Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Inc.

Special Populations Committee
November 4, 2026
11:00 A.M.
Click here for Zoom link

Meeting ID: 892 0109 0774
Passcode: 396188
One tap mobile: +16465588656,,89201090774# US

Agenda

Members:

Corey Johns

Freda Herndon (Chair)

George "Bo" Callis

Mary Lear

Nathan Garrett

Jordan Osborne

Welcome

Call the Meeting to Order

Approval of Minutes

Business Reports:

1. WIOA Report
    a. Performance
2. Employer Grants
    a. Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)
    b. Apprenticeship
3. New Grants & Partnerships
    a. Rural Healthcare Transformation
    b. VR YEP Schools
    c. TN Accelerator
4. Regional Transition Update

Adjourn

Complete zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89201090774?pwd=bb4D5apedNcAn31cNNgbtTyCF5an5U.1

Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board
Special Populations Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 4, 2026, via Zoom at 11:00 a.m.

Members Attending	Members Absent	Staff & Guests Attending
Corey Johns	Jordan Osborne	Marla Rye
Freda Herndon		Andrea Dillard
Nathan Garrett		Meagan Dobbins
Bo Callis		Ginger Fussell
Mary Lear		Alyssa Spaulding
Kristi Spurgeon		
Nestor Reyes		

The Northern Middle Tennessee Workforce Board Special Populations Committee met via Zoom on August 4, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. With a quorum confirmed, Freda Herndon called the meeting to order. Before regular business, Freda invited Nathan Garrett to share an update on the Springfield TCAT project. Nathan reported that a site had been identified and the land purchase was in process, although no agreements had been signed. Freda recognized that the progress followed a lengthy site search. Mary Lear moved to approve the previous meeting's minutes, and Nathan Garrett seconded. With no further discussion, the minutes passed unanimously, and Freda moved to business reports.

WIOA Report

Andrea Dillard reported that preliminary Q4 federal performance results met or exceeded all measures, with finalization expected in September. She credited Meagan Dobbins for anticipating the year-end improvement. After negotiations with the state for the next two years, six performance standards increased, six decreased, and three remained unchanged. Andrea said Marla's counterproposals resulted in more favorable targets than initially proposed. Meagan reviewed year-end CSP performance. Staff enrolled 1,079 participants against the state's combined Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth goal of 1,108, reaching 97%. The separate program goals were established internally for CSP management. Staff completed 991 case closures, nearly matching enrollments, and placement wages exceeded goals. Meagan attributed the stronger fourth quarter to strategies implemented after a cautious start during the transition to in-house services and reduced funding. Marla said the final two quarters better reflected the operation's capacity and provided a stronger foundation for the new year.

Andrea updated the committee on AJC changes in Cheatham, Houston, Humphreys, Robertson, Stewart, Trousdale, Wilson, and Williamson counties. Services continued in all eight counties. Workforce Essentials-owned buildings in Cheatham, Robertson, and Williamson remained open as Workforce Essentials offices rather than AJCs, with overhead no longer supported by WIOA funds. Humphreys County services moved to Nashville State Community College. Houston County provided space in the 911 building in partnership with TCAT Dickson, which planned to begin an LPN class there in September. Stewart County services used the senior citizens building, Trousdale County provided courthouse space, and TCAT provided space in Wilson County for scheduled customer meetings. Andrea emphasized that the delivery structure had changed while local access to services continued.

Employer Grants

Andrea reported that $300K was available for incumbent worker training in the new program year. Three contracts totaling slightly more than $36K had been obligated, with additional employer applications expected within the next week or so.

Andrea reviewed federal State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula funding received in February and available through June 2027. The $54K in SAEF 3.1 program funds was fully obligated, with invoices of approximately $20K and $26.5K awaiting approval for payment. Under SAEF 3.2, $65K of the $135K available had been contracted. Andrea noted that these funds were limited to apprenticeships in specified high-demand occupations and sectors, unlike the broader state apprenticeship funding used previously.

