



Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
FEB 11, 2026

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2025, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guest Attending	Staff & Guest Attending Cont.
Ashley Horan	Anne Fugate	Marla Rye	Trish Bugg
Billy Givens	Jordan Osborne	Jim Hughes	Pam Furlong
Brandon Phinx	Kristi Spurgeon	Mayor Anderson	Heather Skelton
Corey Johns	Nathan Garrett	Ferrol Thomas	Amy Mayberry
Dan Caldwell		Tamera Parsons	Mayor Pogreba
David Rutledge		George Phillips	Cassandra McNair-Brown
Freda Herndon		Andrea Dillard	Betsy Foster
George Callis		Meagan Dobbins	Joely Berg
John Zobl		Natalie McLimore	
Kaitlin Salyer		Tracie Eversole	
Mark Peed		Ginger Fussell	
Mary Lear		Cinthya Rodriguez	
Paul Webb		Kim Rye	
Sellittia Johnson		Cathy Royals	
Seth Thurman		James Starnes	
Shoshana Samuels		Lydia Bennett-Carnes	

Call Meeting to Order - Declaration of Quorum

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board met in person at the Williamson County Administrative Complex, with a virtual option, on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 11:30 a.m.

Chairman John Zobl called the meeting to order. Attendance was taken, and a quorum was declared. John requested a motion to approve the minutes. Shoshana Samuels made the motion, and Dan Caldwell seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved. John welcomed attendees to Williamson County and introduced Mayor Rogers Anderson, noting that this would be his final meeting with the board in Williamson County before his retirement in August 2026. Mayor Anderson welcomed the board, thanked members for attending, and expressed appreciation for Marla Rye and her staff. Marla Rye recognized the mayor's long tenure and support of workforce initiatives, and John commended his leadership and service.

Marla then provided a federal update, reporting that the recent federal government shutdown had minimal impact on local operations due to forward funding through June 30, 2026. She noted uncertainty beyond that date related to potential federal funding and program structure changes. Funding for the SCSEP had been restored by the National Council on Aging, and efforts were underway to reengage affected participants, with funding in place through June 30, 2026.

Marla reported that labor market data was delayed due to furloughs at the state. She stated that August unemployment rates ranged from 2.8% in Cheatham County to 4.0% in Houston County, with the

Northern Middle region at 3.1% compared to 3.6% statewide and 4.3% nationally. She added that labor force participation in the region remained strong at 68.3%, exceeding both state and national averages.

She then summarized highlights from the Governor's Conference for Economic Development, where Tennessee Works was announced as a new statewide alignment of workforce and economic development partners. She stated that the initiative is funded by the state legislature, will operate under its own executive director, and will be overseen by the State Workforce Board. Marla then invited Amy Maberry to provide additional remarks. Amy stated that the initiative is focused on better alignment of services for business and industry and that the State Workforce Board will serve in an advisory role to the Tennessee Works hub by helping identify employer needs and guide workforce system strategies. Amy added that Tennessee Works has officially launched and is already engaging with businesses. She invited members to attend the upcoming State Workforce Board meeting for additional details. Marla thanked Amy and introduced new board member Ashley Horan, who is filling the seat previously held by Kelly Tyler. Ashley briefly shared her background as the Humphreys County ECD coordinator and a local small business owner. Marla reported on recent resource fairs held in response to impacts from the government shutdown affecting Fort Campbell. She stated that the American Job Center participated in events in Christian County, Kentucky, and Clarksville, serving approximately 50 individuals by providing information on available services and unemployment insurance benefits in coordination with the state. John welcomed Tamera Parsons, who led the statewide certification assessment.

Strategic Partner Focus - UTCIS Board Certification Results

Tamera Parsons presented the results of the board certification assessment, noting that board members participated through surveys, interviews, and document review. She emphasized that the assessment was an evaluation of strengths and opportunities intended to support continuous improvement and excellence. She reported that overall survey participation exceeded 70%, indicating strong engagement, and results reflected high levels of satisfaction with board performance across multiple governance areas. The board received an overall achievement rating of effective, with particularly strong results in areas related to board culture, ethics, transparency, partnerships, and stakeholder focus. Survey results showed that members rated the board highly for creating a safe, inclusive, and trusting environment, building effective partnerships, leading with transparency, and upholding ethical standards. She noted that these results place the board among higher-performing boards assessed to date.

