



APPROVED
JAN. 30, 2025

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Innovation Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 31, 2024, via Zoom 11:00 AM**

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guests Attending
Greg Jones (Acting Chair)	Anne Fugate	Marla Rye
Tony Adams	Robin Baldree	Andrea Dillard
Billy Givens	Seth Thurman (Chair)	Meagan Dobbins
	Selittia Johnson	Kim Rye
		Alyssa Spaulding
		Ginger Fussell

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Innovation Committee met via Zoom on July 31, 2024 at 11 AM.

With a quorum confirmed, the meeting was called to order by Greg Jones, acting chair. Tony Adams moved to approve the minutes, and Billy Givens seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla then welcomed new board member, Billy Givens, and asked him to introduce himself. He is a business representative with the machinist union and is replacing Richie Brandon as the Stewart County representative.

CSP Procurement Update

Marla reminded the Committee that Thomas P. Miller and Associates were contracted to procure a new Career Service Provider (CSP) in May. There were four proposals submitted. After reviewing these proposals and conversing with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Marla was concerned that the results would not improve. As a result, she invited Chairman Zobl, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Department of Labor management to a strategic meeting in which they discussed a way to innovate service delivery in the Northern Middle region instead of subcontracting out to companies unfamiliar with the area. They came up with three projects.

The first would be in Nashville. The state expressed a need to reduce infrastructure expenses and money spent on bricks and mortar. Marla stated that in rural areas, the AJC location is the only physical place for job seekers to go to. Nashville, a location with many community-based organizations and educational institutions, could be decentralized and moved from the large

AJC currently in Metro Center and relocated to the Nashville State Community College Campus on Elm Hill Pike. The demonstration project would relocate to the AJC and staff would be deployed into the community to meet customers where they are.

The second project will be in Gallatin. Within a comprehensive AJC, staff belong to many different providers and employers instead of a single common entity when issues arise; some staff will say, "That's not my job" or "You are not my boss." Marla proposed that the State would pilot a project where they are operating all of the programs in Sumner County to see if one entity would promote better teamwork. The state does not have a mechanism to provide direct participant expenses to pay for things like childcare assistance, transportation, tuition payments, etc. Northern Middle will provide it on behalf of the State.

The third project will be in Clarksville, where the Northern Middle Board will run the center much like it has in the past. It will be responsible for operating the workforce programs, hiring directly in the American Job Center, and functionally supervising the state staff there so that people can be held more accountable.

The Executive Committee met on June 14th to review the Demonstration Projects and approved the motion. Projects start on October 1. EDSI will still operate in its other counties, and MAC will still operate in Nashville. She added that Commissioner Thomas will be at the August 14th Board meeting to discuss her vision of reinventing and resetting the American Job Centers and how these projects support that vision. Greg Jones commented that he appreciates trying the pilots and doing something different. It is very easy to continue to do what has always been done. He then asked if there would be any financial challenges and overlap of people in the Gallatin and Montgomery Centers. Marla replied that there will be some overlap as positions are posted and hired. They are working with EDSI to see who they currently have in Montgomery County. The transition period will be between now and October 1. In Gallatin, EDSI only has one staff member. The state is looking at transitioning people from other areas of the state to the center instead of hiring new staff for the project.

CSP Performance Update

Andrea Dillard delivered the CSP performance report. EDSI has improved their efforts since the last meeting. When looking at the enrollment numbers from the previous quarter, they are off to a strong start. She recapped that the key issue EDSI had in the last year was overspending in the first quarter and having to make up for it during the following three quarters. WE staff had hoped for them to finish the last quarter at 75-90% of the enrollment goal, and they ended right around 77% of their adult DW goal. They did have issues in getting youth enrolled. They exceeded in exiting individuals out of the program, meaning those individuals were going to work. When looking at the cumulative numbers, they were in the 90th percentile, and their wages were well above their goal.

The state has not released the key performance indicators (KPIs) for 24-25. Contractors have been directed to go with the numbers that were given last year. EDSI is presently on track to meet their enrollment goal. NM staff have been monitoring them to make sure they are on

track with both their enrollment goals and budget. MAC has met or exceeded all of their enrollment goals and placement goals; the only place that is red is their actual placement. They were told that by June 30th, they needed to have 111 exits to keep their caseload up to date and current. They actually ended up with over 200 exits, just not all of them being positive. Their actual placement dropped some, but they still have 3 quarters to work with the individuals who were considered negative. They are also on track with their enrollment numbers for the year. Greg Jones commented that the Northern Middle region seems to meet the wage goals fairly easily, and over the past few years there has been a wage war that's driven them up. He continued to ask if the goals would be adjusted in the new fiscal year to account for that. Marla replied that it absolutely would be adjusted and that when they go over federal performance negotiations, he will notice that she has accepted the state's proposed wage goals because of the region's success.

