



Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Workforce Board Meeting
July 27, 2023

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Sue LeClair; Kendra Wheeler; Diane Frigon; Monique Roy; Brandi Farrington; Adam Wilson; Trampas Hutches; Josh Henry; Chris Winstead

Board Members Absent: Bruce Tisdale; Jim Trundy, Kate Durkin

Staff Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Sara McLaughlin, Contracted Financial Manager; Tom Fernands, EMDC; Joe Pietroski, Kennebec County Commissioner; David Duguay, Oxford County Commissioner; Terri Kelly, Androscoggin County Commissioner; Mark McInerney, Director, Center for Workforce Research & Information; Shannon Fair, MDOL

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 9:08am. The meeting was in-person at Maine Housing Authority, 26 Edison Drive, Augusta or via a virtual option through Ring Central. All those present introduced themselves.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes:

VOTED: To approve the April 27, 2023 meeting minutes as written.

Motion: Chris Winstead **Second:** Razell Ward **Vote:** All in Favor

3. High Risk Status:

Executive Director Erin Benson announced that the organization is officially off the high-risk status. The formal letter from MDOL stating the end of the high-risk status will be arriving shortly.

4. Economic Overview—Mark McInerney, CWRI:

The Director of the Center for Workforce Research & Information, Mark McInerney, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on how populations, employment and training opportunities and demographic challenges have affected workforce services in regions and areas in Maine.

Mark mentioned how varying demographics impacted and created work constraints and often are associated with generational differences in younger employees and potential workers over older more seasoned employees. The data presented also shows a decrease in unemployment that is impacting the job market which in turn makes the job search tighter across the state.

He stated that jobs being developed in larger urban areas such as the coastal region over smaller areas like within the county area greatly influences employment, poverty, education, and labor rates. Mark stated that the distribution of jobs from 2001-2022 within various sectors has also

changed. Manufacturing positions and the closing of mills significantly altered what we see within the workforce in a lot of rural areas, this has led to struggles and geographic mismatching within the job market we currently see now.

Brandi asked if service needs make any difference in the numbers and ratios being recorded. Mark agreed that opportunities and erosion in the market does make a difference as well as isolation in certain areas making it harder for potential workers to find services that meet their needs.

Chris wanted to know if any kind of research regarding age overlay has been investigated. Mark reviewed data regarding median ages within various areas that does show some information on overlays within age groups. Unfortunately, people with disabilities continue to have the highest unemployment rate across the board and we need to look at what can be done and by whom to lower this. The question of what is stopping employers from hiring people with barriers and what can we do to educate them on these issues was discussed.

Josh asked how they define labor participation rate to determine the percentages being shown. Mark explained that they are looking specifically at those people who are either currently working or are looking for work. The labor force is highest within the coastal, southern, and central counties, which is due in large part to various economic opportunities, a higher level and easier access to education and a lower poverty rate. He said that a lower labor market will equal lower workforce participation across the board and a continuing partnership as we see today will provide future opportunities to increase interest in workforce ventures in much needed areas like Somerset or Oxford County as examples.

Josh also asked if there has been any surveys or data gathering for the 25 year and under age group to determine what they want to do versus what is open within their area to open more opportunities for employment and change. Mark stated that this has not been considered at this time. Chris suggested comparing the survey for youth with the employment piece and expand upon the surveys for a new data point moving forward. This would help get to the core issues for resolution within this particular group. Josh agreed stating that Maine Maritime Academy has a 70% first time college student ratio and almost all those students are from Maine. He feels this is telling us that there is a certain population that wants what MMA is offering and this is something that can be looked at more closely for use within other training opportunities.

Erin was interested to know if people within the "Gig" economy are included within this data. Mark said that all the data is compiled from anyone employed, this would include independent contractors, tradesmen, etc. The data is collected from payroll, taxes, employer information collected and area data like census and surveys. The report would also capture anyone living in one area that travels to another for work.

Diane mentioned that there are currently Career Exploration workshops held by the Maine Department of Labor that assist participants with where they want to go regarding their career goals and how to get there.

Mark finished his presentation with a list of resources that are available to both review this data and utilize partnering programs to expand workforce opportunities, education and training across all regions in Maine.

5. Service Provider Report-Tom Fernands, EMDC:

Tom discussed the six performance indicators negotiated by the workforce board that include employment rate after the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit, median earnings after the 2nd quarter after exiting, credential attainment, measurable skills gains and effectiveness in serving employers. He also explained that participants are exited from the program when they have not received a service from any Department of Labor program in more than 90 days. The performance measures begin with the first full quarter after someone exits services. He stated that looking carefully at the dates for reporting are important when considering lag time, he gave an example of this that showed that Participant and MSG Cohort were the only dates that reported real time.

He reviewed the data for numbers served, exited and anyone placed to include registration in apprenticeships in Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, ONDWG and Quest. The data shows that the median wage can hurt the numbers by over exceeding the negotiated goals due to increases in minimum wages.

