

Approved by Operations  
Committee on October  
11, 2023

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  
**Operations Committee Minutes**  
September 13,2023

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**Board Members Present:** Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Chris Winstead, Treasurer & Chair of Resources; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment  
**Others Present:** Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Manager; Patti Saarinen, EMDC Director of Workforce Services

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**Call to Order**

Chair Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:35am.

**Review and Approve Last Meeting Minutes**

**VOTED:** To approve August 9, 2023, meeting minutes.

**Motion:** Chris Winstead    **Second:** Laurie Glidden    **Vote:** All present in favor

**Provider Update**

Patti gave an overview of current enrollment as listed:

WIOA Title	Planned for 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr.	Actual
Adult	87	49
Dis. Wkr.	42	27
Youth (In school)	20	11
Youth (Out of School)	70	37
CWO	158(12/23)	133
QUEST	75	42

She mentioned that enrollment numbers fluctuated significantly during the first quarter due to waiting to determine the final count of people being carried in that are currently in the exiting process.

EMDC is hearing of small layoffs in other counties but only two in CWM within the past month. Major’s Appliance store in Farmingdale laid off 9 workers and Yellow Transportation in Hinckley/Portland laid off 25 – 30 workers. EMDC works closely with the Rapid Response team to serve laid off workers.

Since the last report, EMDC has had 106 referrals of which 11 were Youth-specific and 16 were QUEST. During this time, there were 28 new registrations: 4 were youth, 7 Adults, 4 DW and 13 QUEST.

The last WDS vacancy was filled, and the new staff member started on August 21<sup>st</sup>. Although still in training, these new staff have begun to take on caseloads. EMDC held a CWM in person workforce staff meeting on Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> to introduce staff and build our team approach.

The EMDC QUEST Project Manager is back and continues to screen resumes for possible QUEST WDS candidates. Although EMDC has not filled these positions, staff continue to recruit participants for the grant, as well as other programs. This influx of new employees has already made an impact, as 30% of Quest’s total enrollment to date has been registered since August 1. EMDC had a very fruitful meeting

with FedCap on Friday, August 25, to discuss referrals and the value of co-enrolling between WIOA and TANF to provide more robust services to eligible participants and braid funding. Fedcap has a high percentage of New Mainers on their rolls that could be eligible for the Quest grant. Other populations that are common among both programs are low-income individuals and women with children. While individual conversations have happened in the past among front line staff of EMDC and Fedcap, this conversation pulled in managers to create a systematic approach to working together.

Coastal Counties, the southern/coastal workforce board, received a grant to specifically serve new Afghan refugees. This grant covers some of the Central Western Maine region, particularly the Lewiston area. EMDC met with several referrals to explain the different grants and have now enrolled six Afghan refugees in CDL training; they also worked with their CSSP partner to braid funds to address the high cost of the training. Patti provided an example of a recent graduate who participated in the program and is currently enrolled in CDL classes to obtain employment in that area that will provide financial security to bring his family to the US from Afghanistan as soon as possible.

EMDC had 16 new QUEST referrals and 13 registrations this past month and continues to remain at the last 25 enrollments for the CWO grant. Staff attended the statewide monthly meeting with David Delaney, the QUEST Program Manager for the Bureau of Employment Services and submitted the quarterly report on August 7th.

Below is a list of the employer project updates that Patti shared with the committee:

Cert. Med. Asst. with Gray/New Gloucester Ad Ed and St. Mary's.

**UPDATE: Training began August 30 with 9 students in attendance. EMDC is funding 7. 3 QUEST, 3 Adult 1 OSY.**

Oxford Hills Nezinscot Adult Education CCMA Training started on March 28, 2023. There are currently 4 accepted students. All 4 are supported by EMDC; 2 Adult, 1 DW, 1 OSY.

Update – no changes from last report. Clinical sites still to be determined.

**Update: 4 students supported by EMDC are in the clinical phase of training. Two are at St. Mary's. One is at Concentra in Oxford. One is at Stephen's Memorial.**

Personal Support Specialist and CNA pathway with Lewiston Adult Education. This is a stackable credential model where one training level feeds into the next leading to more job stability and advancement opportunities.

PSS Mod 1; 2 of the 6 students were enrolled with EMDC.

PSS Mod 2: 3 students enrolled with EMDC.

C N A Mod 3: 3 students from PSS Mod 2 plus 4 more students will be enrolled with EMDC. This class will start in July.