Eligible Training Provider List

Andrea Dillard then delivered the ETPL report. The first three pages are from existing providers asking to add new programs. They all have bright outlooks both locally and nationally. She commented that there should be no issue with these programs. The Automotive Technician Development Training in Dickson, an existing program, is back since there was a 37% cost increase that must be reapproved. The rest of the ETPL list contained providers and programs that have been approved by the board before and, for some reason, have fallen off. The majority of the reason that they have fallen off due to staff turnover. She warned that the fact that their programs fell off means that they have not had any enrollments in those programs. Providers would not have been able to enroll since it would appear in the system as not eligible for WIOA. All of the programs were checked to ensure they still met all requirements, had at least a good outlook locally, and all resulted in a credential.

Marla reminded that while these courses may range from \$225 to \$43,825, there is a policy in place that only gives up to \$6,000 for tuition assistance. Individuals who come into the AJCs are informed that they need to be able to pay the rest of their tuition and are educated on student debt. Greg asked if approving all of these programs would not put the Board in jeopardy in terms of the spending rate for the entire year. He wanted to prevent any challenges or spending too much too quickly like last year. Marla replied that even though the cap is \$6,000 to give towards tuition, averaging between \$2,000 and \$2,500 per student would allow everyone to receive assistance and prevent last year from reoccurring. Billy Givens made a motion was made to accept the list as presented. Tony Adams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the Committee passed the motion.

Federal Performance

Andrea presented the federal performance scorecards. If the standard is met at 100% or exceeding, it will be green; if the standard is yellow, it will pass at 90%. Q3 in 2023 is green in all standards except for one which is yellow. Looking forward to Q4 2023, it is a mix of green and yellows. So, all standards are at minimum passing and can only improve from now to finalization, which will be sometime in mid-August. There is still the ability to change some yellows to green, especially in "Credentials" and "MSGs."

New performance measures are negotiated every year with the TN Department of Labor. Marla is displeased with how this year's negotiations are going. They expect the Northern Middle region to do spectacular work, while areas that have not performed as well are only expected to do a little better. For example, the 2023 employment rate goal was 81%. The state average for the year is 81.5%, but they have proposed that the NM region goal be 87%. Marla countered that their goal should be the 81.5% average, and they came back with 83.8% instead. She countered again at 82% and thinks it will end up around 83%. She is concerned since the Q4 actual was 77%, and the predictive Q1 report is 75.7%. Additionally, there have been issues with EDSI's performance which may have caused performance trends to go down, but the state is still increasing the goals. Meanwhile, locations in west TN have been struggling with their performance standards and have been given standards below the state average. The NM region could theoretically make 81% and fail, but another area makes 78% and passes. Marla commented that this does not sit right with her and that everyone should be judged against the same standard. She mentioned to Greg Jones that, as she said earlier, she would end up accepting the wage standard as proposed to her. The Middle Tennessee area is very fortunate with wages, and the goal was \$7025 while the region performed at \$9000, so the proposed goal of \$9007 should be no issue, especially since predictive reports average out to \$9091. Overall, she believes these goals make the region look bad. Greg Jones added that he appreciated Marla pushing back at the goal setting. He believes they cannot just look at last year's goals and go up from there. You have to look at the performance as well. She stated that she has pointed that out to them and has made sure to have it on record that she disagrees with them and does not think they can be met.

Titans Project

Andrea Dillard reminded the Committee that the region is working with the Tennessee Builders Alliance to help them recruit and identify individuals to go through a 3.5-week training course, educating them on basic construction and certifications to make them eligible for employment and working on building the stadium. Two cohorts have finished so far with 21 graduates. The third cohort is being assembled now and will start on August 21. The goal is to have 15 individuals. Most of the 21 graduates have been 18 to 25-year-olds so far. The first class was only six people to get everyone's feet wet, and all six immediately went to work with two of the contractors. The second class comprised 15 individuals, primarily young adults who had just graduated from high school. So far, only 4 of those have gone to work since most of them are looking to continue their education. Those 18-year-olds have been more difficult to place since they are so young, but they continue to receive job search assistance even if it isn't directly related to the project.

Bylaws

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development requires the Board to update their bylaws every two years. The bylaws proposed in the meeting materials will be for the program year 2024-2026. Marla commented that the changes in the bylaws are under section 4 in Roles and Responsibilities. All of the changes are straight out of the law and are changes in wording but not in responsibility. It is essentially the same content that is worded differently

according to the regulations of the TN Department of Labor. Amending these bylaws requires a 2/3 vote and must go out at least two weeks before the board meeting, so there is no action in the Committee meeting. They will vote during the August 14 Board meeting at the Tennessee Bankers Association.

Adjourn

Greg Jones asked for any final comments, and Billy Givens thanked Marla and the staff for the work that they do. He added that as a new member, it is amazing to see what goes into everything and that he is grateful for the opportunity. Greg Jones welcomed him to the group and told him to always feel free to ask questions. Then, with no further questions, the meeting was adjourned.