The average length of program participants in PY22 was 188 days for adults, 201 days for dislocated workers, 182 days for youth and 133 days for ONDWG enrollees. Chris wanted to know if short term grades were affecting the numbers. Tom stated that the biggest hurdle is due to releases of information with schools to obtain training records. Chris and Tom are going to connect to discuss how to obtain this information easier and quicker moving forward. Erin mentioned that gathering the information needed from Maine JobLink is very hard as the site is difficult to maneuver and not user friendly.

6. Finance Update: PY23 budget—Sara McLaughlin:

Sara handed out an overview of the proposed board budget for July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. She explained that the first column is what was spent this year and the second column is what is projected to be spent next year. The funding that is coming in at this time is via 4 discretionary contracts; WIOA which is ongoing, Opioid which ends December 2023, Career which also ends December 2023, QUEST which will end in September 2024 and ARPA. Having the Opioid and ARPA contracts allows for a bit more eligible funds than we may see at other times. The budget is based on what the organization has for needs, what we need to spend and what wants do we have. These include salaries, supplies, travel, and fringe benefits.

Fiscal monitoring is being done and there is an audit this year, therefore Sara suggested focusing on upgrading infrastructure and spending on sustainability. A new payroll system with Paylocity is being installed and she feels that this will assist with both payroll and HR needs that the organization has. She also feels that investing in training and looking at travel and conferencing expenses would be beneficial for building infrastructure as well.

Josh asked if the cost being seen for the upgrades was due to one-time start up fees. Sara confirmed that the bulk of the costs being seen are for installation, accounting for \$3,500, and will be a one-time fee.

Brandi inquired what Fiscal Management referred to and that is for Sara's services to the organization.

Josh wanted to know about any IT protection or defense that is in place in case of cyber attacks to protect available funds. The board agreed that looking into cyber security would be beneficial, but Sara also stated that at any given time there is only \$50,000 that is available as funding is done within a spend and draw down utilization.

VOTED: To approve proposed budget:

Motion: Josh Henry **Second:** Razell Ward **Vote:** All in Favor

7. Board Business:

The list of standing committees was given to everyone to review and discuss at the next operations committee meeting on August 9th.

A calendar that shows what needs to be done as a board, when and how often will be sent out by Erin for review and updating. Moving forward this will be utilized to ensure that all expectations are being met and on time.

Erin discussed the requirements for core partners that states the need for a Comprehensive One Stop Center for resources and access for participants. She said that the Lewiston Career Center was designated as this site, but there have been issues with the Infrastructure Funding Agreement for non-residents. Another issue is the temporary use of the space by DHHS due to their roof failing. The residents of the center pay rent and utilities for the space they use plus a portion of shared spaces. All required WIOA partners, including the seven non-residents split the costs of the information center (square footage, utilities, and technology). Residents pay 85% of costs for the information center. The seven non-residents evenly split the remaining 15%. Invoices were sent in July for the prior year. This caused concern among the non-residents. Currently there is no IFA and with the loss of the Youth Build program costs have increased. Erin suggested signing the IFA as it is written and having the board provide \$5,000 to cover costs via the ARPA funding and split the rest between the others. This will allow time for preparing an alternate arrangement for 2024.

Razell asked if ARPA funds can be used for this kind of thing and Sara confirmed that it can. Monique suggested negotiating annually and using ARPA funds if that is possible. She would like a list of who sits at the table and when negotiations will begin. Erin stated that this will take place bi-yearly, and once the extension is in place, Erin will bring all the players together to negotiate a new IFA.

Sara would want to investigate who benefits and what the costs are. Are partners paying more as they use space more if applicable or does it make more sense to have an even split for the space itself. Erin does have the signature pages for the original IFA from everyone partnering and will use that if needed to resolve the costs and payment split.

Sue assured everyone that her career center holds in-person tours and that if anyone is interested reach out to her and she will schedule one at any time.

VOTED: To approve \$5,000 for the IFA costs:

Motion: Chris Winstead **Second:** Monique Roy **Vote:** All in Favor

A review of PTO benefits for part time status staff was conducted to vote on with review of the current language in the CWMWDB personnel policy. The vote is regarding providing PTO at a pro-rate of 50% to staff holding a part-time status with an accrual rate of 4 hours of PTO and Holiday pay.

VOTED: To allow PTO to part time status employees at a rate of 4 hours PTO and holiday.

Motion: Laurie Glidden **Second:** Razell Ward **Vote:** All in Favor

Sara asked if this approval would be retroactive to the start of the fiscal year.

VOTED: To amend the PTO and make it retroactive beginning July 1, 2023.

Motion: Laurie Glidden **Second:** Razell Ward **Vote:** All in Favor

8. Executive Director's Report:

CWMWDB hired a part-time administrative assistant, Carrie Parker, who began working with us on June 26. Carrie spent 3 ½ years with Goodwill NNE as a workforce coordinator. She was familiar with WIOA, MDOL, MJL and has a background in administrative support. We are lucky and grateful to have her on board as our part-time administrative assistant. Thank you to Laurie Glidden and Sara McLaughlin for serving on the hiring committee.

