

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board  
Meeting Minutes  
November 13, 2024, In-Person & via Zoom at 11:30 a.m.**

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guest Attending</b>
Mary Lear	Kristi Spurgeon	Marla Rye
Dan Caldwell	Anne Fugate	Andrea Dillard
Kelly Tyler	David Rutledge	Meagan Dobbins
Mark Peed	Greg Jones	Ginger Fussell
Tony Adams		Alyssa Spaulding
Paul Webb		Samantha Roberts
Shoshana Samuels		George Phillips
Seth Thurman		Patrick Buford
Christopher West		Betsy Foster
John Zobl		Stacey Books
Jordan Osborne		Jasmine Jones
Billy Givens		Liz McLaughlin
George Callis		Beth Duffield
Nathan Garret (Proxy Deanna Griffin)		Sarah Buckles
Freda Herndon		Mayor Vogle
Corey Johns		Mayor Hutto
Ryan Jolley		Mayor McCarver
Sellittia Johnson		James Starnes
		Tanya Evrenson
		Adam Lamb
		Lydia Bennett-Carnes
		Cathy Royals
		Teresa Smith
		Ashley Crisp-Randle
		Mayor Pogreba
		Brittany Gray
		Cassandra McNair-Brown
		Pam Furlong
		Amy Maberry
		Heather Skelton
		Kimberly Johnson

**Call Meeting to Order- Declaration of Quorum**

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Development Board met in person at TCAT Dickson with a virtual option on Wednesday, November 13, 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 Rye addressed the Board and provided updates. The unemployment rate in the US is at 4.1%, Tennessee is at 3.2%, and Northern Middle is at 3%. It ranges between 3.8% to 5.4% in Northern Middle, with eight of the lowest rates in Tennessee being in the region. The Labor Force Participation in the US is 62.6%, Tennessee is 59.3%, but the Northern Middle region is 66.1%. The LFPR range is from 47.9% in Houston County to 78.2% in Trousdale County.

Marla informed the board that several board members attended the 2024 Governor's Convention in Knoxville, TN. Dan Caldwell commented that they heard from industries other than manufacturing, learned about best practices, and connected with individuals from all over the state. Marla added that 2024 was the first year TNLWD was a co-sponsor and had a designated workforce development track. She stated this emphasizes the importance of workforce development and economic development in Tennessee.

### **Election of Officers**

The current Board officers are John Zobl as Chairman, Christopher West as Vice Chairman, and Kristi Spurgeon as secretary. The offices do not have term limits, as stated in the Bylaws, but Marla explained that an election must be held every two years. Marla opened the floor for nominations, and Cory Johns moved to re-elect all officers to their current positions by acclamation. Mark Peed seconded the motion, and with no further discussion, the election of officers was unanimously approved.

### **Tennessee Builders Alliance/New Nissan Stadium**


Marla introduced Beth Duffield, who leads the Workforce Development Initiatives for the Tennessee Builder's Alliance, which is building the New Nissan Stadium. Her role is to build a workforce for the trade partners supporting the project. She commented that it has been difficult to follow the state guidelines and to meet training objectives. She reviewed the results of the class and populations that were being targeted to include: women, youth and offenders. She then offered a few student testimonials. John Zobl applauded Beth for their graduation rate, and Marla added that she believes their orientation plays a role in their success. Marla added that construction math is very difficult and she offered thanks to Meharry Medical College, an adult education provider, for assisting the students.

### **Rural Healthcare Initiatives**

Marla introduced Teresa Smith with the TNLWD to talk about an investment opportunity that the State has offered. Governor Lee has established a rural healthcare task force with private and state partners. They identified three priority areas that have downstream impacts on rural Tennessee communities: access to care, workforce development, and social drivers of health. As a result, TNLWD has been tasked to collaborate with existing healthcare training institutions, apprenticeships, adult education programs, and work-based learning opportunities through the k-12 systems. Most recently, they have created a grant funding opportunity to strengthen the pipeline of healthcare professionals in rural communities. She stressed that this would look different in each community and will be available to 91 out of 95 counties. The other four counties (Hamilton, Knox, Davidson, and Shelby) are eligible to apply only if they are creating or expanding a program for the rural communities surrounding them. Funding will be divided into three categories: pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, a workforce development initiative, or direct participant support services. Applicants can request a combined total of \$250K from those categories. The contract period begins July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, and can be renewed based on performance and budget approval.

Chris West, who represents NHC, commented that it is an excellent opportunity. He reported that NHC has been developing apprenticeships to enhance existing training. Marla added that this opportunity has been emailed to all County Mayors. She has had conversations with Mayor McCarver about upskilling existing EMTs to paramedics and believed this initiative was an excellent stepping-stone to improve

---



rural healthcare. There have been 3 to 4 projects so far that have asked the Board for their support, and Marla believes there will be more as the due date nears. John Zobl asked Teresa about the total funding amount available. Teresa Smith replied that there was \$5.6M for 5 years, but the contract was for 2 years, and another application would be sent out.