New Grant Opportunities

Marla reported that a new Rural Healthcare grant would continue training advanced EMTs to become paramedics. Following discussions with county mayors and local communities, staff renewed the Volunteer State partnership serving participants from Wilson, Robertson, Cheatham, and Dickson counties and expanded the initiative to Austin Peay State University. Austin Peay's new paramedic program would improve access for Montgomery, Stewart, and Houston counties. Marla reported an approximately 83% certification rate in the prior cohort, with some withdrawals due to personal circumstances.

Andrea reported that the Youth Employment Program enrolled 302 young people ages 14 to 24 against a goal of 272. Partnerships included CTE programs in Cheatham, Montgomery, Humphreys, and Rutherford counties, patient care training with a nursing home and hospital in Humphreys County, and early teacher training in Stewart County. Meagan worked with the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System to support paid work experience for high school seniors in its new CDL program. TCAT dental assisting students also received wages during required internships. She reported that vocational rehabilitation youth funding served 28 participants against a goal of 32. Funding arrived after the program year began, and some participants' disabilities limited their weekly work hours, contributing to unused funds. Successful partnerships included Project SEARCH hospital rotations in Montgomery County and internships for students with developmental disabilities through Lipscomb and Vanderbilt programs. Andrea said approximately $675K in new youth employment funding had been received. Since July 1, nearly 40 participants had enrolled for direct wage payments, while employers had hired an additional 109 young people whose documentation was pending for entry into the system and employer reimbursement.

USDOL Waivers and AJC Future

Marla reviewed Tennessee's 13 federal WIOA waiver requests and the U.S. Department of Labor's July 27 response. She highlighted flexibility in the requirement to spend 75% of Youth funds on out-of-school youth, supportive services for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants after exit, and employer-requested career readiness assessments without individual WIOA eligibility determinations. Some requests were approved, while others involved flexibility already available under existing law. Marla reported that requests to allow state selection of a statewide One-Stop Operator and exclude SNAP participants from local performance measures were denied. The waiver allowing regional planning councils to perform local workforce board functions was approved. Marla explained that the proposed Workforce System Governance Framework would be presented to the State Workforce Development Board August 28, following public comment through August 14. If approved, the policy listed a September 1, 2026, effective date. It would establish regional workforce boards for East, Middle, and West Tennessee, with regional boards assuming the statutory responsibilities of local workforce boards. Northern Middle would remain a local workforce area but would be governed by a Middle Tennessee regional board serving Northern Middle, Southern Middle, and Upper Cumberland across 40 counties.

Local elected officials would retain financial accountability, execute interlocal agreements, select local CLEOs, and appoint regional board members. The three CLEOs would form a regional council responsible for selecting a fiscal agent. The regional board would select a lead administrative organization. The state recommended using the same organization for administration and fiscal services to reduce duplication and strengthen accountability, although separate organizations could serve those roles. Local advisory councils would provide input to the regional board, potentially using existing employer or education advisory groups.

Marla said she had been advised that local operations would remain in place until July 1, 2027, despite the policy's earlier effective date. She had also been told the state wanted one service provider and one One-Stop Operator per region. Selecting a provider capable of serving 40 counties would require substantial preparation. Marla noted that the upcoming governor transition could affect the proposal's direction and emphasized that implementation remained uncertain.

Marla welcomed Nestor Reyes, who joined the Northern Middle board July 1 and had previously partnered with the area through the Sumner County AJC. Nestor recognized the team's efforts to maintain services, encouraged collaboration through the development process, and offered continued support.

In response to Freda's question about regional board recruitment and selection, Marla expected a prescribed membership structure drawing from existing local boards. She had heard discussion of dedicated rural representation but said implementation procedures would be needed to clarify the details. Freda asked whether federal approval allowed Tennessee to choose whether to implement the change. Marla confirmed that the state requested the waiver and would determine implementation through the state board's policy process. She said she would distribute the policy and public comment link after the day's committee meetings. Nathan asked whether the committee would continue meeting through the transition. Marla expected existing local boards and committees to remain active through June 30, 2027. She anticipated that procurement for a regional service provider would need to begin in January for a July 1 start. Nathan also asked how staff were managing the uncertainty. Marla said unresolved questions about state board approval, leadership changes, and regional administration created uncertainty. Nathan expressed appreciation for the team's work through recent changes. Corey Johns asked whether requests denied by the federal government were separate from those that did not require a waiver. Marla confirmed the distinction, explaining that the statewide One-Stop Operator and SNAP performance requests were denied because the federal agency could not waive those requirements. Corey expressed hope that regional alignment would improve flexibility, reduce overhead, strengthen resources, and support more effective coordination among the state, regional leadership, and local communities amid a tight labor market and continued employer recruitment.

