

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Operations Committee Minutes
December 14, 2022

Board Members Present: Grant Provost, Vice Chair; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member; Chris Winstead, Workforce & Required Member; Peter Wright, Treasurer; Robert Sezak, non-voting Community Member

Not Present: Razell Ward, Secretary; Nick Paquet, Resources and Recruitment Chair

Others Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Sara McLaughlin, Accountant; Patti Saarinen, EMDC Deputy Director of Workforce Services

Vice Chair Grant Provost called the meeting to order at 8:30am. Agenda was tabled to move Provider Update by Patti Saarinen first to accommodate her schedule.

Provider Update

Patti Saarinen, EMDC Deputy Director for Workforce Services stated that PY22 enrollments for the central western Maine region: 117 adults with a goal of 143 by June 30, 2023—on track to meet this goal. Dislocated Worker enrollment is down across the state. People with an established history of working, with good workforce skills can easily find another job if laid off in this market. That is what we are seeing. Currently 27 enrolled with a goal of 86. The likelihood of reaching that goal is slim. For youth, 60 enrolled in out of school youth with a goal of 99 and 16 for in school youth with a goal of 32. On track to meet this goal. The Connecting with Opportunities grant, which is due to end in December has 123 enrolled, with four more to be added during December. We have asked for an extension. The subcontract with Community Concepts will end December 31. The six workforce development specialists hired under CCI will be transferring to EMDC. There will be no disruption of services for clients. While the contract will end, the relationship will not. St. Mary's CMA class running currently with 10 students, 9 of which passed the national exam the first time around. The 10th who missed by 2 points will re-take the exam soon and likely pass. All are finishing up clinicals and will soon become employed. Just finished interviewing for a second class. There will be 13 in that class with 12 being EMDC participants. We placed our first youth with a new partner, the River Valley Association, in a work experience. The Association covers the Rumford, Mexico, and Dixfield area. Also met with Rumford and Dixfield High Schools JMG and alternative ed staff to develop a referral pipeline. We have employers ready to be host sites for work experiences. Continuing work with CES (Center for Entrepreneurial Studies), a youth-focused organization in Franklin County, and Tree Street Youth in Lewiston. Met with Maine Refugee Resettlement Program that has a sub program to help refugees find employment. They are eager to work with EMDC as their clients need employment within the first year of resettlement. Lewiston and Augusta are focal points in the CWM region for their work. Did first OJT with Reed & Reed, which serves as a pre-apprenticeship which will lead to an apprenticeship. Did a podcast with the Oxford Hills Chamber to recruit and get the word out. Also meeting with Skowhegan and Franklin County Adult Ed this week to discuss training opportunities and participant referrals.

Approve Last Meeting Minutes

VOTED: To approve November 9 meeting minutes.

Motion: Laurie Glidden

Second: Chris Winstead

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote: All in Favor

Board membership

Grant spoke with Revision management at the state workforce board meeting and they would like to provide an employee for the board. Erin will send Grant a reminder to get them connected and they should be available for the January board meeting. Grant is also working with Matt at AFL-CIO to find a workforce representative., who is too busy to attend. Grant is hoping to find a labor representative to replace himself. Robert never heard from Sappi. Erin reminded the committee that their ideal number for the board was 23. She shared an excel file of what membership would look like. With 23, 12 need to be from business. Currently there are 8. Revision is committed for a 9th. Robert suggested a car dealer. Erin called Charlie's and left a message; they would not give her a name to call directly. She is waiting to hear. She can reach out to Central Maine Auto Group in Waterville. Tom gave Erin a Huhtamaki contact, who has contacted the HR person. Erin will reach out to this HR person. Bigelow Brewing was mentioned by Robert, Grant, and Laurie. Robert mentioned Sam Hight from Hight Ford. Chris mentioned he had ideas for other members and Amy Landry from AVCOG for a required partner. Robert said he talked with Sam and there was some interest. He will email her. Grant said Bigelow is neighbor, he will ask. Erin will wait to hear about Hight Ford before reaching out to Central Maine Auto Group. Chris feels it is good to have extras in case contacts don't pan out. Suggested Paris Farmers Union to start cultivating other prospects. Chris will reach out. Erin suggested adding Patti Saarinen as one of the four workforce members. Members felt it was better not to have the service provider on the board as a voting member. Erin will look at the rules and make other suggestions. EMDC employees could attend as ex-officio. Amy Landry was in the middle of a huge project, but Chris will reach out to her in the next few weeks to ascertain her willingness to serve again. Chris also mentioned Brian Doyle, an economic development specialist for the City of Lewiston might be a good one to have around the table. Finally in the other category of others, there can only be two to make the percentages of board membership work. Erin will reach out to Bruce Noddin and ask him to step down. He is always welcome to attend meetings as is every member of the public. Robert reminded the group that it is the County Commissioners that select board members. Both Robert and Chris suggested communicating with all of them to see if they had suggestions. Erin offered to send commissioners the minutes of the October meeting and ask if they had suggestions for board membership. Robert asked to have minutes sent to the respective county administrators. As a side note, the bylaws state that every board member has to fill out a membership application every year.

Physical location

A new lease was sent for the office suite located a 87 Winthrop Street in Augusta, the location of the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP). Internet is included and the lease was changed to begin January 1, 2023. Grant asked if the operations committee needed to take a vote to approve the location or make a suggestion to the board in January for full approval. Erin said she felt it was up to the staff to secure an office space, but she would want the committee to support the choice. Chris asked if the full board already approved a budget

that listed a line item for office space. Sara responded that there was a line and the amount of the rent fell below what was already approved. Chris said as long as it is not changing the budget, the Operations Committee should not have to engage the full board. The Operations Committee can approve the lease and alert the board. Peter agrees that it is up to staff, but given the history and that it is a long term commitment, he feels it is good practice to have the Operations Committee review the lease.

