

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  
**Operations Committee Minutes**  
March 8, 2023

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**Board Members Present:** Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member;

**Not Present:** Chris Winstead, Chair of Resources; Peter Wright, Treasurer; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment

**Others Present:** Erin Benson, Executive Director; Sara McGlaughlin, Financial Manager

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### **Call to Order**

Chair Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 10:36 am. There was not a quorum at the meeting, so the Operations Committee was asked to approve minutes via email.

### **Review and Approve Last Meeting Minutes**

**VOTED:** To approve February 8 meeting minutes via email. Email responses were copied for the record.

**Motion:** Laurie Glidden                      **Second:** Razell Ward

**Discussion:** No discussion.

**Vote:** Four in Favor; Two did not respond

### **Board Membership Update**

The last board membership representing workforce will be filled with Brandi Farrington, the Administrator of Community Services at Kennebec Behavioral Health. They run four club houses (three in the CWM region) that help people with mental health issues find and maintain employment. All Chief Elected Officials have been contacted for board referrals, but none have offered suggestions. Met with the HR person at Central Maine Motors to discuss apprenticeships. I am working on building a relationship, and will follow up with an ask for board membership. Meeting with former board member Kim Lindlof, ED of Mid-Maine Chamber. Will ask her for suggestions. Cathy offered to talk with another Sunday River employee. She didn't know if that would be appropriate. Erin thanked her, but thought it would be best to get representation from different companies and different industry sectors. Razell suggested Monique Roy at Central Maine Medical Center.

### **High Risk Update**

Erin shared the CWMWDB letter sent to Kim Moore at MDOL in response to the official letter from the state outlining steps needed to remove the board from high-risk status:

- Board submittal of revised financial policies
- Board submittal of revised personnel policies
- Documentation of Board staff training on grants management (i.e.: SMART training)
- Board submittal of updated position description of Executive Director role
- Submittal of error free drawdown requests

Cathy Witherspoon helped review the personnel policy and the updated version was submitted to the state. The biggest change was a supervisory structure that includes to whom the executive director reports, and where complaints can be made if it involves the ED. Outdated and duplicative language was

also addressed. Erin, Sara and EMDC financial manager, Ashley Bubar attended the SMART training. No certificate of attendance was given to acknowledge our presence. Ginny at MDOL said it wasn't necessary. Laurie did not feel comfortable with this as the state's letter requests documentation. Erin will follow up with WorkforceGPS who provided the training. Updated position description was submitted. In the response letter, we requested a meeting to provide clarity around the submittal of three error-free draw downs. Met with MDOL representative March 6 and agreed upon a set of parameters that Sara outlined in an email sent to all parties involved. The goal is to submit three error-free drawdowns before the April 27 board meeting. Laurie asked if it was a fruitful conversation. Most of the conversation focused on indirect. Sara explained what an indirect cost was and how it affected these drawdowns. EMDC was using a method that was unfamiliar to the state but was not incorrect. There was an agreement that this would not be considered an error in the future.

**Provider Update**

Patti was unable to attend the meeting but sent a report. Erin will forward to the committee. Highlights include enrollments:

WIOA Title	Planned for Year	Actual as of March 8
Adult	181	142
Dis. Wkr.	54	32
Youth (In school)	32	17
Youth (Out of School)	96	75
CWO	158	126

Erin and Patti met to discuss strategy for CWO recruitment—to fill the 32 open slots. Just starting Quest. EMDC participated in Rapid Response sessions for the Pixelle closure.

