

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board  
Meeting Minutes  
May 8, 2024, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.**

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guest Attending</b>
Anne Fugate	David Rutledge	Marla Rye
Chris West	Ginger Jarrett	Andrea Dillard
Corey Johns	James Harper	Meagan Dobbins
Dan Caldwell	Keith Carnahan	Ginger Fussell
Freda Herndon	Seth Thurman	Alyssa Spaulding
George “Bo” Callis	Sho Samuels	Kerwin Thompson
Greg Jones		George Phillips
John Zobl		Rogers Anderson
Jordan Osborne		Roe Falcone
Kristi Spurgeon		Liz McLaughlin
Mark Peed		
Paul Webb		
Richie Brandon		
Robin Baldree		
Tony Adams		
Nathan Garrett		
Sellittia Johnson		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at the Rutherford Chamber of Commerce and with a virtual option on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, at 11:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by John Zobl. Attendance was taken, and a quorum was declared. The Chairman then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mark Peed made the motion. Chris West seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla thanked everyone in attendance and recognized the new Board member, Robin Baldree. Marla then invited meeting host, Greg Jones to speak on the growth in Rutherford County. Marla then played a news segment highlighting the Youth Employment Program and expressed appreciation towards Mayor Golden and Mayor Hutto, who spoke on behalf of the YEP. Marla state that the program has had an overwhelming response from both youth and employers. Waitlists have been created in response to the demand.

**Strategic Partner Focus**

***TDLWD TOSS Monitoring Report and Corrective Action Response***

A monitoring report from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development found that the enrollment KPS were below standard, and EDSI was asked to bring representation to the Board Meeting to discuss their corrective action plan. Marla commended their efforts to maintain their KPIs

during the first three and a half years of the four-year contract but acknowledged that the last six months had been a challenge. Kevin Schneiders, CEO of EDSI, was then invited to speak.

He began by apologizing on behalf of EDSI for failing to meet all quotas during the previous two quarters. Mr. Schneiders then introduced Roe Falcone and Liz McLaughlin, EDSI employees, to speak on their corrective action response. Liz McLaughlin began by informing the Board that enrollments for the adult and dislocated worker program is 58% and youth is 66%. Positive placement rate is at 87% and 85% for adults and youth, respectively. Placement wages are between \$20-\$30 for adults and \$16-18 for youth.

Roe Falcone continued by highlighting the strategic enrollment plan. There was a budget modification to transfer money for the adult/dislocated workers and youth for direct participant training. National support, subject matter experts, and EDSI's call center have pivoted to help in Northern Middle. They make calls to participants on nights and weekends to provide additional resources that the career coaches need. Their marketing team is working on new flyers and promotional material. Job positions for three career navigator roles have been posted, and EDSI is looking to fill those positions as soon as possible. Liz McLaughlin detailed enrollment projections. They need 419 adults/dislocated workers to meet their goal. EDSI is hosting hiring events and assisting laid off individuals to help reach at least 80% enrollment goal. They are also conducting outreach to graduate students and graduating high school students for potential enrollment.

Roe Falcone briefly spoke on their Process Improvement Team plan. This plan holds employees accountable for following through on what needs to be accomplished. She then talked about their youth enrollment plan that involves justice-involved youth. EDSI plans to invite high school students in Clarksville, Erin, and Dickson to the AJC to enroll them in the program. It will have employers on-site with different activities and raffle prizes. She also mentioned that they have started meeting with the team and leadership twice a week to ensure that goals are met. John Zobl commented that being behind on enrollments is a new experience for the Board and that Kevin Schneiders has assured that they're committed to doing everything they can to improve numbers. Marla also commented that she appreciates EDSI's move to provide an increased leadership presence in Tennessee.

