



Approved  
July 29, 2021

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board  
Special Populations Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 6, 2021, via Zoom 9:00 a.m.**

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guests Attending</b>
John Alexander		Marla Rye
James Harper		Megan Dobbins
Seth Thurman		Andrea Dillard
Bo Callis		Sherry Maynard
Jennifer Hobbs		Ginger Fussell
John Zobl		Freda Herndon
Lynn Seifert		Ellen Gomez
Kristi Spurgeon		
Carol Puryear		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Special Populations Committee met on May 6, 2021, at 9 a.m. virtually via Zoom.

Bo Callis called the meeting to order, a quorum was established, and he requested a motion for approval of the minutes. James Harper made the motion to approve the minutes. Bo Callis seconded the motion, and with no discussion, the committee voted to approve the minutes.

**McGruder Center Funding Application-Offender Project**

Marla informed the board about the McGruder Center's request to be an access point for the American Job Center. The McGruder Center is a family resource center in north Nashville that Catholic Charities run. According to Brookings Institute, the zip code they are located in has the highest percentage of incarcerated individuals in the nation. They reached out and asked to be an access point for the American Job Center. Marla, Andrea, and John Alexander went to the center for a tour. The center has a promising space and already has a couple of training programs as well as a judge who does community court. Catholic Charities has submitted a proposal to the finance committee requesting \$63,000 to start a pre-apprenticeship program for offenders since they are in an area with such a high incarceration rate. They already have a couple of companies working with them already. With \$63,000, they would serve 40 individuals over a year timeframe. This would amount to \$1591 per person.

Marla then opened the floor to questions. Bo Callis asked what skill or discipline would they be training in. Marla replied she thought it was basic construction with plans to add a plumbing program. Bo then asked if they had submitted what their standards would be or their list of

achievements for advancement. Marla said they hadn't submitted their entire apprenticeship program, and to not be limited, they wanted to say it was a construction training program. Bo asked if there was any idea what the selection process would look like. Marla replied that they had been working with the Nashville probations court and that they would get referrals from the probation officer they had been working with.

Carol Puryear asked for a motion to approve the McGruder Center as an access point. James Harper made a motion to approve. Bo Callis seconded the motion. With no more discussion, the committee voted for the approval unanimously. Carol then asked for a motion to approve \$63,000 (pending the finance committee's approval) for Catholic Charities to start a pre-apprenticeship program working with local industries. James Harper made the motion to approve. Bo Callis seconded the motion. Bo then asked if the funds would go to Catholic Charities or the Lee Company. Marla responded they would go to Catholic Charities, and then they would disperse them as needed. Lynn Seifert, with adult ed, added that they are planning a prison-to-work pipeline. They have been working with the Davidson County Sheriff's Department with the first pilot completed in the Davidson and Dickson County jails. This program will teach them reading skills and get them to the ninth-grade reading level, and they hope to add soft skills using 180 skills and make it a complete package. Lynn went on to report how well a training session went with the Dickson County and Davidson County jails. Carol Puryear added that if some of those individuals aren't hired and follow the NCCR curriculum, some of the technical colleges can give them prior learning credits. This could help them get through the program even faster. Bo asked if the inmates automatically enter an apprenticeship at the end of the pre-apprenticeships and what is the maximum time they can remain in the pre-apprenticeship program. Lynn replied that Lee Company has several different apprenticeship programs that they can go to in order to hone their skills and continue learning. She also added that the McGruder Center would have several different pathways they can choose from. If Lee Company hires them for the pre-apprenticeship program, and they apply to go on to an apprenticeship, then they would get it. Marla expressed that the funding going to Catholic Charities is so the individuals could go in any direction they choose and not have to go to a specific company. She felt it was structured in a way so they would get the most amount of options. Freda mentioned that having an American Job Center access point at the McGruder Center will help because they could host a job fair and only invite employers who have an apprenticeship program. This would give participants who don't work for Lee an opportunity for advancements as well.