**Update: 2 students from the second cohort have dropped out. They did not realize they would need to care for men and were not comfortable moving forward with this as a career. Both cohorts have completed the PSS phase and have moved on to CNA.**

**UPDATE 9.11.2023: Cohort 1 has completed CNA. EMDC did not fund any students who completed this training.**

**Cohort 2 is currently completing CNA training. EMDC is funding 6 students. One student of the 6, is on medical leave and it will be determined if she is able to complete her clinical training.**

Foundation/PSS/CNA Healthcare Pathway with Lewiston Adult Ed to start 8.21.23

There is not a final number on student enrollment yet.

**UPDATE: Training started on 8.21.23. EMDC is funding 7 people, as of today. EMDC is still looking to enroll 4 more if proper documents can be obtained from students.**

#### Completed:

Cert. Med. Asst. with Spruce Mt Ad Ed and Franklin Memorial Hospital. Class began 4/4/2023. Ten accepted into the training - 7 supported by EMDC: 2 adult, 3 OSY, 1 Quest, 1 CWO.

Update: 1 student asked to leave; 1 is moving into a C N A class leaving 5 students supported by EMDC; class will end soon.

**Update: Of the 5 students, 4 have passed the NHA. Verification has been downloaded and Spruce will be asked to send certs of completion. Will also check with Spruce to determine if the one person who did not pass NHA has completed all clinical hours.**

#### Upcoming:

Upcoming - CNA at Region 9. Estimated start date TBD (October). Minimum 6, maximum 8 students

**UPDATE: Eligibility has been determined for 3 students. 2 more will complete intake packages on 9.13.23.**

**Upcoming – CNA at Oxford Hills. Start date 10.2.2023. class will run with at least 4 people. No students are eligible currently.**

Not a project but we are working with Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education to screen potential candidates for CDL-A training. All potential enrollees will also be referred to CSSP, FedCap and other potential funding sources to assist with costs.

Patti and her staff attended the Maine State Housing Authority Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) meeting to discuss employment resources (BES Career Centers, Apprenticeship, WIOA 1B) and how we interconnect.

Erin and EMDC staff attended the Franklin County Adult Education Lunch-n-Learn to present on workforce services.

EMDC presented at the quarterly Maine Jobs Recovery Navigators' meeting as part of a team to discuss WIOA 1B/QUEST programs.

The Augusta Recovery Reentry Center has reopened, and staff presented WIOA services and the referral process to participants.

Business, Project and Outreach Facilitator attended the Rapid Response for Yellow Transportation in Hinckley.

Business, Project and Outreach Facilitator met with Ginny Mullaney, Mountain View Correctional Facility, to assist a potential participant and explain program services.

#### **Board Update**

Erin reached out to Amanda Cooley from Kennebec Savings Bank to see if she was interested in joining the board. Amanda was not interested in joining the board herself but told Erin that she would reach

out to assist with finding someone who would like to be a member. Erin connected with Amanda again this week and was told that she continues to inquire but has not found anyone who is interested at this time. Erin will continue to network within the community and spread the word. She is confident that as people get to know her better and hear about CWMWDB and the work being done, finding board members will become easier. If anyone has a viable candidate that may be interested in joining the board, please reach out to Erin so that she can follow up with them.

### **Financial Update**

Sara shared an update to the financials and explained that the budget documents are sorted by the contract end dates cumulative through August 2023. Each contract is listed with a start and end date, and the percentage spent will increase throughout the year.

Sara reviewed the OPIOD contract which is scheduled to end December of 2023. She shared that 86% of the budget has been spent on Admin, 99.9% was spent on service provider funds.

The PY22 WIOA contract looks as though it is behind, but due to a need to spend the PY21 funds this is normal. Now that those PY21 funds have been spent, spending on the PY22 will begin and a change to those numbers will begin to reflect that spending in the upcoming months.

The Career Dislocated Worker Grant has about another year before the end date and currently two-thirds of the funding has been spent.

The QUEST Grant has a year until it's end date and are just beginning to see spending within that area. There has been a few hundred dollars spent on the admin side and nothing in regard to the program side, however this is not unusual as we technically do not have the contract as of yet.

The current year WIOA PY 21 was just spent down so PY22 spending can begin. This will mean we will not see a decrease in the PY23 fund spending until at least mid-year to even later in the fiscal year once the PY22 funds are spent out.