Marla agreed that staff should identify opportunities to improve the system but questioned the administrative efficiencies from retaining three local areas within the Middle Tennessee region. The regional organization would still need three local plans and a regional plan. She believed formally designating three workforce areas aligned with the grand divisions could have simplified administration. Marla also noted Northern Middle's strong position, reporting that it was the only area meeting all federal performance measures on the latest official state report card and the only board rated at an efficient and effective level in the UT Center for Industrial Services evaluation.

Marla reminded members that the August 12 board meeting would be held at Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, with Commissioner Deniece Thomas scheduled to speak. Freda asked whether the Commissioner might address broader alignment among education, economic development, and workforce services. Marla said that discussion could occur through the TNWORKS initiative. Nestor invited members to attend the August 28 State Workforce Development Board meeting in Nashville for additional information, and Freda encouraged members to listen.

Adjourn

With no further questions, Bo Callis moved to adjourn, which was made, and Mary Lear seconded, and Freda concluded the meeting.

WIOA Federal Reporting Score Card
NORTHERN MIDDLE WORKFORCE BOARD

PY26 WIOA Core Performance Measures	Targets 100%	Targets 90%	Q1 PY 26	Q2 PY 26	Q3 PY 26
Adult Measures					
Exiters					
Participants Served					
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	85.6%	77.04%	79.5%		
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	84.9%	76.41%	74.8%		
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit	8,600	$ 7,740	$ 9,021		
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	74.0%	66.60%	68.1%		
Measurable Skills Gains	73.4%	66.06%	66.7%		
Dislocated Worker					
Exiters					
Participants Served					
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	87.0%	78.30%	84.5%		
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	86.0%	77.40%	86.4%		
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit	10,600	$ 9,540	$ 12,070		
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	74.0%	66.60%	73.8%		
Measurable Skills Gains	83.0%	74.70%	67.0%		
Youth					
Exiters					
Participants Served					
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	84.3%	75.87%	79.9%		
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	83.0%	74.70%	80.2%		
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit	5,600	$ 5,040	$ 6,234		
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	78.0%	70.20%	75.7%		
Measurable Skills Gains	68.0%	61.20%	64.1%		
GREEN-Passing at 100% of Goal					
YELLOW-Passing at 90% of goal					
Red-Failing at less than 90% of goal					

Northern Middle Program Year July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Grants (07.01.2025 - 06.30.2026)

	County Location	Employer	UEI		Employees Trained	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Contract Amount	Amount Expended
	Robertson	Kofee Broz, LLC	DMBZBPDM35A6		3	7/1/2026	5/31/2027	$13,000.00	
	Davidson	Military Systems Group, Inc.	SBYBHNZL5UJ1		10	7/20/2026	5/31/2027	$5,062.00	
	Sumner	Servpro Industries, LLC	XCKLL736S839		40	7/15/2026	5/31/2027	$18,200.00	
	Rutherford	Wearwell, LLC	WK45GXBXGEQ5		11	7/15/2026	5/31/2027	$13,405.00	
	Rutherford	Fessler and Bowman	NYPLTSQU9BB5		20	8/1/2026	5/31/2027	$25,000.00	
	Williamson	HCA TriStar Health	MLUNB46R9JM8		8	8/3/2026	5/31/2027	$25,000.00	
	Davidson	Nashville Boss Inc	X4XMG5ECRVY5		4	9/1/2026	5/31/2027	$19,800.00	
	Williamson	Williamson Health	XBK7VSR1Q6W4		50	9/1/2026	5/31/2027	$20,000.00	
	Rutherford	RAWSO Constructors	XVUYDUN2CH641		6	10/1/2026	5/31/2027	$25,000.00	
	Rutherford	Anchor Fabrication	E4KNPW5UBUA7		12	10/15/2026	5/31/2027	$25,000.00	
					164			**$189,467.00**	**$0.00**
								Board designated funds available:	***$ 300,000.00***