## **Strategic Priorities**

### ***Connect People with Career Opportunities***

George Phillips presented the OSO report. He informed the Board that all comprehensive centers in the Northern Middle region will now have weekly job fairs like the Murfreesboro AJC. There was a 25% increase in new employers registered on the Jobs4Tn.gov website and a 14% decrease in Wagner Peyser participants. Foot traffic is up significantly, by 1,200 people in the 13 counties. The unemployment rate either decreased or maintained its rate in every county.

Challenges going forward include Title I resignations that have not been backfilled. The former Department of Labor manager position in Sumner County has been vacant since the end of January. The low enrollment KPIs are also a concern. Marla added that Sumner County attendance has been very low and needs to be focused on to which George Phillips agreed.

### ***Improve Efficiency & Effectiveness of Programs***

Andrea Dillard gave an update on the Career Service Providers' Federal Performance. She began by reminding everyone that Liz McLaughlin and Roe Falcone had already provided information on their corrective action plan earlier. MAC is on track to meet all of their goals and objectives. The federal performance evaluation is a standard that every group across the country is held to. Northern Middle is

either meeting (100%) or passing (90%) all of the federal performance standards in Q3, which ends March 31. When Meagan Dobbins ran a predictive report for Q4, most of the standards were already either passing or met.

During the Innovations Committee meeting on May 2, 2024, new ETPL Providers were brought up for approval. The only new provider was Crossroads Campus, which has a pet grooming program. This program is considered to be in demand both locally and nationally. The other two programs are from the existing providers, TSU and TCAT Dickson. Their new programs are an IT program and medical patient care technology assistance, respectively, and are also considered in-demand locally and nationally. Austin Peay's project management professional exam prep program required reapproval due to a 50% cost increase, and Vol State's HVAC program required reapproval because they missed a deadline to extend eligibility.

Andrea stated that after the committee meeting, Elite Self Image Barber College submitted a provider request and offered master barber, barber instructor, barber technician, and barber crossover programs. This provider has been trying to submit his quest since February but ran into several issues trying to get their data uploaded. Elite Self Image Barber College has worked with the state to finalize the application, and Andrea Dillard requested that the Board consider adding them due to all of their difficulties. All programs are considered to be in demand both locally and nationally. They have been approved by the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance, their licensing entity.

Greg Jones commented that the Committee's sentiments at their meeting were that all of the approved ETPLs do not necessarily have to fit into the five sectors because there are people outside those sectors who also need jobs. He added that although some programs have a significant total cost, Northern Middle only covers up to \$6K. Marla emphasized that it is a maximum of \$6K; depending on budget availability, a smaller amount will be granted for training while leveraging other funding sources to assist individuals. Greg Jones motioned to accept all new providers and programs requesting approval. Mark Peed seconded the motion. With no further commentary, the motion to accept was unanimously passed.

### ***Manage Board Funds to Support Career Pathways***

Ginger Fussell reviewed the budget. She told the board that despite an issue with EDSI's enrollment, all fiscal performance measures were being achieved. Quarter 3 expenditures were \$2.2M, \$747K less than last quarter. This cutback in spending was expected after the robust expenditures in Q1. CSPs were asked to pace their spending and Ginger Fussell commended their attention on the matter. She then reminded the Board that while the budget shows that it is only 56.5%, it is being skewed by the Tennessee Youth Employment Program funding. An additional \$389K was awarded for the Titan Stadium Project, so the budget has increased to \$15.2M. This budget increase was the first action to be approved. At the previous meeting, the Board voted to submit a request for an additional \$1M for repurposing of DW to adult to the state, and it was granted.

While EDSI did strategically pace their overall spending, they were still tight on direct participant expenditures. This is because they spent so much on participants in the first quarter, leaving less for the remainder of the year. It is essential to understand that they never went without funding for direct participants, but they could not maintain their expenditures last year and in Q1. MPCR, on the other hand, is still being met and maintained. This is impressive when considering that four locations are participating in the state-approved Labor Participation Rate Pilot Project. In the previous quarter, MPCR was 46.82%, and in this quarter, MPCR is 40.37%. The goal of 40% is still being narrowly met.

