Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

APPROVED
NOV 6, 2025

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Special Populations Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025, via Zoom at 11:00 a.m.

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guests Attending
Freda Herndon	Corey Johns	Marla Rye
Mary Lear	Christopher West	Andrea Dillard
Bo Callis	James Harper	Ginger Fussell
Selina Moore	Jordan Osborne	Kim Rye
Nathan Garrett		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Special Populations Committee met via Zoom on May 1, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

With a quorum confirmed, Freda Herndon called the meeting to order. Selina Moore moved to approve the minutes, and Nathan Garrett seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Federal Performance
Andrea Dillard reviewed the federal performance scorecard for PY24 Q3, noting that all measures were either green (100%+) or yellow (90%+), both of which are considered passing. She noted that while NM is used to green scores, yellows are acceptable, given the significant increase in performance targets last year. One measure is currently projected to fall below 90% in Q4, but Andrea was confident it would meet the threshold before the quarter is finalized. Marla added that only one or two of Tennessee's nine workforce areas are meeting all measures, with most falling short in at least one category.

CSP Performance
Andrea then reported on the performance of Career Service Providers. MAC exceeded youth enrollment goals but is behind on exits, although they are expected to catch up by June 30. EDSI has met or exceeded all KPIs for Q3 and are now current on participant exits for the first time this year. Board staff Meagan Dobbins and Cathy Royals have worked with both providers to resolve outstanding cases while maintaining positive exit outcomes. The Montgomery County pilot, launched October 1, has met all KPIs except youth enrollments, which fell short by two.

Caseloads have been reduced from 650–670 to around 450–460. Andrea acknowledged that the caseload was initially too high but commended the staff's progress. In Sumner County, a state-run pilot, performance improved from meeting no KPIs in Q2 to five of ten in Q3. Marla confirmed staffing remains an issue at both the state and center levels.

Target Populations
Marla provided updates on the programs for target populations. Under the Rural Healthcare Grant, NM received $350,000 for a paramedic training program at Vol State to upskill 25 advanced EMTs, which will also serve as the state's first paramedic apprenticeship. She also highlighted the PROWD grant, which awarded nearly $900,000 to the Nashville area to support individuals reentering society after incarceration. A career advisor will begin training in June, with program launch set for July 1.

Regarding the Tennessee Youth Employment Program, Marla noted that NM served over 600 youth last year and was recently asked to expend an additional $500,000 between May 1 and June 30, aiming to serve 115 youth. A new $1 million TYEP application has been submitted for all counties except Davidson due to the abundance of nonprofits in Nashville. She asked the committee to share any potential worksite leads, noting recent partnerships with Corey Johns and Wilson Works that had identified $50,000 in employer placements.

Andrea concluded with a brief update on Incumbent Worker Training and State Apprenticeship Grants. This year, 18 employers received IWT contracts supporting 431 employees. About 70 apprentices across nine employers are also utilizing state apprenticeship funds. All apprenticeship expansion formula grant funds have been obligated. Marla added that Robertson and Rutherford County school systems are now participating in the Governor's Grow Your Own teacher apprenticeship initiative. Nathan Garrett asked if Davidson County Drug Court could be a PROWD training partner; Marla replied that it was too early for her to confirm, as grant staff training would begin in June.

CSP Procurement Update
Marla provided an update on the Career Service Provider transition. With the contracts for EDSI and MAC nearing the state's five-year procurement limit, the Board considered at its last meeting whether to reprocure or pursue a new structure. After speaking with local mayors and economic development agencies, Marla found that the consensus was that the AJCs had lost community connection and visibility. Around the same time, on February 28, 2025, the State Workforce Board approved a new policy that allows local boards to serve as their own service providers. Following consultation with the Executive Committee and the Chief Local Elected Official, and in light of a 13% funding reduction for Program Year 2025–2026 (approximately $1 million), a waiver request was submitted on March 24 to allow the Board, in partnership with Workforce Essentials, to assume this role. Conditional approval was granted on April 2, pending clarification on firewalls between strategic and operational functions. A revised plan, including independent monitoring and procurement plans, was submitted and approved on April 11. To maintain neutrality, Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency will remain the One-Stop Operator. EDSI and MAC were informed of the change, and meetings were held with their staff