Tamera then reviewed governance ratings, reporting that structure, governance systems, and strategic insight were rated as effective, while performance management and legal and ethical behavior were rated as functional. She highlighted strengths including clear roles and responsibilities, strong accountability practices, effective planning aligned with state and regional priorities, and demonstrated ability to execute strategic plans. Identified opportunities included enhancing staggered board orientation, formalizing succession planning, strengthening forecasting and decision-making processes, expanding performance measures beyond required KPIs, and developing indicators to assess partnership effectiveness and customer-centeredness. She concluded by identifying best-known practices observed during the assessment, including the Workforce Wednesday communications and the board's diversified, performance-based contracting strategies. She noted these practices contribute to organizational stability and could be shared as models for other boards. She stated that a detailed feedback report would be provided to Marla Rye and thanked the board for its participation. Marla thanked Tamera, and John Zobl expressed appreciation for the assessment, affirming that the findings would be reviewed and used to guide improvement, and recognized the board's ongoing commitment to strengthening its work.

Strategic Priorities – Healthcare

Marla reported follow-up actions from the prior Board meeting's hospitality and tourism panel, noting that an employer meeting for the hospitality and tourism sector was scheduled for December 4 at French Landing with support from Leesa LeClaire, Laurie with the Tennessee Hospitality Association, Brandon, Selena Moore, and Nestor Reyes. The meeting is intended to identify workforce priorities directly from employers and to produce industry-driven action items.

She then introduced guest speakers Jim Hughes of Williamson Health and Ferrol Thomas of the Tennessee Hospital Association (THA). Ferrol explained that THA is a statewide membership organization representing nearly all Tennessee hospitals and that its workforce work includes support for rural health and a nonprofit arm that can pursue grants. She reported THA has launched several nursing workforce initiatives, including a nurse residency program for rural and critical access hospitals, an academic preceptor incentive program to expand clinical placements, and a pre-licensure nursing apprenticeship model approved through the Board of Nursing. The apprenticeship model is expanding statewide, with multiple LPN programs active, an RN program underway, and additional employers expected to launch in January. She also noted that THA is working to extend apprenticeship-style models to other healthcare roles and emphasized that employers often lack the staff capacity to build and sustain training programs without partners.

Jim shared that Williamson Health has expanded workforce development efforts through grant funding, reporting an initial grant of nearly \$90K and an additional award of more than \$200K in the current fiscal year. He summarized three strategies supported through the funding: upskilling licensed staff to support retention and career advancement, providing skill-building opportunities for frontline staff through ESL and high school equivalency programming, and supporting academic partners by investing in nurse preceptors and strengthening transition to practice experiences. Jim also noted Williamson Health has implemented a pharmacy technician apprenticeship and is exploring additional apprenticeship pathways, including radiology and laboratory roles. In discussion, Ferrol recommended that local workforce efforts leverage THA to connect with appropriate hospital contacts, noting that many hospitals, particularly smaller facilities, do not have dedicated workforce staff. Brandon Phinx commented that interest from training providers has increased and that THA's apprenticeship toolkit and sponsorship structure have helped reduce administrative barriers for healthcare apprenticeship expansion. Mayor Rogers Anderson emphasized the need to improve NM branding and communication so employers better understand the role and services of the workforce system, and John Zobl agreed that clearer messaging could be aligned with Tennessee Works. Board members also discussed grant development capacity, with Mayor Anderson and Paul Webb describing how grant writing expertise, creative matching strategies, and ongoing grant monitoring have supported successful awards. Mayor Anderson noted opioid settlement funding is also available to counties over multiple years and could support workforce-related and recovery-focused initiatives through regional partnerships.

OSO Report

George Phillips reported on the program year start, noting a strong first quarter beginning July 1 with increased enrollments and higher foot traffic. He stated that as of September 30, overall traffic had increased by more than 2,000 individuals compared to the fourth quarter of the prior year. Due to the federal government shutdown, labor market information was only available through August, and George noted that nearly all counties in the region showed a decrease in unemployment rates compared to the prior report. Staffing is an ongoing challenge, particularly on the state side in comprehensive centers, citing an extended hiring freeze and continued turnover that has increased strain on remaining staff. George reported that key performance indicators were off to a strong start, especially enrollments, and noted that co-enrollments between Wagner-Peyser and Title I programs remained slightly below target but were improving and trending in a positive direction. John Zobl thanked George for his years of service and acknowledged his upcoming retirement. Marla Rye introduced Sarah Buckles as George's

replacement, noting that she joined the Rutherford County American Job Center in 2019 on the Wagner-Peyser side and would be assuming the role moving forward.