Sara provided an update to the budget that was approved at the last board meeting and reviewed the changes that occurred since that time for August. We are currently 16-17% through the fiscal year and those benchmarks were reviewed for spending. The budget for salaries is spot on as we know what to expect and should not see any major surprises within this category. Fringe benefits are a little high, but Sara is not concerned with these numbers currently. Some concerns were with supplies, but a lot of these costs were frontloaded and used to establish Carrie and Erin with office needs like a desk, IT equipment, etc. and she does not expect this trend in spending to continue now that these areas have been covered and they are not in need for major purchases moving forward. Payroll processing fees again was an area that was frontloaded and expected as part of the investment into infrastructure and includes the Paylocity installation and set up which is now operational, and Erin and Carrie will begin training on utilizing this shortly for timesheets and payroll information. This accounts for about \$4,000 for this set up and installation regarding funds spent. We also used the extra funds to make this change happen.

It is still quite early into the new fiscal year, so we will see changes as the year continues and spending trends are higher, giving us a better view of where we stand.

Sara reached out to Tim, the auditor that we have been working with who performed the last audit to send out an engagement letter and audit for the period ending June 30, 2023. Tim was the only person who responded to the RFP sent out and had previously done audits for us for five years previously. We can continue to use him for the next five years within the RFP; however, the federal government encourages changing auditors frequently and this is an option if the committee chooses. Sarah recommends staying with Tim through this current audit as he is familiar with us, and we do have the contract from the RFP that he has accepted already. If we decide to go with Tim another RFP is not needed, as the one we have is good for five years. She feels that no one responded due to the high-risk status that needed to be stated within the RFP that went out. This status will make auditing a bit more challenging this year as most of the year this status was held. Once Erin receives the engagement letter, we can expect to start the audit about November or December to be completed before tax season.

Chris agrees with staying with Tim through this audit given all the reasons Sara mentioned and if steps need to be taken later to change to a new Auditor, then that can happen. Sara mentioned that it is written in the federal policy to change auditors with some frequency, but it is not necessary now if the committee is ok with keeping Tim. The committee agreed to keep Tim and look at changes at another time.

#### **Open Discussion/New Business**

Erin sent out the previously discussed RFA for the CBO request for applications that would take \$54,000 from the QUEST grant and \$90,000 from the ARPA grant to distribute \$28,800 to one CBO in each county that went out in August. Unfortunately, there was very little response to this RFA with Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services (MEIRS), Western Maine Community Action (WMCA), and one from each county for the Maine Reentry Network—that was all. There is a meeting scheduled for next week with the committee that was formed including Chris Winstead, Diane Frigon, Erin, Angelina Klouthis-Jean and Patti Saarinen to decide how best to distribute the funds.

Razell inquired about the focus for distributing funds and how that will be given. The focus is very specific, and they are required to give us 45 referrals and a minimum of 15 will enroll. The participants must be invested in continuing through the process. This grant will help establish referral pipelines that will remain in place moving forward. The hope is that relationships and referrals will remain after the funds are spent.

Erin discussed policies that were created and approved at the April 2022 board meeting, but were not vetted through the Department of Labor. The policy committee (Tom Fernands, Patti Saarinen, Monique Roy, Susan LeClair, and Erin) rewrote and resubmitted policies for ITA, OJT, Youth Incentives and Youth Additional Requirement (for additional eligibility criteria). Once these policies are reviewed by MDOL, the Board will need to approve them, hopefully in October.

Sara is interested to know if we can use Monique and her policy skills to assist in re-writing the financial policy that was written in a bare minimum style to get off high-risk and it will need to be re-written. Erin will reach out to Monique and ask her about this via ZOOM with Sara.

WIOA monitoring is required by the state, and Erin has been working closely with Ginny and Rebecca Bryant, who performs our file monitoring, to learn more about the requirements and needs for this monitoring. This monitoring includes looking at practices, talking with staff members and leadership. At the end of September, a conversation with all EMDC will take place which will kick-off this monitoring and will address the leadership issue with Lee.

Our MOU/IFA documents were only valid for one year, despite the confusion with the timeline that was listed on the calendar of events Ginny created. Lisa Haskell from DOL sent Erin an email about billing non-residents per the IFA and, when these bills went out, some recipients were in the dark. Erin sent out the original IFA signature pages as explanation of payment. We are currently out of compliance and the MOU and IFA need to be updated. The Attorney General informed us last week we can ask for an extension. The \$5,000 Erin asked for at the July meeting offsets the costs to the non-residents to split the 15% of the information center. Erin does not feel that the MOU will be an issue regarding extending through June 30, 2025, but feels the IFA will be an issue. A resolution on the cost and payment needs to be addressed as this is required within the infrastructure law.