to facilitate the transition. Natalie McLimore, Vice President of Workforce Essentials and a veteran of TANF service delivery across 60 counties, was appointed to manage CSP operations. Marla and Andrea will remain at the board level to focus on strategy, while Natalie will oversee day-to-day operations. The new organizational structure eliminates four EDSI management positions, saving approximately $375,000, along with four additional roles, resulting in a more streamlined and cost-effective model. To support continuity and staff morale, former EDSI employees transitioning to Workforce Essentials will receive credit for their years of service under the prior contract, allowing them to retain accrued leave benefits and seniority. Nathan Garrett applauded Marla and her team for all the challenging work and decisions they had to make to reach this point. He believed that this new organizational structure would flow more smoothly and facilitate better communication. Marla then acknowledged the challenges of the transition, noting her optimism about restoring the American Job Centers' local reputation and strengthening community partnerships. While EDSI and MAC have been cooperative and supportive throughout the transition, including assisting their employees and managing youth funds, Marla reiterated that the shift away from contracted services is intended to rebuild the centers' effectiveness and presence.

AJC Locations

She then explained that the Tennessee Department of Labor is continuing to encourage reductions in infrastructure costs to offset funding losses. Marla reviewed the infrastructure costs from July through March, excluding OSO-related expenses, and found that $837,000 had been spent over the nine months. With contributions from non-mandated co-located partners, including Forward Sumner, Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency, Catholic Charities, and Williamson County Schools, approximately $81,000 was recouped in contra rent, bringing the net costs to around $756,000. Projected annually, infrastructure expenses are expected to total roughly $1.1 million. Davidson County remains the most costly location, although a recent relocation may yield $100,000 in savings, pending final billing and confirmation of whether security costs are required. Montgomery, Sumner, Rutherford, and Dickson counties follow in cost ranking. Marla noted mixed feelings about reducing infrastructure in rural counties like Houston, Humphreys, Stewart, and Trousdale, which collectively cost about $116,000 but remain well-utilized. Currently, about 57% of total infrastructure costs are charged to WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker programs. As partner agencies continue to reduce their presence in AJCs, remaining programs must absorb a larger share of facility costs, raising concerns over further increases if other partners, such as Veterans Services, scale back. Marla emphasized the need to consider these cost shifts when renegotiating infrastructure agreements and invited Selena to share insights on how Southern Middle Tennessee is addressing its own facility strategies.

Selina Moore, who is also on the Southern Middle Board, shared that her region faces similar budget constraints. As of the previous day, they had closed their Lawrence County comprehensive center and consolidated staffing at the Columbia AJC. She noted that maintaining brick-and-mortar locations in all 13 counties is uncertain and that they are exploring outreach center models. Marla responded that she is not bringing any closure recommendations at this time, but noted the Finance Committee had reviewed the data and anticipates a larger carryover due to under-spending by contractors, which could help offset funding losses. However, she emphasized the need to initiate cost reductions now to prevent a more severe financial situation next year. Freda Herndon asked whether alternating schedules and shared staffing in rural counties might preserve services while reducing costs. Marla said she has spoken with county mayors, who are generally understanding and willing to offer alternative spaces, such as libraries or courthouses, for part-time services. She agreed that maintaining a presence, even a limited one, remains essential. Bo Callis then asked about building ownership. Marla confirmed that the board owns buildings in Montgomery, Sumner, Cheatham, Williamson, Dickson, and Robertson counties. Lease rates are already below market value, and the board is considering leasing additional space within those facilities to further reduce costs. In response to Freda's question about decision timelines, Marla clarified that non-comprehensive center leases include 30-day walk-away clauses and can be ended early with state approval. Comprehensive centers, however, require six months' notice.

Adjourn

Marla concluded by reminding members that the next board meeting is scheduled for May 14 at 11:30 a.m. at TCAT Smyrna, where further discussion on infrastructure and an action plan may take place. With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.