**Financial Update**

Sara shared her screen. As a recap, the budget for the board is \$245,414, funded by four different contracts. Since then, there has been an additional contract, Quest, which was not included in the original budget. As we begin to spend Quest funding, we are likely to spend less in WIOA PY22 funding. Good news is there is plenty of money and plenty looking forward into next year. We are at 43% of the budget, below where we should be. We are not at risk of leaving any funds on the table. If we continue at this trajectory, we will roll more money into the next program year. In the line item detail, there is nothing alarming. We are overbudget on postage, but this is insignificant. The major items are personnel salary and fringe, professional services (Sara), and auditors—everything there is on budget. Did not provide an overview of where the provider (EMDC) is in spending their funds, because the drawdowns are behind due to MDOL oversight and the delay with errors. No numbers Sara has in her system reflect the true amount that EMDC has spent. Erin has been following EMDC's youth expenditures, as CWMWDB has left significant monies on the table unspent. EMDC is on track to spend out all youth funds this program year.

**Open Discussion/New Business**

**Staffing**—hire a 20-hour per week administrative assistant. Can be remote. Hours can be increased if the work is there. Media and monitoring are being taken care of through independent contractors.

**Grant**—NWDB ED Galan Williamson and Erin are looking at a Pre-Release Job Training Services grant through the Department of Corrections. The state will not apply for it. Galan has 25 years in corrections and will take the lead in reviewing this opportunity.

**Retirement**—The board needs to review and approve the retirement contribution every year. It was not addressed in April 2022 and there was no board meeting in July 2022. Erin gathered retirement contribution information from several entities and sent to the committee. Right now the board has a set dollar amount, when a percentage might be more appropriate. It might be best if the committee reviews/discusses and make a recommendation to the full board in April.

**By-Laws**—Current edition requires a CLEO to serve on the Operations Committee. This is not a WIOA requirement. At this time, the CLEO board has been asked twice to provide a member for this position. No one has stepped up. Erin suggests removing this requirement knowing that all meetings are open to the public, so any CLEO could attend the Operations Committee meetings.

**Quest**—Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training is a new grant received by the state. In the summer of 2022, all regions helped in supplying information for the grant. Focuses on growth industries: infrastructure, environment and climate, the care economy, and other critical in-demand sectors. Targets low wage workers, women with children, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved or incarcerated individuals, and those from historically marginalized communities. Erin will send an info sheet.

**\$500,000 grant**—state set aside \$500,000 from ARPA money for the three local workforce boards. Coastal Counties is using the funds to pay participants stipends while they are in training. NWDB has put in two proposals, which have been denied by the state: use of funds to help non-participants get documents they need to register for the program, and a program to help participants buy cars. Erin will meet with MDOL on March 10 to go over ideas to make sure they are viable from the state's perspective. While the proposal is due March 15, they are giving us an extension as I was not sent the grant outline until March 2. Monies must be expended by December 2024. When this was originally sent out in the summer of 2022, Laurie said the board was interested in focusing on a marketing campaign for youth. The CWM has a higher percentage of dislocated youth than the state and nation. WIOA funds cannot be used for marketing, so this money might be an opportunity to do an outreach campaign that is typically not allowed. There is also the possibility of expanding funding in the Quest grant set aside for partner community-based organizations. This money could bring in more partner organizations to help us recruit. Laurie mentioned being at another meeting where this grant was mentioned. David Grime, a BES staff member, said that employers need to look at different ways of recruiting, to meet potential employees where they are. Just putting an ad out is not going to get them who they want. And she mentioned that the state already provides a matching grant fund to help people buy vehicles.

**Two presentations**—proposal for the Maine Counseling Association was accepted. Will host a panel for high school guidance counselors: *If Not College, Then What*. Panelists will be Joan Dolan from the Maine Apprenticeship Program; Kelly Flagg from the Associated General Contractors of Maine; Grant Provost from Ironworkers Local 7; and Lisa Harnett from EMDC. Will also present to the Adult Education Conference in June with Patti Saarinen: *Workforce boards and adult education: how do we work together?*

**Conference**—Erin will be attending the National Association of Workforce Boards annual conference in Washington DC March 25-28.

**Adjourn**

Chair Cathy Witherspoon called for a motion to adjourn. Laurie Glidden motioned to adjourn; Razell Ward seconded. All in favor. Cathy adjourned the meeting at 11:32 am.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at 8:30 am.