VOTED: To approve the lease for CWMWDB office space at 87 Winthrop Street, Augusta

Motion: Robert Sezak **Second:** Laurie Glidden

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote: All in Favor

High Risk Status Update

All policies were sent to Ginny for approval. Ginny felt they were too laden with policy. They should be written for direct staff to provide guidance, not for policy wonks. Erin re-wrote the Support Services policy following Ginny's suggestions. Sara, Joanna and Erin re-worked the financial manual, and Sara needs to give it a final review. Joanna is reviewing the Personnel Policy. Erin needs to attend the SMART training from the USDOL in February, and it is suggested that a board member attend. Erin suggested that Peter may have no interest as treasurer. Chris suggested that other board members might attend to build in capacity for those who might step into the treasurer role. Erin agreed to send the description to all board members and ask who might want to attend. Chris offered to sit through the training.

Grant passed the gavel to Chris as he had to step away for a meeting.

Financial Report

Sara shared the budget for fiscal year July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 including four sources of funding: WIOA PY21, WIOA PY22, Opioid, and CAREER. These are all multiyear contracts totaling \$4.5 million, of which 10% is administrative funding. Some has already been spent in prior fiscal years and some is planned for future fiscal years. Sara's task is to determine what to use for the current fiscal year and make sure there is enough for next year. The board came up with a budget of \$245,000 for the current fiscal year. This is not a rigid budget, there is flexibility. If something happened, the board could approve an adjusted budget. There is about \$30,000 being reserved for next fiscal year that could be tapped into. Moving to line items, the bulk of the budget is people. It is a typical budget of what has been developed over the past decade. To the right are the actuals through November. We are behind on spending but that is planned because the budget is back ended. The board would not likely hire someone until fall or winter; no office space until 2023. November is about 42% through the fiscal year, so a good benchmark would be about 42% of the way through the budget. Only at 22%, but that is okay. Some things are front loaded, like the audit costs, which are already paid for. Until Erin was hired, there weren't many expenses except for Sara's costs, some software subscriptions, audit fees, and dues. It will show underbudget until the second half of the year. Other funding opportunities include a Dislocated Worker Grant called QUEST. It will be an additional funding source used for fixed costs. We will likely not spend much this fiscal year, as the contract will not likely be executed until February. We finished our PY21 audit just in the nick of time. Put out an RFP for the PY22 audit, which needs to be completed by March 31, 2023. We have no

proposals. Sara shared the RFP with her colleagues. Other than the current auditor, two responded saying they had no interest and the second was considering it. Robert, Kelly, Peter, and Erin have been working with Kendra to get Peter on to the checking account to do approvals. Last thing is the majority of Sara's time has been taken up with the drawdowns for EMDC. It is not that anything inappropriate is going on, but more the administrative process that is extremely cumbersome because of the high-risk status. At times it is difficult to provide documentation that is easy to read and understand by the reviewer. MDOL kicks it back because they don't feel the documentation is good enough. It takes a great deal of time. Just because you cannot provide pretty documentation does not mean there are not adequate controls in place. There are logical reason MDOL stated that if EMDC could provide three clean draws in a row, they would remove the extra documentation requirement. They submitted two clean draws, but the third was problematic. Now they must begin again with three clean draws. Sara has suggested ways to improve their approach. Chris suggested sending a letter stating this issue, so if it comes up on an audit down the road, there would be a letter stating the board's concern. Laurie was in agreement to compose a letter that would motivate EMDC to be more careful. A thoughtful conversation ensued about what best approach to take. Erin mentioned that even if the board was removed from high risk tomorrow, EMDC would still need to provide three clean draws. EMDC did not contribute to the board's high risk status, but its fate of removing this additional work is in their own hands. Chris and Robert made it clear that our concern is not for EMDC but for the boards. There was never a vote or direction to move forward with a letter.

New Business

Erin mentioned that the annual meeting was scheduled for January 26, 2023. Will the meeting be in person, via zoom, or an option for either. Erin found mention in operation committee meeting minutes a request from Kelly to acknowledge Craig Nelson for his service on the board. This was supposed to happen at the April board meeting. Erin found no evidence that it did. Does the board want to honor Craig and Kelly at the January meeting? Committee members agreed to acknowledge Craig and Kelly and have an in-person meeting with a zoom option. Laurie offered to ask about the Maine Housing Authority board room. Other loose ends: Sara mentioned the QUEST grant—it will bring in an additional \$178,000 administrative funding over a two year period. I met with Bonita Tompkins, the director of the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies in Farmington, along with Dan Belyea and Charlie Collins. There was a great discussion regarding Bonita's ideas to involve youth and her work with the local high school, and how we might partner. Patti Saarinen from EMDC has met with her several times. We are supporting some of her participants through WIOA. Next week I will meet with James Dinkle, the executive director of FirstPark Commerce Center, an introduction made by Craig Nelson. We executed a contract with EMDC for WIOA PY22. Waiting to sign a contract with the state. Razell attended a meeting about apprenticeship and wondered what we could do as a board to support this work. Patti and I met with Joan Dolan, the director of the Maine Apprenticeship Program last summer and requested she convene a meeting of WIOA people and the 14 entities that received a portion of the \$12 million dollars in grant funding for apprenticeship. Sent her another reminder and mentioned it to Ginny. The CWM EMDC workforce is working with two of these grantees already: Tree Street Youth and Industrial Roofing Company. Grant has ideas about apprenticeship. her a few times about this initial request.

On behalf of Vice Chair Grant Provost, Chris Winstead adjourned the meeting at 9:54 am.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 8:30am.