Yesterday marked the 33rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). On that note, I am pleased to share with you an improvement in the CWMWDB region regarding serving participants with disabilities. It went from 17.2% in PY21 to 37% in PY22. I consider that a win!

At the last meeting, I mentioned being in the process of refining a \$500,000 grant submitted on behalf of CWMWDB for a portion of ARPA funds set aside for the three workforce board regions. The proposal includes \$100,000 to be added to money set aside in the Quest grant for community-based organizations. Originally, \$200,000 was set aside for a marketing campaign recruiting youth, as the CWM region has a higher percentage of disconnected youth than the state. Another \$200,000 would be focused on supporting clients with support services that are not covered by WIOA funds. The state wanted to dial back the marketing portion to \$100,000 and up the support for direct services to clients. I reached out to a marketing firm to ensure that \$100,000 would be adequate for a marketing campaign. I was reassured it was. I adjusted the proposal. The state wanted the \$300,000 portion to be fleshed out but suggested writing a contract for the CBO and marketing campaign, and the contract could be amended for the additional of the \$300,000. I agreed. The

contract was sent, reviewed, suggested revisions were made, and I signed it on July 14. The contract was sent to Kim Smith at MDOL for her signature and then sent back to procurement for one last review. I should receive it soon and can begin the RFA for CBOs and the RFP for the marketing campaign. I am working with EMDC on the \$300,000 direct client portion.

PY21 WIOA Monitoring of EMDC and CWMWDB has been completed. We must update a few policies on the board's side. I have reached out to the NAWB for templates and researched other areas. Am working with the policy committee. Rebecca Bryant, the independent contractor hired in February to monitor EMDC, is moving on to PY22 monitoring. Rebecca has a great deal of experience--doing this similar work for the NWDB.

I reached out to NAWB for mentoring purposes. They linked me with a seasoned ED from Kansas. We met via zoom on July 11 and talked about policy. She offered to be a support moving forward.

Board membership: Steve Jorgensen submitted his resignation. He has too many conflicts with meeting times but knows the work is important. I asked if another person in his hospital organization could take his place. I have not heard back. We have 5 business representative positions to fill—six if we include Bruce Tisdale. I know Cathy and Chris are reaching out to a few people, and Dave is getting me the contact information of someone from Nine Dragons. If everyone could think of one businessperson and send that name to me, it would be very helpful.

At the last board meeting, after EMDC's report, Oxford County Commissioner Dave Duguay mentioned that Oxford County was in dire need of dispatchers, corrections officers, and deputies, and wondered what could be done. ED facilitated a meeting with Patti Saarinen and Marianne Young of EMDC and Dave and Oxford County Administrator Donald Durrah to discuss a potential training project. We are waiting for further information from Donald to see how we might move forward.

ED met on Monday with Grant Provost, Adam Wilson, and Jason Shedlock, representatives of three Maine unions to discuss ways that WIOA could be more helpful in getting participants into union apprenticeships. Met with Sam Boss, the AFL-CIO apprenticeship coordinator to talk about the current construction pre-apprenticeship in Lewiston, and a member of the EMDC will be meeting with the class at 1:30 today to discuss WIOA. She will return next Tuesday to determine the eligibility of those that are interested.

Josh stated that KVCC has an electrical program and that the interest in electrical work with youth is not going well. He said that even Timber HP is having difficulty in this area, and he would like to participate in this program. Chris also mentioned that EMCC has a 9-month program free for participants as well as options through other programs and that he will pass along those options to Josh for higher education and training opportunities.

The Maine Department of Economic & Community Development has asked the local workforce boards to work with their Economic Development Districts to meaningfully engage key regional stakeholders in an important discussion updating Maine's 10 Year Economic Development Plan and the State Workforce Board's Strategic Vision for Maine's Workforce. These discussions can also lead to information the boards must gather to update their local plans due in 2025. The goal is to gather as many stakeholders as possible whose input could be used for more than one purpose. That way the boards aren't asking the same people to meet again in six months. Trying to make the best use

of everyone's time! I am working with Amy at AVCOG and Jessica Cyr at KVCOG on possible dates and locations, potentially CMCC for AVCOG, maybe KVCC for KVCOG. Will alert you when the meetings are scheduled.

Finally, I attended an information session for an EDA pilot project grant focused on areas that have a lower percentage of primary working age (25-54) labor participation rate. Somerset and Oxford Counties are eligible. I sent you a two-page outline. I am meeting with the ED of the NWDB and MDF to brainstorm. My thoughts are around training for Sappi.

9. Other/New Business:

There was no other or new business to discuss at this time.

10. Adjourn Meeting:

VOTED: To adjourn meeting at 11:00am.

Motion: Laurie Glidden **Second:** Chris Winstead **Vote:** All in Favor

Next Board Meeting Date: Thursday October 26,2023, from 8:30am-10:30am