



Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
AUGUST 11, 2021

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Full Board
Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2021, In-Person & via Zoom 11:30 a.m.

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guest Attending
John Alexander	Howard Bradley	Mayor Robin Brandon
John Zobl	Keith Carnahan	Mayor Kerry McCarver
Anne Fugate	Seth Thurman	Melissa Counts
Kristi Spurgeon	Dan Ryan	Molly Hewitt
Carol Puryear	Richie Brandon	John Watz
Lynn Seifert	GC Hixon	Danielle Ellis
Tony Adams		Stacey Books
David Rutledge		Rubin Cockrell
Chris West		Liz McLaughlin
Dan Caldwell		Christina Dusenberry
Jennifer Hobbs		Lindsay Whittin
Mark Peed		Freda Herndon
James Harper		Ginger Fussell
Tylesha McCray		George Phillips
Bo Callis		Ellen Gomez
Paul Webb		Adina Chumley
Charles Story		Marla Rye
		Andrea Dillard
		Sherry Maynard
		Richard Nelson
		Phillip Wallace
		Glenn Dahill
		Casey Deel
		Kevin Schnieders
		Cynthia Croom
		Tanya Evrenson
		James Starnes
		Christel Brown
		Robin Brandon
		Ginger Hausser
		Trish Farmer
		Rob Dancer
		Meagan Dobbins
		Renea Rosson
		Ellen Zinkiewicz
		Susan Cowden
		Joseph Johnson
		Ashley Crisp-Randle
		Jennifer Eppley

		Hansel Phelps
		Darla Tea

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board, met in person at TCAT Smyrna and virtually on Wednesday, May 12, 2021, at 11:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order, there was a quorum, and Chairman John Zobl made opening remarks. John Zobl asked for a motion to approve the minutes. John Alexander made the motion to approve. Carol Puryear seconded, and the vote was unanimous. Marla welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting in support of the board Marla then recognized Mayor Robin Brandon from Stewart County and Mayor Kerry McCarver from Cheatham County, who joined the board meeting. She then thanked the board members for attending their committee meetings and thanked the executive committee for their contractor performance work. She welcomed Anne Fugate, the newest member of the workforce board. Anne Fugate then introduced herself and gave a brief introduction.

Marla started the meeting with a few brief remarks. There has been a lot of transition and improvement in our local economy. The unemployment rates released last week showed the Northern Middle Workforce area has a rate of 4.3%, which is lower than the state average of 5% and lower than the national average of 6%. There are still 47,000 people on unemployment insurance. In April 2020, at the height of the pandemic, there were 156,000 on unemployment insurance. There are lots of jobs available for those individuals. Gov. Lee is suspending the federal pandemic unemployment insurance effective July 3. Hopefully, this change will drive people back into the American Job Centers.

Contractor Report – Q & A

EDSI

Kevin Schnieders, CEO of EDSI, opened his report by acknowledging the bumpy first quarter. He stated he did not do a very good job at being the leader and didn't establish expectations. He added that people expected them to hit the ground running, and they weren't able to do that. He admitted he should have set the expectation with Marla and the team that they would need time to get going before taking off. He then turned the lead over to Danielle Ellis and Christina Dusenberry.

Danielle started by informing the board that they have 95% of the staffing positions filled and have offers out for the remaining positions. EDSI had to change their advertising methods and started using LinkedIn and Jobs4TN.gov. They have been in the process of retraining the team, filling a lot of knowledge gaps, and making sure they have great tools. They also focus on having great communication. EDSI has weekly regional team meetings where they share goals, talk through challenges, and celebrate wins. They are also meeting weekly with the Workforce Board. Molly and Liz are the two leaders in the area. They are reinstating monthly meetings within the comprehensive centers to make sure that internal teams and internal partners are in the loop of what everyone is working on. She explained that it does take about three months to ramp up performance, and their performance is now trending up. Currently, their enrollments are averaging between 25 to 30 per week. Keeping with this trend, it is projected that they would be just under or right at the 400 enrollment mark. This trend has been consistent since March and has seen many improvements with the Adult & Dislocated Worker Program and the Youth Program. She does believe the Summer Youth Initiative will greatly impact their youth numbers and are excited about that initiative. Danielle reported they'd seen a significant spike in their minimum participant cost rate. While MPCR is getting closer to their goal each month, they may not have enough cumulatively to be at the 50% goal. She stated with the governor's

announcement of ending the pandemic relief that they feel they will see an increase of traffic in the centers, allowing them to focus on the OJTs. They are discussing career exploration workshops, training for healthcare, technology, and advanced manufacturing. They are also launching a pilot program in Rutherford County for a youth coding career acceleration program in partnership with Persevere. Danielle reported that in July, they hope to introduce some adult and youth reentry programming to ensure that folks coming out of prison have resources available to them upon reentry. She said they are also looking at introducing non-traditional employment for women to expose them to information from other industries and encourage them to try new things. They are working with Ellen Gomez to make sure they establish a presence within the K – 12 schools so they can upskill the community to be ready for tech jobs when they come to Middle Tennessee.