Erin sent out an email about the extension and only three people have responded. She will continue to work on connecting with everyone and getting this resolved as soon as we can. If people do not respond by the end of this current week, she will start reaching out to them directly with in-person visits to ensure we remain in compliance.

MDOT grants were discussed previously, and Erin met with them to discuss these grants. Galan is working with Jackson Labs and Erin is working with AGC to submit grants to DOT to purchase work vans for employment transportation assistance.

Specialty Electrician meeting is scheduled for later today with cohorts from both businesses and community colleges to discuss how to work together to get training in place for Electrical and Instrumental electricians that are desperately needed across the board in Maine.

Grant mentioned various apprenticeship programs that exist and how connecting with these organizations may assist with these needs and recruiting both participants and businesses who are willing to work with them on hiring these participants upon graduation. Grant will work alongside those participating in these meetings to spread the word to businesses and gather information on working together moving forward to meet these needs.

### **Adjourn**

Chair Grant Provost adjourned the meeting at 9:35am.

**Motion:** Razell Ward    **Second:** Laurie Glidden    **Vote:** All present in favor

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 13, 2023, 8:30am-9:30am

Next full board meeting: Thursday, October 26, 2023, 8:30am-10:30am at Maine Housing Authority

### **ED Outreach since last Operations Meeting**

8/11/2023 spoke with Simon Thorne from Consolidated Communications to get an understanding of what job opportunities would be available with the influx of all the broadband money. He gave me a breakdown of the work needed to be done immediately—mostly being done by contracted workers—and what might be steady employment in Maine for the industry moving forward. Very interesting conversation.

8/15/2023 attended a FAME workshop on the new FAFSA that will be used for the fall of 2024. Informational documents were sent to EMDC's staff so they would be prepared to help participants apply for financial aid if they were going into training that is eligible for financial aid.

8/15/2023 met with Erica Watson of the Maine Development Foundation regarding the work they are doing with the forestry industry. They received a grant in November 2022 to focus on this industry and define 15 forestry occupations. They did four focus groups, with one of them in Livermore Falls. There is a workforce committee that includes industry leadership, CTEs, Adult Education, and the Maine Community College System. She invited ED to participate on the committee.

8/16/2023 CWMWDB and NWDB executive directors met EMDC CEO, Lee Umphrey, to discuss the leadership turnover within the organization, most recently the abrupt departure of VP Tracey Colley after 3 months and the departure of youth director, Madeline Bradfield after less than a year. Lee said they were in the process of filling both positions with the former being downgraded to a director position.

8/17/2023 attended the Maine Hire a Vet event at the Augusta Civic Center. Spoke to several businesses about WIOA and OJTs. Connected two with apprenticeship staff.

8/25/2023 virtually attended a meeting with staff who support veterans: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP), Local Veterans Employers Representative (LVER), and Veteran Readiness Employment (VRE). I talked about WIOA and ways that we might work together. I connected the staff member from LVER, who meets with employers in the CWM region to talk about hiring vets, with EMDC's Marianne Young who does business outreach in the region. The two could talk about their work, exchange ideas on good businesses with whom to work, and maybe figure out how the two programs might partner.

8/29/2023 attended the Fidium Fiber-Consolidated Communications ribbon cutting at the Hathaway Creative Center in Waterville. Opportunity to meet in person Simon Thorne who I had chatted with over the phone about the broadband industry in Maine.

8/31/2023 met over zoom with Jen Hogan from Community Federal Credit Union to discuss their Financial & Life Navigator Program for businesses to understand how it might be offered to more businesses.

8/31/2023 connected Jenna Kuun from Norway Savings Bank with an apprenticeship staff member and Michaela Charles from Somerset Career & Technical Center (SCTC). SCTC had done an apprenticeship

with a local bank in Skowhegan, and I mentioned this to Jenna when I met her at the Maine Hire a Vet event. This was an opportunity for her to learn of how her bank might benefit from the same strategy.

9/1/2023 virtually attended the Governor's Opioid Response Seminar Series. Was surprised to discover that two of the Central Western Maine region's counties had among the highest Suspected Opioid Overdose Rate per 10,000 people: Androscoggin had the highest and Somerset the third highest.

9/8/2023 attended the State Workforce Board meeting held at Jackson Lab. Received a tour of the facility, which was very interesting. Connected with an individual who runs a summer program for youth.

9/12/2023 made a presentation regarding WIOA during a Lunch & Learn at the Franklin County Adult Education program in Farmington. EMDC staff were in attendance too.

9/12/2023 attended the ReStart Program Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting. Several people presented on the workforce system. I explained how the board connected all the pieces.