind with exits which make their caseload extremely high. They have been given specific exit goals to meet to reduce their caseloads. Of the participants, they have exited in Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth; they are exiting at a high placement rate. EDSI is meeting the placement wage goal as well as MPCR for Adult/Dislocated Worker; they are a little short of their Youth goal for MPCR. They are meeting the Youth Work Experience and In-School Youth Ratio goals.

MAC did not meet its enrollment goals for the first quarter but exceeded them for the second quarter. They exceeded their exit and positive exit goals but did not place enough people into employment. MAC needs to work on exiting their participants positively. They are meeting their placement wage goal but not meeting their MPCR. They exceeded their work experience goal but did not meet their in-school youth ratio goal.


Andrea updated the Board regarding the three new youth contract providers. Jobs for Tennessee Graduates have exceeded their enrollment goal. Monroe Harding has increased their enrollments since the last meeting was held. They are struggling with expenditures and direct participant expenditures. Liberty Station is improving. They increased their enrollments and better understood expenditures and allowable costs. These contractors do not have any exits that need to be monitored yet.

Next, Andrea reviewed the Federal Performance measures. She brought to their attention that last quarter the 4th Quarter after Exit measure was failing, but when it was finalized, it rose to a passing score. The same measure for the second and third quarters is passing at 100%. All other measures have a passing score of either 90% or 100% of the goal. Currently, the chart says we are failing the measurable skills gain, but this is the only performance measure that is current and can be increased throughout the year. She confidently said it would pass by the end of the quarter due to participants earning skills gain throughout the quarter and year.

### ***EDSI***

Danielle Ellis reported about their staff turnover. At the beginning of 2022, they started with 40 on staff and ended the year with 47. Fourteen positions were added throughout the year. During the year, they hired 32 people and had 26 terminations. The comprehensive centers have the highest turnover rates. 46% of the resignations received were from career advisors. There were several main reasons given for resignations. They are career advancement (12%), higher pay (12%), other jobs (19%), personal/family

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(19%), and 18% did not specify a reason for their resignation. Davidson, Sumner, Montgomery, and Williamson counties have the highest turnover rate.

Danielle stated she hoped in the future to have this report broken down into quarters so they would be able to document if the situation is improving. They are also taking a company-wide approach to finding the best way to improve retention. They recognize that Tennessee needs strong leadership and excellent training and have made strides in training and evaluating the new team members within the first 30 days. They are currently 94% staffed today and only have three open positions.

### **MAC**

Tanya Evrenson reported on MAC's performance. POWER Youth continues to partner with Metro Nashville Public Schools to enroll youth for Paid Work experience and other activities. They are partnering with Rosewood Academy, which houses young men that are justice-involved. They are looking at the opportunities to enroll them in the POWER Youth program and possibly assist them with training facilitated by TCAT. The staff has been working hard on exits and follow-ups. Reports for the Board reflected the number of positive exits being below our goal of 85%. Since the report was pulled, coaches reached out to many customers and were able to update the information in VOS, and we are now at 84% positive exits. Metro Action Commission offers a Summer Youth Employment Program for Davidson County Youth, and the portal opens on February 15, 2023.

### **Strategic Priorities**

#### ***Manage Board funds to Support Career Pathways***


Ginger Fussell gave the financial report. She said that current quarter expenditures were \$2.3M, approximately \$207K shy of last quarter. EDSI, our largest provider, changed accounting systems in the fall, which involved application migrations. They fell behind in their billing to NM through the transition, so some of quarter two's billing will not hit until quarter three. Fiscal Year To Date expenditures through December were \$4.8M, approximately \$144K less than last year. Since last quarter, our \$14.9M budget has grown in new funding by \$80K with the addition of a Re-Entry (Justice-Involved) grant.

Next, Ginger updated the committee, saying that last quarter, the Board authorized staff to request, as needed, up to \$1.5M for additional re-purposing of Dislocated Worker for Adult spending. NM requested, and TDLWD approved, \$1M of that amount, with \$500K remaining to be requested if needed. \$1M had been requested in the prior year, bringing the re-purposed total to \$2M. As approved last quarter, the Youth portion of EDSI's contract was increased up to an additional \$750K through June 30, 2023. Approval for an \$80K budget increase will be requested, bringing the total to \$15.0M. Note that \$37,800 will be passed through to EDSI, our career service provider.