AJC Operations

Andrea Dillard reported that enrollments under the new Career Services Provider, Workforce Essentials, were off to a strong start in Q1. Adult enrollments exceeded the quarterly target, while Dislocated Worker enrollments were slightly below target. She explained that this variance is not unusual, given the more specific eligibility requirements for Dislocated Worker services and noted that the board has flexibility to shift funding between Adult and Dislocated Worker programs based on service demand, which typically trends higher for Adult services. Andrea also reviewed federal performance indicators, reporting that all Q1 measures were passing at either 90% (yellow) or 100% (green). She stated that preliminary Q2 data showed several measures below target; however, results were not final, and staff are actively monitoring performance and addressing issues prior to final reporting. Performance is reviewed regularly by staff and leadership to ensure corrective actions are implemented as needed.

Natalie McLimore provided an update on the transition of career services to Workforce Essentials effective July 1. She reported steady progress during Q1, which focused on stabilizing operations, rebuilding staffing, and training staff following the transition. Despite a reduction in staffing from 56 positions to 33 due to funding changes, the team successfully met Q1 performance measures. Natalie reported that the program was nearly fully staffed, with only one vacancy remaining in Davidson County, and credited the management team for supporting staff through the transition. She also reported on Dislocated Worker and Rapid Response activity, noting services provided in response to layoffs or closures at Bridgestone, Geodis, HD Supply, and Vanderbilt. She explained that while Dislocated Workers often receive services, many return to work quickly, which can limit formal program enrollment despite high service levels. Natalie reported that staff supported more than 12 career fairs during the first quarter, delivering over 400 services, and implemented an active workshop schedule across American Job Centers. She also announced the launch of an AI for job seekers workshop in November and reported that outreach services had resumed in Davidson County at six additional community locations following completion of staff training.

Eligible Training Provider Update

Andrea then presented updates to the Eligible Training Provider List, reporting that no new providers had requested approval. For programs requiring approval, all but the program from TN Professional Training Institute were either State- or TBR-approved institutions. The TN Professional Training Institute requested to add patient care technician and medical assistant programs and result in certifications. Andrea also reported two training cost increases requiring board action: Skilled Workforce increased costs by more than 25% for the Titans Stadium Project due to expanding the program from 3 to 6 weeks, and Volunteer State reported a 35% increase in its certified medical assistant program. Seth Harper Thurman, Innovations Committee chair, reported that the committee unanimously recommended approval of the requested programs and made a motion to approve the list. Ashley Horan seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously and received no further discussion.

Financial Report

Ginger Fussell reported on first-quarter financial performance for program year 2025–26, noting that the organization was 25% into the fiscal year with \$1.4M in grant utilization during Q1. Nearly all expenditures during the quarter were associated with formula grants. At quarter end, 13.8% of the formula budget and 11.9% of the overall revised budget had been expended. The total 2025–26 budget was \$12.4M and included three new grants totaling \$558k. Ginger noted that Q1 utilization in 2024–25 was higher at \$2.1M; however, that figure included \$446k spent on a TYEP grant that carried over into 2024-25. She explained that the prior TYEP grant ended June 30, 2025 with a new TYEP grant beginning July 1, 2025 and that the Career Service Provider role was transitioning during this period. From a fiscal

standpoint, Ginger stated that the CSP transition was more efficient and favorable than transitioning services to outside contractors. She reiterated that enrollment drives spending and referenced earlier reports on enrollment progress. Ginger added that minimal expenditures were reflected in Q1 for non-formula grants awarded July 1, 2025, but were expected to increase in Q2, particularly as students participate in paid work experience during holiday breaks. She reported that the only Finance Committee action item was approval of the Budget-to-Actual report and the revised 2025–26 budget of \$12.4M, reflecting the three new grants.