After this discussion, Carol Puryear asked for a vote in favor of the motion. All members voted yes. The motion passed.

### **Campbell Strong Workforce Partnership Grant Update**

Marla informed the committee that the Campbell Strong Workforce Partnership Grant is set to expire on September 30, 2021. This was a two-year grant which was extended for the third year. No more money will be given, and finances are getting tight on enrollment funding to get to September 30. TNDOL was told that enrollments would probably cut off in June, and the last quarter will be a transition period to make sure the enrolled soldiers have gotten what they

need. Marla does not feel confident that the grant will get extended, so she is setting the program up for transitioning.

### **Summer Youth Employment Program**

Marla informed the committee that the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development is conducting a summer youth employment program and will be awarding funding to each local area. Right now, there are a lot of unknowns as far as how many youths will be served and how much money will be awarded. She stated that she anticipated about \$500,000 for a 12-week work experience for in-school or out-of-school youth. She explained that in addition to the work experience that there has to be an education component. Currently, we have been working with EDSI and MAC to try and engage career and technical education directors in the school systems in Northern Middle.

Ellen Gomez added that the education stakeholders would want to know their role and what they need to do other than recruit participants. They will see their juniors and seniors for one or two more weeks before they are gone for the summer. Due to the lack of time, they feel they are not able to develop a good plan or partnership. Ellen added that the summer learning camps that are happening in June would be a good place to recruit participants. Another idea is for eligible students attending TCAT who need to do a co-op or internship to get paid while in that program. Carol Puryear expressed excitement for these good opportunities for Northern Middle Tennessee.

### **Contract Service Provider Performance Review**

Andrea informed the committee that both service providers are currently behind and have gotten off to a very slow start. By June 30, EDSI needs to have 455 Adult and Dislocated Worker enrollments. At the time of this report, they had 231, which is just over 50% of their goal. For youth, their goal is 112 by the end of June, and they are at 46, which is 41% of their goal. One issue affecting their performance is they are not 100% staffed. Marla has requested that the President and CEO of each company be present at the full board meeting on May 12 to present a corrective action plan. While Andrea reports that EDSI is making good progress towards their goal, she is not confident that they will be completely caught up by the end of June. Another concern is their placement rates are dropping as well. Marla added that they are meeting with the contractors weekly to provide technical assistance and review performance.

Andrea reported on the Metro Action Commission (MAC), the youth provider for Davidson County. Their goal is to enroll 115 youth by June 30, and currently, they are at 15, which is 13% of their goal. They continue to struggle to identify and enroll individuals in their program. Both contractors are struggling to meet MPCR. Marla spoke with MAC, and they agreed they did not need to take on any additional funding. All money granted from the Summer Youth Employment Program will go to EDSI to serve the 12 counties, and MAC will continue to serve Nashville with existing funds. Marla reported that the Executive Committee had been invited to attend the weekly meetings with the contract providers. She also encouraged the committee to ask questions to the providers after they present their corrective action plans.

**Known Performance Indicator Update-State Policy**

Marla informed the board about the state KPI policy. For the first six months of the year, the goals were soft targets without penalties. After Effective July 1, there will be funding penalties associated with not meeting the goals. The state has not defined what the exact penalties will be yet. Marla expressed that we should be good stewards of this money, and serve as many participants as possible.

Marla was asked what she thought the biggest challenge for the contractors was. She responded that it was staffing for EDSI and the lack of onsite management. She also felt that turnover and adjusting to Tennessee's way of doing business was a challenge. She feels they are trending upward, but their MPCR got behind because of the slow transition period. Marla stated that MAC's performance has been surprising; however, the reassignment of Tonya Evrenson was a positive step.

Carol Puryear added that enrollment is up at TCAT this summer, but they have had to work hard to get participants to register.

With no other questions, Carol Puryear adjourned the committee meeting.