### **One-Stop-Operator Report**

George Phillips introduced the assistant one-stop operator, Sarah Buckles. He then offered the OSO Report. Adult Title I enrollments are up 69%. New employers registered on Jobs4TN are down from the last report, however, Wagner Peyser participants are up 46.8%. Title I staffing has stabilized, but Title III partners have become a concern due to the Labor's budget's shortfall and a subsequent hiring freeze. There are fewer KPIs than in years past. Currently, the only 3 KPIs are total Title I enrollments, Total Wagner Peyser & JVSG enrollments, and co-enrollments of Title I into Title III. All three of those goals were met for the first quarter. George added that he believes the state will roll out more KPIs.

### **Federal Performance Update**

Meagan Dobbins delivered the Federal Performance Update. For the first quarter, all measures are being met by at least 90%, which is passing. She reminded the Board that at the last meeting, it was discussed that the State has increased our goals significantly. That is why so many measures are below the 100% target. Lower counter-proposals were denied, and Meagan expressed that it is challenging to keep improving. She anticipates more 90% passes and possibly even failing to reach targets. The Credential Attainment and Measurable Skills Gains measures are the primary areas of concern looking forward. Meagan explained that this is because most of the measures are for individuals that terminated a year or more ago.

### **CSP Update**

Meagan Dobbins then delivered the Career Service Providers update. EDSI has exceeded the Adult/DW enrollments at 358 of the 250 goal. She is pleased with their performance so far and does not anticipate a repeat of last year's issues. This is because EDSI has decided to reduce costs to \$2,500 per individual for tuition instead of the \$6,000 cap used last year. They did fall short on their youth enrollments. Meagan added that exits are good. Since there are only three KPIs and they are reduced, staff has been able to focus more on improving case management. MAC met their enrollment goals for in-school and out-of-school youth. They have exceeded their exit goal and placement wages. John Zobl asked Marla about the CSPs MPCR. Neither contractor met the target MPCR and have provided corrective action plans.

### **Eligible Training Provider Update & Requests**

Andrea Dillard delivered the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) update in three sections. The first category had new providers, including Dental Assistant School of Nashville. Andrea explained they are located in Brentwood and train dental assistants. The second category included new programs requiring Board approval. All programs were identified as having a bright local or national outlook. Most of them result in a credential. The two exceptions are from Vol State. The first is a Video Game Design and Development program and the other is Graphic Design with Photoshop. The Board can choose to approve these programs and it will be recorded as a positive if the individual completes the course and obtains employment in that specific field. The third category consists of former providers that were removed from the ETPL for missing a subsequent review. The one exception to the list was the Tennessee CDL School. At the November 2023 Board meeting, a new policy was written that if a school failed one standard, they would remain on the list for one more year and be reevaluated at the end of that year. If they failed two of their standards, they would be taken off the list. They would be eligible to reapply after one year. Tennessee CDL missed both standards and did not provide any documentation in November 2023, so they were removed from the ETPL. They are now eligible to reapply and have done

so. Mark Peed asked if they had made any changes to their program. The school was informed that moving forward, they would have to report to the Board and be monitored very closely. Mark Peed then asked why they should be considered for reapproval if they have not proposed any change to their program. In the case of the previous providers that had difficulty, they were achieving their measures so the Board mandated that they send more information than before. This way, if they do not submit their documentation on a timely basis, they can be removed from the list faster. Jordan Osborne commented that it would be akin to a probation period, and Marla agreed. Mark Peed added that he believed they should be required to submit an improvement plan with their reapplication to be considered. He continued that he is very favorable towards having more CDL drivers, but the course is costly, and the school will receive the money whether or not the individual graduates. Marla agreed that adding some stipulations to their readmittance could be wise. Mark Peed then suggested conditionally approving them if they work with Andrea on improvement. Chairman Zobl stated that they should not be approved until they report the plan before either the Committee or the Board. The Chairman then asked Andrea Dillard if that sounded reasonable. She replied that it did.

Corey Johns asked what counted as a “credential.” Based on Board policy, a credential can be counted if an individual successfully completes a class and goes to work in that field. It could also be a degree or a recognized association vouching for the course. Kelly Tyler was concerned that one class of Photoshop would not qualify someone to be employed in that area. It would be beneficial in building that skill, but it would not guarantee employment. John Zobl asked how long the individual would have to become employed. After exit, they would need to be employed within that 12-month timeframe to be a positive. Freda Herndon agreed with Kelly Tyler’s concern and added that a case-by-case approval could be better. The individual would have to speak with a supervisor to see if they have any background in the course material and if a job in the field was likely. She also suggested that the Committee document the process with the Tennessee CDL School so there is an established process. Corey Johns clarified that his question was based on the hopes of finding a better way to work with Vol State on the credential issue.