MPCR dropped from 51.9% last quarter to 49.56%, which remains strong compared to the 40% required. This is helped by the ability to count activity on the National Dislocated Worker grants now. Quarter two CSP billing dropped \$355K from the prior quarter, partially due to EDSI's accounting transition. Both contractors are approximately 67% of utilization of their contracts out of 80% time progression. EDSI's contract budget includes increases at various intervals throughout the 30-month contract period, including the most recent increase of \$750K for Youth. MAC's contract remains at its initial contract budget. Mid-Cumberland HRA, our OSO is 42% out of 50% time progression.

EDSI has exceeded MPCR for Adult/DW. This is partially due to having open positions on their staff. They fell just short at 48% for Youth. EDSI maintains MPCR Fiscal YTD and cumulatively for all fund streams. EDSI met Youth Work Experience and ISY during the quarter and Fiscal YTD, but not contract to date. MAC fell short of MPCR for the quarter at 42%. MAC has met MPCR Fiscal YTD at 56% but is short at 46% cumulatively. MAC met Youth Work Experience during the quarter and has met it cumulatively.

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The smaller contractors are progressing toward enrollment and are positioned for increased expenditures in upcoming quarters. To date, expenditures are lagging in time progression. Jobs for Tennessee Graduates has spent the most with 32% of funds utilized, Monroe Harding has utilized 27%, and Liberty Station has utilized 11%. They are 50% of the way through their contracts in time progression. Liberty Station has the highest MPCR at 51% and work experience at 51%. JTG is at 24% MPCR, but exceeds the work experience goal at 35%. Due to the nature of JTG's program, the In-school-youth ratio is at 100%. Monroe Harding is not yet meeting any of the dollar-driven goals. They've adjusted their strategy between ISY and OSY. Their highest percentage is ISY at 27%. Trends tend to show that it takes about six months to figure out their path and start contributing to our goals, no matter the contractor's size.

Ginger then moved on to the monitoring update. She reported that EDSI's staffing situation has improved. Now the focus shifts to training new staff and retaining existing staff. A couple of issues of questioned costs were identified, and we are working with EDSI for a resolution. Technical assistance is continuing for the new youth providers. JTG's audit is complete, with no findings. Ginger feels like their restriction can be removed now that their audit has been received. They continue talking with Monroe Harding about their low direct participant expenditure rate. Oversight of partner accountability of the One-Stop-Operator continues with a focus on KPI goals. TDLWD conducted quarterly monitoring and had no findings. A participant file desk review was conducted, and they shared a list of observations. Ginger stated that Ankur Singula, with Thurman Campbell, presented the results of the audit to the Finance Committee. The audit had no findings and had a clean opinion. Ginger updated the committee on changes that have happened within the accounting department.

Ginger then reviewed the action items for the committee to approve. First, the 2022-23 budget revision of \$15.0M after adding \$80K. Next, approval is needed on the EDSI CSP pass-through of \$37.8K for the Re-Entry (Justice-Involved) Grant. Ginger requested approval to have Ankur and his firm conduct the audit next year with a modest fee increase knowing that his firm may opt out of doing government audits after the 2023 audit. It was mentioned that many firms are opting out of government audits, so finding a new firm may be challenging and include a significant cost increase. Mark Peed added that the Finance Committee endorsed these action items then Mark made the motion to approve them. Chris West seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the action items were approved unanimously.

### ***Connect People with Career Opportunities***

Marla began by discussing by reviewing the benefits cliff that the Federal Reserve Bank presented last year. She states it is difficult for individuals to work in low-wage jobs that have a negative impact on their state and federal benefits. In some cases, the individual is actually worse off by taking working when they lose their benefits. She stated Natalie McLimore had been a team funded through the Tennessee Department of Human Services called the Tennessee Alliance for Economic Mobility (TAEM). This program is meant to address the benefits cliff and help individuals across the cliff.

Natalie explained the program to the Board. She started by saying any penny increase in pay can cut families off from benefits. This program is meant to mitigate those problems. This program is funded through the Department of Human Services as part of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Opportunity Act. Six grants were awarded across the state, each of which is \$25M. The TAEM pilot is being conducted in seven counties, Montgomery, Davidson, Murray, Dickson, Rutherford, Sumner, and Wilson. Natalie gave an example to the Board of what benefits a family immediately lost when they made \$4 more an hour by getting a management position. This benefits cliff is a national problem, but it keeps low-income families from moving forward in Tennessee. An alliance of 32 different partnerships

has been formed to deliver this program and make system changes so that we can move our families forward.