Danielle said they have been working on improving their digital marketing and outreach services. They are excited to hear about the return to work campaign and feel this is needed to reinforce the American Job Centers and their direct connections to employment opportunities. They are exploring creative messaging since they found out that text messaging seems to be the number one way to reach participants throughout the pandemic. They are investigating ways people can opt-in to receive text messages. Lastly, Danielle reported they were working on a full circle system where they can accept referrals from their community partners, share resources, have a sound communication system, and take services to those who need it but may not walk into the AJC.

Danielle was asked what have been the biggest changes made to ramp up services in the last six months. She responded that they had reinstated the intake processes in the comprehensive centers to be referred to the appropriate services right up front and get as much done as possible on the first visit. Secondly, they have worked hard to make a connection with the L.V.E.R.s (Local Veterans Employment Representative) in the centers and work closely with them. Additionally, they are implementing a lot of curriculum for the region to meet needs. Resume workshops, interviewing skills, interviewing on a virtual platform, and career exploration are also some job seeker needs. Pilot programs, such as youth coding, will continue to be pushed as more needs are discovered.

MAC

Dr. Croom started off by explaining they expected to have hit the ground running with this program. However, it did not and they moved this program from the early education and youth division and move it to their workforce division. Tanya Evrenson, who has more experience, now has oversight. Dr. Croom feels that they are now moving in the right direction, and they've already begun to make progress. She also expressed how COVID negatively impacted the program due to not having access to the places they would normally have access to in order to recruit participants. However, she did explain she felt responsible as well, saying she didn't have the foresight to make sure the program was situated within the right unit of the organization. She then mentioned that they would make sure that they find participants by going to where they know the people are.

Next, Tanya Evrenson explained that they started with internal recruitment first by reaching out to folks they already have in their system as receiving assistance with utilities, rent, mortgages, and things like this. They have reached out to young parents with children in headstart (about 140) and are planning meetings to give them more information about the program. They have also reached out to the young

adults in the adult education unit of their program. They are attending public events to recruit young adults and reach out to the Opportunity Now participants who also have some barrier to employment. Tanya said they would also partner with the American Job Centers and EDSI and have conversations about co-enrollments and recruiting to get referred to young adults who qualify for their program. She then reported that they are reaching out to many different organizations and schools to be sure that they know about the program and that they have access to the young adults who qualify for the program. She stated that they were working hard on their enrollment numbers and that they are trending upwards.

KPI Performance Goals/WIOA Effectiveness of Programs

Andrea Dillard then gave a report on the program providers' KPIs. She stated that as of April 28, EDSI had enrolled 211 Adult & DW workers, which was 46% of their goal. They enrolled 44 Youth which was 39% of their goal. As of the morning of this meeting, they had 251 Adult & DW, which is 55% of their goal, and Youth increased to 51, which is 46% of their goal. MAC had a goal of 115 youth. In April, they had 12, which is 10% of their goal. At the time of this meeting they increased to 24 youth which is 21% of their goal. EDSI has 83% placement for Adult & DW, and 64% for Youth with placement wages at \$18.76 for Adult & DW and \$14.53 for Youth. MAC has an 80% placement rate, and the placement wages are right under \$12.50. Marla added that EDSI was on track to reach 400 by June 30 but will push for 455. To achieve 100% of their goal, they would need to enroll 27 Adult & DW each week and 8 Youth enrollments each week. For MAC to reach 100% of their goal (115), they would need to enroll 11 youth per week. Tanya reported that MAC is shooting to meet the goal of 115 enrollments by the end of June.

John Zobl asked Tanya and Danielle to inform the board about MPCR and compliance. Danielle reported that they saw some good results during April due to their improvements and felt like May and June would be the same. However, she does feel that they would be a bit under their cumulative goal because they did start the first few months with a deficit. Tanya felt that they would also have a cumulative deficit, but they will do their best to meet their goal.

Mark Peed suggested that some standards be set for both contractors to meet. If those standards aren't satisfied, then formal actions should be taken. Charles asked if the state needs to be alerted that the MPCR may not be met. Marla responded that she had alerted them and Ginger would have more information. Marla was asked what the state could do or sanctions they would put in place if goals weren't met. She responded that they developed sanctions and they could dissolve the board, make the Board restructure, and under the new KPI policy, there could be monetary penalties. Marla also informed the board that it is in our contract that if the service providers fail to perform appropriately in a timely or proper manner, the Northern Middle Workforce Board shall have the right to immediately terminate the contract and withhold payments in excess of the fair compensation of completed services. When asked about how we compare to the other workforce areas, Marla reported that we are one of two areas (there are nine across the state) that are achieving all of the federal compliance measures. She went on to say that as far as the MPCR, the other areas have much lower rates than Northern Middle.

