



APPROVED  
JAN. 30, 2025

**Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board  
Special Populations Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
July 31, 2024, via Zoom at 3:00 p.m.**

<b>Members Attending</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff &amp; Guests Attending</b>
Freda Herndon	James Harper	Marla Rye
Jeremy Tudor (Proxy Corey Johns)	Nathan Garrett	Andrea Dillard
Christopher West		Ginger Fussell
George "Bo" Callis		Meagan Dobbins
Mary Lear		Alyssa Spaulding
Ryan Jolley		Kim Rye

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Special Populations Committee met via Zoom on July 31, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

With a quorum confirmed, the meeting was called to order by Freda Herndon. Chris West moved to approve the minutes, and Bo Callis seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Marla began the meeting by recognizing two new board members and asking them to introduce themselves. Mary Lear is the HR Director for North America AO Smith, which has many facilities in the middle Tennessee region. She is representing Cheatham County, but her company also has facilities in Williamson, Wilson, and other counties in East Tennessee. Ryan Jolley is currently the Assistant Administrator for Employer Operations at the Division of Workforce Services at the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. He is replacing John Alexander while they try to fill his position. She then introduced Jeremy Tudor, who was representing Corey Johns.

**Career Service Provider Update**

Marla reminded the Committee that Thomas P. Miller and Associates was contracted to procure a new Career Service Provider (CSP). There were four proposals submitted. There was then a strategic planning session between the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, herself, Chairman Zobl, and Deputy Commissioner Scott to discuss innovation. Marla stated that continuing to do the same thing would result in the same difficulties faced over the previous year. During the strategic planning session, they devised three innovative

ideas that could be piloted in the Northern Middle area to see if changing the delivery mechanism would improve the service strategy. The Executive Committee met on June 14 to review and discuss the three pilots. They voted to approve the pilots.

The first project will be in Nashville, where the program will be taken to the people at various community-based organizations to deliver services. This would reduce the brick-and-mortar footprint. The AJC will be relocated to a Nashville State Community College campus on Elm Hill Pike. NSCC closed this campus during COVID-19, and they want to reopen it as a workforce center, teach short-term courses, and partner with the American Job Center.

The second project will be in Gallatin, where the state will operate the Title 1 program. A significant challenge in operating the AJC Network is that the staff is comprised of several partners. The OSO faces challenges such as “You’re not my immediate supervisor” or “You cannot tell me what to do.” This project will see if all employees reported to the state, would it result in better team morale? The state, however, does not have a mechanism to provide direct participant expenses for things like childcare, tuition, etc. so the Board will still provide that function in the meantime.

The third project will be in Clarksville, where the NM Board will operate the career services directly. Marla reminded the Committee that the board staff used to have direct control of the staff and AJCs, which made it more flexible to implement changes and demand more performance accountability. The state will allow the Board to provide more functional oversight of the Title III program in Montgomery.

She continued that they plan to renew the contract with MAC and EDSI to continue their services in the remaining ten counties until 6/30/2025. After much thought, it was decided that this was the best way to continue services without interruption. After the last Board meeting, EDSI has been working hard to improve their results and enrollments. These actions have been coordinated with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Commissioner Denise Thomas will be at the August 14<sup>th</sup> meeting to speak about her reset and reimagining of workforce development. Marla believes these models play a part in that reimagining.

Bo Callis asked if there are any performance milestones to determine if the pilots are successful programs. Marla replied that they have been discussing setting up enrollment KPIs with the staff. The goal for the projects is to act more as staffing agencies and go out to recruit individuals to place into employment rather than being a training agency. Bo Callis then asked if the state would assume some responsibility for fulfilling the state KPIs or if that would still be solely on the board. Marla answered that since the Board is still responsible for the services in Sumner County, but the state should be reporting to the board and would be responsible for meeting those performance standards.

Freda Herndon then asked if any communication with staff at the Nashville AJC about the timeline had occurred. Marla replied that communication in all 3 of the centers has already

happened. Additionally, some staff in the Nashville center have gone to the proposed new location to look at it. Freda Herndon asked if anyone had spoken with any partners. Marla answered that was on the list of things to do if they had not already. Freda replied that she had not heard it from any of the Nashville instructors and was wondering if MAC had been told. Marla knew that MAC had been informed but was unsure about the instructors at this time.

Chris West asked if there was any indication of how those employees at the Nashville center are taking the structural change. Marla replied that after a meeting with the state, the sentiment was that “the train was leaving the station. You are either going to be on it, or you are going to be left behind”. She emphasized that staff will be sent in teams to areas they go into as a safety precaution and believed that many of them are excited about being able to go out and help people where they are. Chris West added that it’s exciting and is a much more proactive stance. They will be able to market their services directly and teach individuals about what the AJCs provide and how it can help them.