The approach is to deliver a universal assessment, then divide caregivers and their families into three pathways: Dream, Hope, and Inspire. Each pathway determines what kind of coaching the family will receive. Nine hundred families in the seven-county service area will be served, and 256 families have already been screened. Each family will receive individual coaching, financial counseling, and customized resources based on what they need. The goal of each pathway is to empower them to go back to school, earn a higher education, increase their employment, or move them to employment with a higher wage. When they can manage their pathway with fewer benefits, they will save taxpayers overall and become self-sufficient. Families often don't have the resources to move forward, and this program will help them do that and reduce generational poverty. They must be 18 or older, have 1-4 children, be enrolled in one or more public benefits, be willing to work to improve their situation, make \$55K or less, and be a U.S. citizen. EDSI can refer WIOA clients who meet the criteria, but one of the main ways clients will be referred is those who receive assistance at nonprofits. Individualized coaching also includes mental health pieces as well.

Next, Dianna Webb, Senior Manager for Economic Mobility and SNAP for United Way, gave an overview of the SNAP Employment and Training Reimbursement Program. This grant is funded through the Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Program, while DHS has direct oversight. United Way identifies potential partnerships which could benefit from these reimbursements. They aim to continue expanding the SNAP E&T footprint with partnerships in all counties in the Middle Tennessee Region. They began in 2019 with two partners and have grown to 16 partners. They identify potential partners by ensuring they have the following components: the right participants, the right capacity, the right services, and the right funds.

### ***Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs***

Andrea presented the Eligible Training Provider List. There are twelve providers requesting to be added to the list. Meagan Dobbins ran placement data information and determined the average earnings for the program certification. Most of these meet the needed wages and have bright outlooks. They also match the six program sectors needed. The state asked Andrea and the team to wait on creating policies as they felt the policies the State is working on would address all the issues and questions about which programs should be added. Marla added that if any program was denied at this point, the provider could appeal the decision, and the state would approve them based on their current, more lenient policy.

Andrea presented a youth incentive policy change to the Board that was previously presented to the committee. The changes they are requesting are to add additional incentives for students who obtain higher GPAs or enroll in post-secondary education.

John Zobl asked for a motion to approve the ETPL as presented. Tony Adams made the motion, and Tylesha McCray seconded it. With no further discussion, the motion was approved.

John Zobl asked Lynn what the committee thought of the youth incentive policy. Lynn stated the Special Population Committee approved it, and Lynn made the motion to approve it. Kristi seconded, and with no further discussion, the motion was approved.

### ***Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs***

Marla went on to talk to the Board about the \$100K the finance committee approved for a marketing and outreach campaign. Small Town Startup from Springfield was selected for this task. They are



focusing on a social media campaign, podcasts, and a texting campaign designed to get clients in the door of the AJC.

Marla informed the Board that the state had approved a pilot project focusing on employment first. This plan has a work-first approach where the AJCs would operate almost like a temporary staffing agency where the focus was putting people to work. Since this will be a labor-intensive project, they will also ask to waive the minimum participant cost rate. This strategy is to increase staff at the AJCs in the four lowest Labor Force Participant Rate counties to act more as a direct placement provider. A regional OSO will provide a natural firewall. They would be there for the career service provider employees to report to if there is an issue, and the regional OSO would report to the Upper Cumberland Board and not go through the Northern Middle Board. Upper Cumberland and Northern Middle would have to bid for a regional OSO. EDSI and MAC would be renewed for one additional year with the option to renew for another year based on their performance. Changing contractors would make meeting the state's guidelines difficult because of the time for them to get their bearings, and it would be too much to implement a pilot while assisting new contractors. Additional funding will not be requested; it will be appropriated through normal allocations. If this pilot project is successful, we would want to deploy this model through all counties. The Executive Committee has agreed to this plan, and the state is also agreeable.

Marla talked about the Campbell Strong Defense Alliance, an EDA grant awarded to a group on Ft. Campbell that is all about bringing additional resources, jobs, and putting soldiers to work. They are meeting with several Chambers of Commerce to advocate getting employers to intern with soldiers exiting the military. Soldiers will be allowed to do the internship during their last six months of service.

The Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association does economic development in the 40-county region in Middle Tennessee. A wage and benefits survey is conducted in partnership with the local community every year. The information is sent to MTSU, where they compile the data. The survey will soon be wrapped up and sent out.

### **Adjourn**

John Zobl reminded the Board that the next meeting would be on May 10, 2023. With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