1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
					0			**$0.00**	**$0.00**
								State Apprenticeship Grant Amount Available:	

Northern Middle SAEF Funding 3.1 and 3.2

SAEF 3.1 Grant (02.01.2026 - 06.30.2027)

	County Location	Employer	UEI	Training	Employees Trained	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Contract Amount	Amount Expended
1	Davidson	Focus Freight, LLC	PL3WDNK55XD4	TRUCK DRIVER	3	2/1/2026	5/31/2027	$7,500.00	
2	Davidson	Little Wonders Early Learning Centere	MMVTQ8YKV571	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR	8	2/1/2026	5/31/2027	$20,000.00	$20,000.00
3	Rutherford	Roscoe Brown, Inc.	FXDHCW7M9F61	HVAC/PLUMBER	11	2/1/2026	5/31/2027	$26,500.00	$26,500.00
					22			**$54,000.00**	

Board designated funds available: ***$54,000.00***

SAEF 3.2 Grant (02.01.2026 - 06.30.2027)

	County Location	Employer	UEI	Training	Employees Trained	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Contract Amount	Amount Expended
	Davidson	Feintool Tennessee	HVGVXDPNMQF4	Toolmaker-Manfacturing	4	7/1/2026	5/31/2027	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
	Williamson	High Hopes	KBUMXSM37NK5	Childcare Development Specialist	1	7/1/2026	5/31/2207	$2,500.00	
	Davidson	St. Luke's Community House	ULASR7C4JLC8	Childcare Development Specialist	4	7/1/2026	5/31/2027	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
	Davidson	Dixon Management Group, LLC	UVCJJH9SV2V3	Restoration & Supervisor Technician	11	7/1/2026	5/31/2027	$27,500.00	$27,500.00
	Davidosn	Power Pro Electric, LLC	S1XDM1DY1NC8	Electrical Helper/Electrician	4	7/1/2026	5/31/2027	$10,000.00	$6,600.75
	Davidson	HCA TriStar Health	MLUNB46R9JM8	PCT Advanced Phelebotomy	3	8/1/2026	5/31/2027	$7,500.00	
	Dickson	Water Authority of Dickson County	KW7BUVLN6DV8	Wastewater Systems Operations Specialist	1	8/10/2026	5/31/2027	$2,500.00	
	Davidson	National Beauty & Barbering Institute (NBBI)	MS95QD8G4ZW7	Barber	6	10/1/2026	5/31/2027	$15,000.00	
								$85,000.00	

State Apprenticeship Grant Amount Available: ***$135,000.00***

October 20, 2026

Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Ms. Teresa Smith, Rural Healthcare Initiatives
220 French Landing Drive
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Ms. Smith:

Please accept this letter as Workforce Essentials' official request for $775,701 in Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Grant funding for the proposed period of October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, subject to the start date established in the executed contract. Workforce Essentials proposes to serve 160 individuals throughout the 30-county service area designated by the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

Our proposed services address both priorities identified in the state guidance: 5.1 Healthcare Leadership and 17.3 Youth and Adult Exposure to Healthcare Occupations. We will provide short-term training for rural healthcare leaders and paid opportunities for youth and adults to explore healthcare careers, develop occupational skills, and enter or advance in the rural healthcare workforce.

The state allocation identifies $355,843 for Healthcare Leadership and $419,858 for Youth and Adult Exposure to Healthcare Occupations, for a total request of $775,701. The accompanying budget worksheet and budget narrative will detail participant services, program staffing and operating costs, and administrative expenses within the total award.