Marla Rye reported that the three new grants totaled \$558k. She stated that \$200k was awarded for an apprenticeship grant, equating to \$2,500 per apprentice enrolled in the Northern Middle area. A TYEP grant focused on vocational rehabilitation participants was awarded in partnership with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and would serve individuals with disabilities, with 32 youth anticipated to participate. Marla encouraged board members to share information about community-based organizations working with individuals with disabilities that may be interested in work-based learning opportunities, noting that participant wages could be paid through the program. She also reported that \$247k was awarded through a re-entry grant supporting two projects, one in Rutherford County and one in Humphreys County, serving justice-involved individuals, including those post-release and not necessarily associated with a jail. She explained that the Humphreys County project would partner with TCAT to provide flooring training in carpet, tile, hardwood, and LVT installation, while the Murfreesboro project would focus on advanced manufacturing.

Ginger Fussell reported that MPCR at the end of Q1 was 38.14%, slightly below the 40% target, and stated that she was encouraged by the result, given that the quarter represented a transition period. She explained that MPCR reporting had been streamlined by fund stream since contributions from outside contractors were no longer included, and that infrastructure costs previously shown in a separate column were now embedded within each fund stream, making results appear lower than in prior presentations. Ginger referenced Natalie's earlier report regarding staffing reductions from over 50 positions to the low 30s, noting that the reduction lowered overhead and improved the outlook for MPCR performance going forward. She reported that the Career Service Provider division achieved an MPCR of 42% for Adult and Dislocated Worker combined, with Adult at 53% and Dislocated Worker at 22%. The CSP Youth program achieved an MPCR of 55% and met Work Experience and In-School Youth goals. Ginger reported that the One-Stop Operator, MCHRA, expended 21% of its 12-month contract budget at 25% of the contract term, noting that because the contract represents an overhead expense, lower utilization was a favorable outcome. She reported that NM Quality Assurance staff completed case file reviews of new Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participant files with no significant observations. Procurement for external monitoring was nullified due to a lack of responses and pricing constraints. One-Stop Operator monitoring activities were ongoing with no issues, and Ginger thanked George for his service and partnership with the Northern Middle Tennessee workforce area. She also reported that the state conducted case file reviews of 40 Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth files with no observations or findings. Ginger stated that the TNDLWD PAR team conducted its annual review, including an onsite visit in September, and that an exit conference was expected later in the month. She concluded by reporting that the external financial audit was ongoing with Stone, Rudolph, and Henry, PLC, with fieldwork scheduled during the month.

Marla Rye reported that the Finance Committee reviewed the financial report and recommended approval by the full board. Dan Caldwell made a motion to approve the 2025–26 Financial Report with the revised budget of \$12.4M, reflecting an increase of \$558k for the three new grants. Paul Webb seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved with no further discussion.

AJC Locations Update

Marla Rye provided an update on the American Job Center rating scale that the board previously reviewed two meetings earlier in Murfreesboro. She explained that the centers are evaluated based on costs, enrollments, cost per enrollment, and the % of the population served, with a golf-style rating in which lower scores reflect stronger performance. Marla reported that the ratings were updated for the first quarter of the new fiscal year and that Davidson, Rutherford, Montgomery, and Houston counties remain the top-performing centers. The only significant change was Davidson County, which moved up four positions to the top ranking due to co-location with Nashville State Community College. She noted that while this location has significantly reduced costs, additional security expenses are being added and will be reflected in the second and third quarters of the fiscal year. Marla stated that Williamson, Humphreys, and Trousdale counties continue to rank at the bottom, primarily due to lower customer traffic. She shared that Trousdale County has already transitioned to operating three days per week and that similar part-time schedules may be considered for other locations. Marla added that staff will meet with the state to discuss infrastructure and potential changes for 2026, and that the board will continue to monitor performance and make adjustments as needed.

Corey Johns asked about the difference between affiliate and comprehensive American Job Centers. She stated that comprehensive centers are designated as “C” on the report and are located in Davidson, Rutherford, Montgomery, and Sumner counties, housing Department of Labor staff, Title I staff, and adult education services in some locations. Affiliate centers designated as “A” typically have only Title I staff on site. Marla also noted that future efforts under Tennessee Works are expected to align TBR institutions with American Job Centers further, citing Davidson County as a successful example. She indicated that similar alignment is being explored in other counties.

Public Comment and Adjournment

No public comments were requested. Chairman Zobl reminded the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2026. He then adjourned the meeting.