John Zobl asked for some discussion on setting expectations on enrollment and expenditures by the end of the quarter. Mark Peed commented that he didn't feel anything is being asked of the contractors that

were spelled out in the contracts from the beginning. Marla was asked if the payment agreed upon in the contract is based on the performance of the providers. She confirmed that the contracts are cost reimbursement and that EDSI does have an incentive they get paid if they achieve all of their benchmarks. She then asked the board to consider making 90% the target for the providers to meet by the end of the quarter since that is considered passing by the state. She also expressed that the MPCR cumulative goal shouldn't be set at 50% since they have a deficit they need to work out of, and July 1 will be a reset of goals and will run on the fiscal year. It will not benefit anyone if new providers are chosen and go through another transition period. It would benefit us to keep these contractors if they can ramp up and meet the goals. Mark suggested that the MPCR goal just be calculated for just the month of June, meaning we would require the providers to meet a goal of 45%-50% for the month of June. It was felt that this would be a reasonable target to set. John Alexander asked if the dip in our performance right now is going to be low enough to show up in four quarters on our federal report. Marla explained that our federal performance would dip because of COVID and the poor performance of the providers.

John Alexander made a motion that both contractors have to meet 90% of their cumulative enrollment goals as of June 30, and they must also be at 50% MPCR for all funding sources for the month of June. Mark Peed seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Strategic Priorities

Manage Board funds to support Career Pathways

Ginger Fussell shared that we've had a lot of activity at the board level, and for our local area that is above and beyond our contractor activity despite the tough quarter, we do have some positive results for our year cumulatively. When looking at all of our activities to include Campbell Strong, National Dislocated Worker Grants, and COVID grants, we have utilized \$9.8 million. This is on the heels of the first two quarters at \$3.4 million and \$3.9 million, and then we took a \$1.6 million dip in the 3rd quarter. It's not surprising we have a \$600,000 dip because quarter two had short-term grants which started and finished in that quarter. The \$1 million decrease in Adult & Dislocated Worker and Youth was not expected and this is due to the decline in contractor activity. We start with a base budget and at our August and November meetings, our available funding to be spent in this fiscal year was \$15.1 million. At the end of the third quarter, we spent \$8.9 million or 58.8%. Last quarter we received an additional \$2.5 million, and in this third quarter, we had an additional \$440,000 putting our budget at \$18.1 million. This makes our expenditures at about 54%. \$300,000 of our Dislocated Worker funding was repurposed for adult expenditures as we always seem to run low on adult funding.

The contractors' slow ramp-up was evident in the billing. EDSI's billing in March was about \$235,000, and their billing in April exceeded \$400,000. This shows they are making good strides. At the end of March, with 17% of the contract time elapsed, EDSI had spent 7% of their budget, and MAC had spent 5%. Because of timing issues, MAC's billing for April decreased, but they are expected to have a higher month in May. The MPCR goal is 50%, EDSI is at 12% for Adults, 23% for Dislocated Workers, and 14% for Youth. MAC is at 17% for Youth. Two goals that are not normally presented because the goal is usually met are the work experience requirement and the In-School Youth goal. The work experience should be at 25%. EDSI is at 0%, and MAC is at 9%. The In-School Youth should be at 40%. EDSI is at 1%,

and MAC is at 4%. As their MPCR improves, these goals should improve as well. The cumulative MPCR (from July 1, 2020-March 2021) has dropped 4.9 percentage points to 39.97%. It is unsure if we have met our 40% goal. That depends on whether the state will round up the final figure or not. When we incorporate all of the additional activities that we have, the MPCR is 56.90% cumulatively. This is a drop of 2.48 percentage points from last quarter, which was 59.38%.

Ginger then reported about Campbell Strong. This grant expires on September 30, 2021. So far, 86.6% of the budget has been spent. 91% of the goal was spent toward direct participant expenses. We had an enrollment goal of 2,000, and we are at 81% of that. While this grant is expiring, we are hopeful for additional funding.

Ginger gave a monitoring update. We hold weekly meetings with our current career service providers. There are still some ongoing final adjustments with Mid-Cumberland, the out-going career service provider, but they are continuing the One-Stop Operator contract. We are working with the state to phase out the Campbell Strong project in September, but there may be some additional funding.