### **Performance Update**

Andrea Dillard updated the Committee on where the last program year ended. EDSI did not meet 100% of their enrollment goal. She informed new members that in the first quarter of the previous year, EDSI enrolled more than 100% of their quarter goals by putting individuals into training components with the maximum amount of money allowed per person. That forced them to step back and find a new strategy as they used more money than they should have in Q1, even if they exceeded their quarterly goal. They were projecting to get between 75% and 80% of their enrollment goal. They finished the year at approximately 76%. Even though they missed their enrollment goal, the individuals exited the system and went on to receive very decent wages. The average for Adult DW was \$23, and Youth was about \$16.50.

New key performance indicators and goals from the state have not been released. Contractors have been given guidance to keep using the numbers presented last year. With that in mind, EDSI and MAC are on track to meet their enrollment closely. EDSI has been more strategic about spending and is ensuring that their spending and enrollment goals from quarter to quarter line up. MAC, the youth provider in Davidson County, has met all their enrollment goals and exceeded their actual exit and placement goals. The only red area they have is their actual placement rate. They were given a goal of 111 exits. Some individuals were in the system for quite a while, and MAC decided to exit them, knowing they might have to take some negatives. They ended up having 227 exits, with not all going to work. This resulted in a placement rate of about 73%, but there are still several quarters to help exited individuals obtain employment and still get credit for it. Freda commented that it would be quite challenging to redo this report to reflect the new strategies.

Andrea Dillard then recapped the Tennessee Youth Employment Program. The current contract will run through June 2025 and was awarded additional dollars a few months ago. The cumulative enrollment goal to achieve is 572, and they have already exceeded it with 608 participants entered into the program. The State is having everyone report their enrollments and expenditures weekly, ensuring the money is spent. The total award was a little over \$2.8M

\$1.9M has already been obligated, with \$1.39M of that being expended. Andrea believes they are doing an excellent job of making sure that the youth enrolled are working enough hours each pay period so that expenditures are where they need to be. There is an extremely large waiting list as of now, and there are a lot more youth and employers interested in participating in the program than what there is funding for. They hope this will be an excellent justification for asking for additional dollars later.

Marla commented that she is proud of the work EDSI and fiscal staff have done with this program. The state has been challenged with areas that were awarded the money and not spent it. The NM region has one of the highest rates for the amount expended, and the staff have worked very hard to ensure they're on top of reporting all the numbers. She added that in the August 14 Board meeting, there will be a panel of youth and employers that participated in the program. Andrea Dillard added that several youths have been hired as permanent employees after completing their assigned youth. Some have been offered part-time positions while they are still in school. Jeremy Tudor asked if Andrea knew the amount of youth that had been retained. Andrea Dillard replied that she is working on getting those numbers and hopes to have a more definite number to report out at the Board meeting. Jeremy Tudor added that he thinks it would be interesting to know what percentage of the youth retained are under 18. It has been a struggle in Wilson County to help employers understand that in the State of Tennessee, individuals under 18 can be hired. He added that seeing if this program is a solid pipeline to employ younger youth would be interesting. Marla replied that those are really good points. She added that the youth from last year were not eligible to be employed again this summer under the grant. However, she knows of at least one case in Montgomery County where the young man was invited back into the mayor's office this summer.

### **Titans Stadium Project**

Andrea Dillard reminded the Committee about the Titans Stadium Building Project. Northern Middle helped the Tennessee Builders Association secure a grant through the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development to help offset some funding costs. They are recruiting individuals to take a 3.5-week course to certify them in basic construction and OSHA training. There have been 21 graduates so far. The first class only consisted of 6 people to see how it would go. All 6, 50/50 men and women, were offered jobs and are still working onsite. Four were justice-involved, had just transitioned out of prison, and still passed the background check the employers required. The second class was made up of 15 youths who had recently graduated. Not all of them went to work immediately afterward, as they were just looking to get their certifications and enroll somewhere to further their education. Four of those youths were made employment offers and are working right now. They are working with the rest who are not attending school to find employment. A third class will be starting soon with 15 participants.

### **Bylaws**

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development requires the Board to update and amend the bylaws every two years. The only change made was the language of the roles and responsibilities of the board itself. This is taken straight from the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunities Act legislation. Anytime there is an amendment in the bylaws, it takes a 2/3 vote of all members and must be sent out two weeks in advance. No action would be taken at the Committee meetings; it would be taken at the Board meeting.

### **Adjourn**

Since there were only a few action items, Marla asked for any ideas members thought could be done to support workforce development in the region. Chris West replied that he was very impressed and appreciated all the work going on and had nothing else to recommend at this time. With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.