The attached statement of work and project narrative describes our proposed approach to employer engagement, participant recruitment, training, and paid healthcare experiences across the designated 30 counties. Through these services, Workforce Essentials will support Tennessee's efforts to strengthen rural healthcare delivery and help residents receive care closer to home.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this request. Please contact me at 931-905-3500 if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Marla W. Rye

Marla W. Rye

Statement of Work and Project Narrative

Workforce Essentials will implement a Rural Healthcare Transformation program across the 30 counties assigned to the organization by TDLWD. The program will connect rural healthcare employers with leadership development resources and paid learning opportunities for prospective and current workers. Services will be organized around employer needs. Under activity 5.1, we will assist healthcare managers, administrators, office managers, and clinical leaders with non-traditional, short-term training. Under activity 17.3, we will coordinate paid healthcare career exploration, youth internships, adult incentives, and registered apprenticeship opportunities. We will work with healthcare employers, educational institutions, and local workforce partners to recruit participants, arrange services, and document results. Proposed enrollment targets are 35 leadership participants and 125 youth and adults in paid healthcare opportunities, with 160 total participants.

- Northern Middle (7): Cheatham, Montgomery, Robertson, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson
- Upper Cumberland (11): Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, White
- East (12): Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger, Hamblen, Hawkins, Hancock, Jefferson, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Union

Healthcare Leadership 5.1

Workforce Essentials will provide financial assistance for short-term micro-credential programs, leadership development, healthcare management training, continuing education, and specialty training that strengthen rural healthcare operations. Employer input will guide the selection of training for participants whose responsibilities affect service delivery, staff supervision, or organizational performance.

Training may address workforce retention, frontline supervision, practice management, or the implementation of value-based care, artificial intelligence, telehealth, and eConsult services. We will seek existing programs offered by educational institutions, industry associations, and other qualified providers.

Each training request will identify the participant's role, the rural healthcare employer or community served, the skills to be developed, and the expected benefit to the organization. Workforce Essentials proposes to pay approved training providers directly when practical. Staff will verify participation and collect completion records, credentials, or continuing education documentation, as applicable.

Youth and Adult Exposure to Healthcare Occupations 17.3

Workforce Essentials will work with rural healthcare employers to create paid experiences that introduce participants to healthcare occupations and support entry or advancement in the field. Potential host employers include hospitals, clinics, emergency medical services agencies, long-term care facilities, and other eligible rural healthcare providers. Placements will reflect employer capacity and the participant's interests, preparation, and eligibility.

Youth paid internships will connect eligible students with supervised healthcare experiences. Workforce Essentials will seek referrals through schools, career and technical education programs, and workforce partners. Each placement will include learning objectives, an identified supervisor, documented hours, and feedback on workplace skills and career interests. Duties will be appropriate to the participant's age and preparation and consistent with the host employer's patient safety and privacy requirements.
Adult incentives will support eligible adults in approved healthcare career exploration or paid learning experiences, including postsecondary healthcare students. Workforce Essentials will coordinate placements with employers and training partners. The program design will consist of a 200-hour internship with a $3000 stipend that aligns with the current YEP program.

We will also identify opportunities to support paid registered apprenticeships with rural healthcare employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors. Where an appropriate program is available, staff will help connect eligible participants to employment and related instruction. Apprenticeship services will follow the approved grant scope and will be coordinated with other funding sources to avoid duplicate payment for the same cost.

Program Staffing and Regional Coordination

Workforce Essentials will designate staff for employer engagement, participant services, financial documentation, and reporting, with assignments and costs identified in the final staffing plan. Staff will coordinate referrals and career services with local workforce organizations and American Job Center partners across the designated counties.
Employer outreach will identify leadership training needs, internship supervisors, and apprenticeship opportunities. Staff will maintain a county-level record of outreach, employer participation, and participant services to monitor geographic access and identify counties needing additional recruitment. Workforce Essentials will coordinate with the other two RHT grantees and TDLWD on referrals and service boundaries.

Workforce Essentials will encourage rural healthcare employers and training partners to sustain effective internships, leadership training, and registered apprenticeships beyond the grant period. Participants needing further training or employment assistance will be connected to available workforce services and other eligible resources.

LIVE HERE.
LEARN HERE.
WORK HERE.

You don't have to leave your hometown to build a career that matters.

RURAL WORKS

$2 MILLION
TOTAL FUNDING

A targeted investment to help rural businesses turn workforce challenges into workforce solutions.