John Zobl then asked for a motion to require the Tennessee CDL School to provide an improvement plan to the Committee before being reapproved. Mark Peed made the motion, and Jordan Osborne seconded. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously. Discussion resumed on the issue of the two Vol State courses that do not result in a credential. Freda Herndon recommended speaking further with Vol State to learn more about the classes and how they lead to employment before adding them. George Callis then asked Marla about a previous meeting that discussed credentials and non-credentialed pathways. She replied that the meeting had centered on medical occupations like phlebotomy that did not require a certification test. It was decided that if a phlebotomist went to training, even if they did not receive a credential, it was a skill that led to a job in that field because the training got that person the job. Mark Peed added that the NMTWB’s goal is to put people to work, not to educate them. Corey Johns added that the Photoshop course, would be applicable to several different careers. John Zobl asked for a motion to accept all new providers and programs as listed. Corey Johns made the motion, and Tony Adams seconded. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Financial Report**

Ginger Fussell delivered the Financial Report. This time last year, contractors had a very strong quarter in dollar-driven measures and the overall volume of expenditures, but it was not sustainable. This year, however, is the opposite. Only \$2.1M was expended in the first quarter, compared to the previous year’s \$3.4M. This is primarily due to the strategies to correct the overspending issue from last year. However, these strategies have resulted in too little being spent directly on participants, which directly correlates to a lower MPCR.



Ginger Fussell then explained the changes made to the budget during the quarter. There has been a \$790K increase to the formula fund stream budgets. However, the State did not renew the RESEA program. The budget initially included 12 months of RESEA activity, but it will now have 3 months for the fiscal year, leading to a \$202K reduction in the budget. There are two new apprenticeship grants that increase the budget by \$281K. The net effect of these changes is an \$869K increase, bringing the budget to \$13M.

The MPCR in Q1 of last year was nearly 50%, but is 23.43% for the current year's Q1. Corrections to need to be made promptly to improve the MPCR. MAC was close to the 40%, but the target is 50%. Ginger commented that EDSI has contributed \$446K to the Tennessee Youth Program, which is significant. However, due to State policy, that money does not count towards MPCR even though the money goes directly to participants. Contractor billing is at \$1.6M, including the \$446K to TYEP. EDSI and MAC have submitted corrective action plans addressing MPCR improvement.

PAR has completed their annual fiscal monitoring visit. She commented that it had been very thorough and time-consuming. The entrance started in August and the exit conference was in early November. There were only two items noted in the exit. The monitors sampled items out of \$1.9M in expenditures. They found one timesheet with a mathematical error on it, resulting in EDSI owing back \$532.13, which was promptly corrected and refunded. The formal report has not been issued, so we will await the results. The second observation will be about the cost allocation plan that has been used for decades without any issues. Marla stated that someone would have to tell her what has changed in the law before making any adjustments. The external financial audit with the new auditors, Stone, Rudolph & Henry, is still underway.

John Zobl asked if the corrective action plan regarding EDSI was adequate. Ginger replied that it certainly had merit and hoped it would materialize. She has received the October invoices, and there was some improvement but we had a way to go. She added that fall semester billings will be processed soon, which should help. Mark Peed made a motion to accept the financial report. Billy Givens seconded. With no further discussion, the report was unanimously accepted.

### **Infrastructure Cost Report**

There has been significant discussion recently regarding the amount of funding spent on infrastructure by the state. Of the nine workforce board areas, the NM region is one of two areas that still have AJCs in all of their counties. Marla added that she does not believe they will mandate closing centers, but they could release a policy limiting the amount of funding spent on infrastructure. Across all 13 counties, approximately \$1M is being spent on infrastructure; of that, the WIOA Title 1 program is paying around \$526K. That equates to about 5% of the total budget, or around 8% of what the projected expenditures are going to be.

### **AJC Redesign/Business Services**

The state's redesign for the AJC is to meet people where they are. This includes out in the community, housing projects, jails, schools and community based organizations. This redesign is happening in Davidson County. They are also looking to equip AJC staff with knowledge of all programs so they can assist any individual instead of referring them to different specialized staff members. Additionally, they want to put more emphasis on direct placements and working directly with the employers to meet their needs. Mark Peed asked to take a look at enrollment differences in the 3 pilot locations at the next meeting. Pilot projects did not start until October 1, which is why they were not discussed during this meeting.



**Adjourn**

With no further discussion, Chairman Zobl reminded the board of their next meeting on February 12, 2025. The meeting was adjourned.