Next, Ginger presented the fiscal year budget for 21-22 since the board will not meet again until August. This is a base budget calculated at \$11.9 million, which includes around \$300,000 for incumbent workers. This is about \$3 million less than last year because of Campbell Strong and carry-over adjustments. As funding becomes available, we will progressively expect to raise the budget. Admin and program expenses were raised about \$100,000 primarily because of health care costs. There \$300,000 for incumbent workers, and there is a national DW grant. Contracted activities include the One-Stop-Operator and Career Service Providers. We do expect to receive a RESEA award, so that has been included. This has been presented to the Finance Committee. Mark Peed made a motion to approve the current operational budget as amended and to adopt the 21-22 \$11.9 million operational budget to include \$66,000 for the McGruder Center and \$300,000 incumbent worker training. Charles Story seconded the motion. The board voted unanimous approval.

Connect People with Career Opportunities

George Philips gave his One-Stop Operator report. In the local area updates, he recognized the new contractors that came on board and expressed the benefit of the Premier Virtual Job Fair Platform. He noted the contractual MPCR being lower at 39.97%, and the Title 1 active cases are down as of March 31 compared to December 31. In Adult Education, a total of 83 students received their HiSETs, with an average of 456 students enrolled in classes. This quarter, 81 students received a level gain. New employers registered in Jobs4TN, new job orders in Jobs4TN, and Wagner Peyser Participants are all up, along with Vocational Rehab numbers being up. AJC traffic counts are down. It was a little over 19,000 for the quarter ending March 31 as compared to 24,000 for the quarter ending in December. All AJCs were closed for one week in February due to snow.

George then reported about unemployment in the Northern Middle area. Northern Middle's unemployment rate is at 4.3%, which the state is at 5.1%. Eleven of the thirteen counties saw a rise in unemployment over the past three months ending March 31. Unemployment remained flat in Williamson County. Davidson saw a decrease from 4.7% to 4.5%, and the largest increase occurred in

Houston county, going from 6.2% to 7.1%. Finally, George briefly discussed the KPIs which are transitioning to hard targets.

Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs

Marla informed the board about the statewide manufacturing project. We were awarded around \$350,000 for a statewide initiative to provide training for manufactures that use the Haas manufacturing equipment. We are working with 44 employers (at least one from each workforce area across the state) and are paying the fees for their employees to go to training. So far, we've spent \$250,000 and are sending 71 employees across the state to the training center in Knoxville.

Next, Marla updated the board on the McGruder & Napier Center Certification. Each committee looked at the McGruder Center as an access point. The zip code it is located in has the highest incarceration rate in the United States. Marla believes we should be targeting services in and around the North Nashville area. The group that toured the facility and both committees informed about the project would like an AJC access point to be set up there and provide the pre-apprenticeship program in the plumbing field. She went on to brief the board about the Napier Project. They will officially be open for business, May 17 and allow the American Job Center system to set up. Marla asked John Zobl for a motion to approve the McGruder Center as an access point and the Napier Center as an affiliate site so that services can be expanded in Davidson County. John Zobl asked for a motion. David Rutledge made the motion. Carol seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the board voted in favor of the motion.

Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs

Freda updated the board on the Eligible Training Provider List. After the committee meeting, there were two additional programs to be presented. The recommendation is to approve them for one year due to a lack of enrollment history. The two programs are at Tennessee College of Applied Technology at Hartsville and can be evaluated at the one-year mark. Bo made the motion to recommend the approval of the programs for one year. John Alexander seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the board voted in favor of the motion unanimously.

Andrea brought before the board four policies that were reviewed and approved by the Innovations committee. The first three policies were existing policies that were modified. Adult Priority has the addition of 75% of the individuals that are enrolled in the Title 1 program must fall within the first four levels of the five priority levels. At the present time, we are already over 75%. The Grievance and Compliant Resolution Policy has the modification to reflect new forms and reporting deadlines required by the state. The Supportive Service Policy needed the clarification that sales tax can be allowed for reimbursement for eligible subcontractors. In the past, the subcontractors have been nonprofit, but EDSI is a private for-profit contractor and is not tax-exempt. The policy clarifies that as long as the subcontractor has to pay sales tax, it is an allowable reimbursement. The TAA Title One Co-Enrollments is a new policy. One of the KPI requirements is that 100% of individuals enrolled in the Trade Adjustment Assistance and Reemployment Program must also be co-enrolled into the Title 1 Dislocated Worker Program. There is currently a lot of paperwork required to be in each program, and getting participants to come in two times to fill out a stack of paperwork is inefficient. This policy would streamline the process and use the information from one program to enroll them in the other program. One program

requires a few additional questions to be answered, and this will be completed with one extra form filled out during the intake. Tylesha McCray made the motion to approve these policies. John Alexander seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Adjourn

John Zobl reminded the board of the upcoming meetings. He expressed appreciation for everyone's participation. The meeting was adjourned.