The Contract Service Providers are 93% time elapsed through their 42-month contract period. EDSI has spent 92% of their budget and MAC has spent 90% of their budget at month 39. The contract with the One-Stop Operator is at 63% expended. They are an overhead expense so it is preferred for them to stay under their time progression budget. Ginger Fussell explained that the three dollar-driven measures she tracks are MPCR for youth, work experience, and in-school youth. EDSI has met the adult/dislocated worker as well as the youth MPCR for the contract period but not for this past quarter. This is, again, due to their paced spending. They have met their work experience goal for the contract period and exceeded this quarter. MAC has met all three goals in Davidson County for MPCR, work experience, and in-school youth.

At the last meeting, Ginger reported that Thurman Campbell was discontinuing their governmental audit work; however, they are considering another year with us. Ginger Fussell then spoke about the TOSS findings discussed in the committee meetings. She reminded them that this unit's only fiscal concern was a potential "pausing" of funding. It was never a directive from the board to pause funding. EDSI still had funding, but needed to make decisions on how to pace their budget. The state responded yesterday that they have accepted the submitted corrective action plan.

The second action item was to accept the \$11.4M base budget Ginger Fussell presented for the 2024-25 fiscal year. This budget is less than in previous years, primarily due to fewer carryover funds. This is because there was reduced funding this year as well as the previously mentioned aggressive spending. After opening the floor to questions, Marla complemented Ginger Fussell's internal control. No one ever wants to have findings by the state, but her team quickly let the contractor know that they need to pace themselves to get through the year. John Zobl also commended her team's efforts. Mark Peed made a motion to accept the requested action items. Chris West seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the Board unanimously approved the budgets.

### ***Train Workforce to Fill Employer Needs***

Marla explained that the state requires the Board to bid out Career Service Providers. Thomas P. Miller and Associates have been contracted as an independent third party to conduct the CSP procurement. The RFP went out on April 1. The intent to apply from the organizations was submitted on April 22. On May 3, proposals were submitted to Thomas P Miller for review and scoring. Once they release those scores, she will create a team of Board members to review the proposals and conduct interviews, if necessary. The selection of the winning bidder will hopefully be announced by the end of the month. At that point, negotiations with the contractor will begin before they go into place on October 1. The reason for the delayed start is the Summer Youth Employment Program. Between 300 and 350 youth will be on a payroll that EDSI provides over the summer, and asking these youth to change their payroll in the middle of the program if there is a change in contractor would not be an easy task. This transition period will also be used for intensive staff training as well as a time for the potential new provider to interview and evaluate existing staff to make any changes needed.

She then brought up the WIOA Regional and Local Plan, which needs approval. The plans were posted for public comment in April, and the State has issued a planning guidance around the priorities of the planning process. Northern Middle's plan will require heavy invests in youth, increased focus on services to employers and improvement in the Labor Force Participation Rate. Strategic collaborating will be required. She restated that serving business and industry is a crucial component of the plan moving forward into the 2024-25 program year. In the regional plan, one of the focuses that Northern Middle has been tasked with is highlighting the work already done with business and industry, such as the incumbent worker training grants, the apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training, and developing a skilled workforce. As part of the plan document, some strategic priorities have been identified for increasing the labor force participation rate. Houston, Montgomery, and Humphreys counties all have a

labor force participation rate well below the state average. After meeting with those county mayors, a survey will be created to find out from individuals what is barring them from entering or re-engaging with the labor force.

Marla continued by saying that she plans to put an emphasis on better data management. Many individuals enter the American Job Center looking to be referred to jobs, but they are not being counted in the data. Mark Peed made a motion to accept this 2024-2027 WIOA Strategic Plan. Dan Caldwell seconded. With no further discussion, the Board unanimously approved the plan.

No one requested to make a public comment.

### **Adjourn**

Marla Rye reminded the Board that the next meeting would be on August 14, 2024. She announced a professional development opportunity would be awarded to one of the lucky board members at our next meeting. With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned.