

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Full Board
Meeting Minutes
May 17, 2023, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.**

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guest Attending
Anne Fugate	David Rutledge	Marla Rye
Arrita Summers	Jessica Largen	Meagan Dobbins
Chris West	Keith Carnahan	Ginger Fussell
Corey Johns	Paul Webb	Sherry Maynard
Dan Caldwell		Phillip Wallace
George "Bo" Callis		Adina Chumley
Greg Jones		Tanya Evrenson
Ginger Jarrett		Ginger Hausser
James Harper		Diana Webb
John Alexander		Katina Bass
John Zobl		John Watz
Kristi Spurgeon		Brenda Head
Lynn Seiftet		Renea Rosson
Mark Peed		Liz McLaughlin
Richie Brandon		LaTanya Channel
Sellittia Johnson		Freda Herndon
Seth Thurman		Danielle Ellis
Sho Samuels		Cathy Royals
Tony Adams		Ashley Crisp-Randle
		James Starnes
		Rob Dancer
		Patrick Buford
		George Phillips
		Trish Farmer
		Heather Skelton
		Mayor Wes Golden
		Mayor Bob Rial

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at Dell Technologies in Nashville and with a virtual option on Wednesday, May 17, 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. John Alexander seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla thanked everyone in attendance and gave a brief update regarding the state of our 13-county region. Unemployment is historically low at 2.6%, ranging from 2.3% in Williamson County to a high of 4.4% in Houston County. This equates to less than 30K people on the unemployment rolls for the Northern Middle Workforce region. Labor Force Participation Rate is holding steady. The state has a rate of 59.6%, less than the national average of 62.6%. Northern Middle ranges from 48% in Houston County

to 73.5% in Trousdale County. That is a 25 point difference in the range. The large range variance may be due to the state prison in Trousdale. There are approximately 2,500 inmates there, and they are counted as exempt from the labor force participation rate. Four counties are lower than the state average: Montgomery, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart. The pilot project is set to kick off in those counties on July 1. John Zobl clarified that the LFPR counts people from age 16 to 99. He stated that the number would drastically improve if you didn't count the older people.

Marla went on to recognize the work of board members since the last meeting and recognize the county mayors who joined the meeting today including Mayor Bob Rial, Mayor Wes Golden, and representatives from the Davidson County mayor's office. She informed the Board that Corey Johns has applied for a TVA Workforce Development Grant and Sumner and Montgomery Counties are also working on a TVA investment grant. Anne Fugate has been instrumental in helping EDSI get set up and serve spouses in Ft. Campbell. John Alexander has been working with the Greater Nashville Hospitality Association on workforce issues. Dr. Arrita Summers has been working with the automotive technician development training program in Clarksville, serving six dealerships in Middle Tennessee. Dr. Lynn Seifert has been working on the adult education issue in Northern Middle. Marla thanked Sho Samuels for hosting our meeting and providing our lunches today.

Sho Samuels welcomed everyone to Dell. She provided the attendees with historical information about the building. She also shared that Dell is committed to leaving communities better than they found them. She mentioned the numerous programs they have designed to help students in elementary school through adulthood.

Partner Focus:

Persevere Tech Alliance

Freda Herndon gave a brief update on the work of Persevere Tech Alliance. She began with a testimonial video of a client who went through their program and is now self-sufficient, has a healthy relationship with his children, is engaged, and just purchased their first home. Freda went on to give an EDA grant overview and update on career pathways. This program is expanding to other areas in Tennessee. She explained that each participant at Persevere receives a laptop (up to \$750), career readiness, life skills, financial fitness instruction, and support. Clients are provided with mental health counselors, case managers, and employment specialists. These wraparound services help them be successful in their careers and lives. The presentation ended with a request to become more involved through volunteering to be an alliance ambassador or a mentor.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

Brenda Head spoke about the National Council on Aging. They administer a federal job training grant called Senior Community Service Employment Program which helps low-income seniors 55 and older receive job training to reenter the workforce. To qualify for this program, a senior must be 55 or older and meet the low-income family guidelines. The SCSEP grant covers 14 Tennessee counties in three different workforce areas and serves 155 participants.

Brenda went on to explain how the grant works. The grant aims to update older adults' skills so they can leave the program and obtain part-time or full-time employment. Partnerships are formed with nonprofit and governmental agencies. Participants express a goal for the type of employment they desire, and the program matches them with a training partner in that field. Brenda announced her retirement and that Workforce Essentials will be administering the program in the future.



Strategic Priorities

Manage Board funds to Support Career Pathways

Ginger Fussell reviewed the budget for the Board. Current quarter expenditures were \$3.3M, approximately \$1M higher than last quarter. She noted that 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 did not hit until quarter three. Coupled with that were focused efforts on training in the current quarter on the COVID National Dislocated Worker grant and moderate increases in Adult and Youth formula grant expenditures. Fiscal year-to-date expenditures through March were \$8.2M. Since last quarter, the \$15.0M budget has grown to \$15.2M with the addition of a \$200K in Consolidated Business grant.


The TN Department of Labor announced a Summer Youth Employment funding opportunity. Guidance related to this announcement is ongoing. We anticipate additional funding before our next board meeting, but at this time, the amount is still to be determined. We have requested \$2M. It will operate in two phases, the first to begin May 1, 2023, through August 31, 2023, and the second phase to begin July 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024. We are submitting proposals next week.

Ginger reviewed action items to include a request to approve the \$200K budget increase, bringing the total to \$15.2M plus any grant awarded for the Summer Youth initiative. In previous quarters, the Board authorized staff to request, as needed, up to \$1.5M for additional re-purposing of DW for Adult grant spending. NM requested, and TDLWD approved \$1M of that amount, with \$500K remaining to be requested through June 30, 2023, if needed. We request an extension of this remaining \$500K authority to June 30, 2024.

Ginger reported that MPCR increased from 49.56% last quarter to 53.27%, which remains strong compared to the 40% required. The jump was helped this quarter by the increase in training within the National DW grants. According to the Contractor billing trend chart, there was a significant increase in quarter 3, as previously explained, partially due to EDSI's accounting transition catchup, then additional training costs in the quarter.

MAC is 77%, and EDSI is 80% spent out of 90% time progression on contracts. Note that 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 remains at its initial contract budget. Mid-Cumberland HRA, our OSO, is 64% out of 75% time progression. In quarter 3, EDSI exceeded MPCR for Adult/DW at 55% with very high direct participant costs on the National DW grant.

Ginger provided updates on the three youth contractors. To date, the expenditures are lagging behind time progression. Jobs for Tennessee Graduates has spent the most with 52% of funds utilized, Monroe Harding has utilized 47%, and Liberty Station has utilized 23%. JTG is at 29% MPCR but exceeds the work experience goal at 42%. While Liberty Station spent the least, they had the highest MPCR at 75%. Monroe Harding has not yet met any of the dollar-driven goals. MPCR, Work Experience, and in-school youth are at 20%, 22%, and 25%, respectively. Marla added that the youth funding is taking a significant cut. Based on these cuts, the finance committee voted to not renewing the contracts for these smaller contract service providers. Their remaining participants will be shifted to EDSI or MAC for services. Marla stated that when we bid out the youth contracts again, these contractors will be better prepared for bidding on WIOA contracts. Ginger stated that these contractors helped us meet our work experience requirements.



Ginger presented next year's initial budget. Total projected allocations before carryover is \$7.8M. We are projecting a large carryover of \$5.9M from this year primarily due to remaining dislocated worker funds. The allocation notice contained significant reductions to each fund stream. Marla explained that the WIOA dollars were down 4-5% for Adult & Youth, and 8% for Dislocated Worker on a national level. The state uses a formula for allocating funds which considers the poverty level, plant closures and other economic factors. Based on projections, initial budgeted revenues and expenditures for FY2023-2024 are \$12.9M, not including the Summer Youth Employment Program, since that amount hasn't been awarded yet. The carryover will reduce the burden from the reduction in allocations. An additional \$400K has been requested from the National DW grant to be used before June 30, 2023. The budget will be modified at the August meeting after year-end numbers are complete and the exact carryover is determined.