Program Purposes

The Rural Works initiative supports businesses in rural Tennessee as they expand training, strengthen their workforce, and prepare employees for the opportunities ahead. The initiative is designed to help employers build practical, industry-aligned talent solutions across multiple sectors.

Goals

- Expand access to high-quality training and work-based learning
- Upskill current employees and strengthen staff capabilities
- Increase access to industry-aligned credentials and career pathways
- Assist employers in responding to changing workforce needs with customized solutions
- Advance workforce outcomes in rural communities

General Allowable Activities

Funding may support employer-led activities that directly address documented workforce needs, including:

- Customized training designed around an employer's specific needs
- Employee upskilling, reskilling, boot camps, and incumbent-worker training
- Training that leads to industry-recognized credentials or certifications
- Expansion of employer training capacity
- Other allowable activities that improve access to employment and advancement opportunities

The Opportunity Ahead

Rural Works put state funding into action for Tennessee's rural communities. It allows Tennesseans across the state to gain skills, it helps businesses grow, and rural communities build a stronger workforce for the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT **TNWORKS.COM**

Vocational Rehabilitation-Youth Employment Program

Outreach and Recruitment Strategies:

1. **State Special Schools**

   Tennessee School for the Blind

   Tennessee School for the Deaf

   York Institute
2. **Edison School**
3. **Robertson County School System**
4. **Progressive Directions**

The TNWorks Talent Accelerator offers a central hub where employers can share their workforce needs, connect with training providers, and begin the enrollment process for grant-supported training opportunities.

The Talent Accelerator currently includes the following programs:

- **TN Talent**: TN Talent enables Tennessee-based employers to tap into $5 million in workforce funding through the U.S. Department of Labor's Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund to expand employer-driven workforce training programs in nuclear energy, AI infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing. Employers can apply to offset the cost of incumbent worker training in these high-demand fields, for both new hires and incumbent workers.
- **Rural Works**: The Rural Works initiative supports businesses in rural Tennessee as they expand training, strengthen their workforce, and prepare employees for the opportunities ahead. This $2 million investment is designed to help employers in rural communities build practical, industry-aligned talent solutions across multiple sectors.

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
220 French Landing Drive
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-6642

Bill Lee
GOVERNOR

Deniece Thomas
COMMISSIONER

September 21, 2026

Dear Mayors, Local Workforce Development Board Chairs, and Local Workforce Development Board Directors,

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to strengthening Tennessee's workforce system. Your leadership at the local and regional levels remains essential to ensuring that Tennesseans have access to high-quality workforce development services and that employers have the talent they need to thrive.

On August 28, 2026, the State Workforce Development Board voted to establish a regional workforce board governance structure. That decision remains in place; however, after careful review, the Department has determined that additional time is needed to ensure a smooth and effective operational rollout.

While the Board's decision stands, we are actively refining and strengthening the operational components of the regional model. This work is underway, but more time is needed to address outstanding structural, administrative, and procedural considerations prior to full implementation. We are committed to building a regional structure that supports local needs, enhances service delivery, and aligns with statewide workforce priorities—and doing so requires thoughtful sequencing, clear guidance, and thorough coordination.

Importantly, as we continue refining the operational elements of the regional governance model, **our commitment to preserving a strong local voice remains unwavering**. Local elected officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, and community partners play a vital role in shaping workforce priorities, and that role will not be minimized under any updated governance structure. We also recognize **the distinct needs of Tennessee's rural communities, and any operational adjustments will be thoughtfully designed to ensure that rural counties are fully supported and well-represented throughout this transition.**

Accordingly, we will be **delaying the operational rollout of the regional workforce boards**. During this period, existing local workforce development board governance structures will remain in place, and we will continue working closely with all partners to design a transition plan that is practical, collaborative, and fully informed by stakeholder input.

In the coming weeks, the Department will provide updated timelines, implementation guidance, and engagement opportunities to ensure that all partners—state, regional, and local—have the clarity and support needed for a successful transition.

Thank you again for your leadership and for your continued dedication to Tennessee's workforce system. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Deniece Thomas
Commissioner