The EDSI staffing situation has improved somewhat; however, case management has suffered due to staff turnover. Priority has shifted to training staff to improve customer service. The focus is on reducing caseloads so that the quality of service can improve. EDSI and Mid-Cumberland submitted their audit reports, and there were no findings. Technical assistance was provided to the new youth providers, and desk reviews were conducted. TDLWD conducted quarterly monitoring with no findings. Two dislocated worker and work experience concerns were addressed by NM staff, who anticipate us meeting requirements by June 30, 2023, for expiring grants.

Action items presented to the Board include: 1) requesting approval for the 2022-2023 Budget Revision, which includes an additional \$200K making the budget \$15.2M plus the pending amount for the Summer Youth grant 2) Extend the authorization to re-purpose \$500K from DW for Adult to June 30, 2024. 3.) Extend EDSI's contract to June 30, 2024, at 95% of their 12-month contract allocation for Adult/DW, Youth, and RESA fund streams. 4.) Extend MAC's contract to June 30, 2024, at 95% of their 12-month base contract for Youth. 5.) End the three small youth contracts as of June 30, 2023, due to a reduction in the youth budget for 2023-2024. 6.) Approve the 2023-2024 preliminary budget of \$12.9M. 7.) Approval of the Procurement Policy. The policy has been updated to reflect the current federal rules and regulations. The allowable purchase thresholds have changed, and one section has been added regarding Domestic Preferences for Procurements. John Zobl asked for a motion to approve all action items as presented. Mark Peed made the motion. Seth Thurman seconded. With no further discussion, the Board members voted to approve the action items.

Connect People with Career Opportunities

Marla reported to the Board that the state was awarded \$15M to provide a Summer Youth Employment Program. This will be done in two phases, to provide more work experience for young adults. Phase 1 targets youth with barriers, phase 2 is open to any youth. Priority will be given to foster children and low income youth. The young adults can work 25 hours per week for six to eight weeks at up to \$16/hour. Since no money was allotted for taxes or workman's comp, the wages will be lower, and the number of hours will be less to compensate for these additional costs. EDSI and MAC will administer the program. The state has a goal of serving 3,750 youth. We are preparing to serve 150 youth in phase 1 and 500 in phase 2. Recruitment for the program has begun.

Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs

Meagan Dobbins identified the new providers requesting to be added to the list. Then she presented the list of providers requesting additional programs to be added and made eligible for WIOA funding. Meagan presented the list of providers who were previously on the list due to no enrollments or missing their renewal deadline and are requesting to be added to the list again. Megan mentions that all programs except for the Nossi College of Arts fall within the six industry sector strategies. The

Innovation Committee has approved these changes and requested the WIOA cap of \$6,000 per program be explained to the Board.

Megan explained the state had been working on additional guidance and policies to be approved by the state Workforce Board. She informed the Board that their packet includes a draft copy of the State Workforce Services Policy Eligible Training Provider List. This new policy does not directly address the need of only allowing providers in the six industry sectors. Marla added that a board policy supporting their goals could be written when the state policy is passed by the State Workforce Board. She also added that career advisors explain the WIOA funding cap and will ask participants how they will come up with the remaining tuition balance if needed. Greg Jones made the motion to approve the ETPL list as presented. Seth Thurman seconded. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Next, Meagan reviewed the WIOA Federal Reporting Score Card where we are projected to pass all performance measures. She also discussed EDSI and MAC performance.

Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs

Marla went on to talk to the Board about the Workforce Equity Collective. This project is funded through the mayor's office and is a collective of community partners to address workplace equity led by the Urban League of Middle Tennessee. They have a goal to serve 1,500 individuals over the next three years. They are focused on removing all barriers for individuals in Davidson County. They will be paying participants \$15/hour to attend training.

Marla informed the Board about the procurement of a One-Stop-Operator. This is a regional initiative with the Upper Cumberland Workforce Board. The two workforce areas will have the same OSO and operate more consistently. Proposals are due by the end of May. Thomas P. Miller will review the proposals and make a recommendation which will be presented to the Executive Committee since it will be before the August meeting. The winner will be announced on June 15.

John Watz gave a brief overview of the Infrastructure Jobs Grants. This grant aims to increase the Labor Force Participation Rate with good-paying jobs.

Adjourn

John Zobl reminded the Board that the next meeting would be August 9, 2023. With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned.