

**Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Operations Committee Minutes
August 14, 2024**

Approved by Operations
Committee

October 11, 2024

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member/Youth Committee Chair; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment

Absent: Chris Winstead, Treasurer/Chair of Resources

Others Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant; Patti Saarinen, EMDC, Sara McLaughlin, Financial Analyst; Aaron Berger, Program Manager, Gener8tor Skills

Call to Order

Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:36am.

Introductions were made to start the meeting as Aaron Berger from Gener8tor Skills joined the meeting as a guest. Aaron is the Program Manager and works on various nonprofit workforce service projects. Erin mentioned that he may want to consider joining the October board meeting as this is where he will get the most information regarding the agency.

Review and Approval of the Last Meeting Minutes

Voted: Approval of the July 10, 2024, meeting minutes.

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

Provider Report-Patti

Enrollments:

<u>WIOA Title</u>	<u>Planned for PY24 1st Qtr.</u>	<u>Actual (as of 8-12-24)</u>
Adult	100	108
Dis. Wkr.	39	35
Youth (In school)	15	12
Youth (Out of School)	44	31
QUEST	158	84

Numbers will fluctuate this first quarter due to the 90 days' wait from the end of the last service before some people who were counted as carry-ins will actually be counted as exited. The numbers listed above are as accurate as we can be until after September 30th; they include new enrollments and carry-ins.

There have been few layoffs in our 5-counties since the beginning of July. The latest list includes: Nutrien AG in Detroit – 16 people; White's Auto Body in Madison – 6 people; Big G's in Winslow; New Balance moving from Norridgewock to Skowhegan – no layoffs but local businesses may experience some losses; Puritan in Pittsfield – just a few people remained at that location; Open Text (Carbonite) – few people have come into the Lewiston CareerCenter; Mexico Police Dept. – 2 people who may get picked up by the Sheriff's Dept.

Since July 1st we've had 127 referrals of which 44% were from BES. The others were from adult education, FedCap, CSSP, Rapid Response, AFLCIO and MERN. Due to being down 3 staff in CWM, we are contacting new referrals as quickly as we can. If people are ready to start training, we give them priority.

QUEST Grant:

We are at 53.2% of our QUEST enrollments or at 84 enrolled out of 158 total. As stated above, many referrals qualify for both QUEST and Adult, and we try to determine which program will serve them best.

Please see Other News for a list of places staff have visited this past month; many of these have possible QUEST referrals.

Employer Projects:

Foundation/PSS/CNA Healthcare Pathway with Lewiston Adult Education; this is a registered apprenticeship training. MOD 3 C N A cohort started 6/4/24. EMDC is supporting 4 students all Adult.

AGC Construction Pre-apprenticeship. Three cohorts have started: one at KVCC with 8 students; EMDC is supporting 3: 1 QUEST and 2 Youth. Sacopee Valley – 10 total; EMDC is supporting 4: all ARPA. Oxford Hills – 15 students; EMDC is supporting 7; class began July 22nd.

Certified Nursing Assistant training for Maine Health. This is being coordinated by Central Lincoln County Adult Education. Two classes are in our area: one at Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education which will begin July 22nd. Classes and clinicals are to be held at Stephens Memorial Hospital. EMDC is sponsoring 3 of the 4 students. The second is through Spruce Mountain Adult Education. Classes and clinicals to be held at Franklin Memorial Hospital. EMDC may sponsor 2 of the 4 students.

AFL-CIO Pre-apprenticeship Construction Academy. Start date is early July. EMDC has received 3 referrals.

Oxford Hills CDL training. Start date is 7/15/24. EMDC has 10 adult referrals.

Upcoming/In Discussion:

Foundation/PSS/CNA Healthcare Pathway with Lewiston Adult Education; this is a registered apprenticeship training. A new round will start in August; EMDC has 12 referrals.

Skowhegan Adult Education. CNA training with classes and clinicals being held at Mount Saint Joseph's in Waterville. Still in the process of recruiting. Classes are scheduled to start in September. The maximum number of students is 10.

Skowhegan with Adult Education. CDL training to begin on 9.17.24. In the recruitment phase. Maximum students are 8.

Region 9 Adult Education. CNA training begins on 9.10.24. In the recruitment phase. Maximum students will be 6.

Completed:

Spruce Mountain CCMA. EMDC is supporting 6 people: 4 Adult, 2 Quest. All have been registered and enrolled in WIOA. Classroom training ended mid-May. Participants are finishing clinicals.

Oxford Hills CDL training. EMDC is funding 4 people: 3 Adult, 1 Youth. Two of the adults are currently working at Schiavi's. The employer has agreed to pay for half of the tuition cost. Full tuition is \$5700.00. Schiavi will pay \$2850.00. All are in the process of completing driving hours.

Oxford Hills CDL-A Daytime class; 3 students: 3 Adult. Several of these students had tuition paid in part or full by their current employers. All are in the process of completing driving time.

Other News:

Lewiston will be the third pilot site for the Progressive Employment collaborative effort. A meeting was held for BES, BRS and EMDC staff to get an overview of Progressive Employment and start discussing how we can work together. Training will be scheduled for early September.

Community Partners we have met with:

- Oxford Hills Adult Ed
- MEIRS
- Tree Street
- New Beginnings
- Lewiston Adult Ed
- Lake Region Adult
- Fedcap-Lewiston, Skowhegan and Farmington
- Region 9
- Mt. Blue- Tyler Provencher. Discussed their digital literacy program.
- BES
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Spoke with students at Reddington Fairview General Hospital in Skowhegan. These students are taking general healthcare classes through KVCC. While these general studies are not on the ETPL, we could potentially assist these students if they move into occupational skills training.

Presented at FedCap's Power of Possibilities workshop to discuss WIOA services with potential applicants.

Placed a youth on WE as an Activity Assistant at Pinewood Terrace in Farmington.

Extended the WE at Gaskyl Printing in Rumford; looks like this will lead to a direct hire.

Met with WD Matthews, Paris Farmers Union, and Mardens to discuss potential OJT and WE.

Staff facilitated Resume and Mock Interviewing workshops for the AGC students at KVCC, Sacopee Valley and Oxford Hills.

Participated in the statewide Apprenticeship Lunch & Learn presentation on WIOA services.

Met with Lori Moses, Coordinator of Apprenticeship and Credential Programs for Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network. They are one of the Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors with occupations for Early Childhood Educational Specialists, which is a statewide program. Their training program is listed on the ETPL. We discussed how we may be able to use our WIOA funding to assist with pre-apprenticeship training for Early Childhood Education Specialists. There has been a shortage of childcare specialists, so this training is very timely.

Cathy asked Patti if those people laid off within the autobody industry had any mechanical skills as this would be something that Boyne would be interested in possible employment needs. Patti said that she will find out the skill sets and can have staff reach out about that.

Erin mentioned that the Union Construction Academy took place in Newport, and though this is outside our region, we did reach out to 297 women between the ages of 18-45 that were within a 30-mile radius of the event. She knows that we are assisting at least one person from that event, Patti stated that 7 are being assisted with 4 of those being from our region and 3 being part of the Northeastern region. She stated that because there was no cost to the training they are mostly being helped with supportive services.

Cathy stated that Sugarloaf has its first culinary apprentice which is very exciting for them. They are working with the Farmington Foster Tech and are hoping for more collaboration with them in the future. She explained that they are currently full-time throughout the summer and then will drop down during the school year to part-time, but she is not sure how that is being worked out around school as another staff member is working on those details. Erin stated that before Boyne takes on another apprenticeship, Cathy needs to reach out because if they qualify, especially youth, for WIOA services a work experience can be established and the WIOA dollars pay the wages. Cathy believes that this was done once before about five years ago at another facility, which Patti confirmed. Cathy will let the staff know about this option and will have them reach out along with the people at Foster Tech meet with Wrin and Patti for discussions.

Financial Report-Sara

Sara shared her financial reports with everyone and reviewed the budget and spending thus far into the PY24 year. She mentioned that there are usually no significant changes between July and August with the start of the new fiscal year and spending tends to be minimal during this time.

She briefed everyone on the cumulative spending on all the current contracts that was updated through August 12th, explaining that the Career funding ends on September 23rd, and she does not see any reason why the board will not spend the rest of the 3% funding that remains and that EMDC has already spent 100% of their funding. Quest and ARPA funding is highlighted on the report as they are scheduled to end in 2024, but they are going to have a no-cost extension which will change the budget for spending those contracts out. She wanted to make sure that this was explained as the report looks like spending for Quest is at 32% with an end date of September 2024, but with the extension the spending of funds is adequate for the expected timeline. She also mentioned that Quest is a good example and is indicative of the problems with no-cost extensions, and that is that when the contract is initially awarded, she creates a budget based on the timeline given for and the spending frame for spending

before expiration. However, when a no-cost extension happens, like with Quest, she expected that we would need to spend \$134,000 within two years and that is what she budgets staff charges for time and payment to uniformly to spend as planned. So, when the extension is given without any more funding this changes the length of time to cover and now the funding needs to be stretched further. When looking at all of the contracts the spending from an administrative perspective is relatively flat and so it costs her the same to process a drawdown from EMDC despite the amount so where the board spending is flat, the service provider spending is more on a bell curve where it ramps up, peaks and then curves off which generally shows the board in front of service provider spending on average. Sara sees no problems with the spending thus far with either ARPA or Quest and the extension for spending out the rest of the funds before the new expiration dates.

PY23 WIOA has begun to pick up spending now that EMDC has spent out the PY22 funding which has now expired. From an administrative perspective PY23 spending is at 76% and EMDC is at 14% with a total of 19%. She expects that PY23 spending for EMDC will quickly increase now that they are completely down with PY22 spending. The new PY24 contract will expire in June 2026 and is a 1.8-million-dollar budget, which is a little less than last year's contract, has not been touched on yet as spending for PY23 needs to be done before we can start to dip into any of the PY24 funding.

Sara finished with an overview of the administrative breakdown that is only a month into the new fiscal year and shows a 4.5% spending thus far, with the large contractual budgets from the CBO mini grants is skewing the numbers. Removing these extra monies shows spending at 6.6%, which is less than the expected 8.33% but Sara is not worried about those numbers. The individual line items look a little off, looking at dues and subscriptions as an example it looks like we're already at 40% one month into the budget, but that is because a large NAWB subscription and insurances were due in July but there is no risk of going over now that those initial lump sums have been paid.

Sara took a moment to update everyone on what she's been working on behind the scenes with the annual sub-recipient monitoring. This is different from the audit by Tim Poitras and is when the state monitors us as a sub-recipient and we in turn monitor EMDC as our sub-recipient. This has been happening congruently recently as the state is finally catching up on being behind with monitoring after a few years and just finished monitoring us for PY21 and are now monitoring us for PY22. This year is different as prior to now MDOL used to use an inside State of Maine organization, Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS), who has their own internal auditing/monitoring team, and they were monitoring us. It is now being contracted out to an independent accounting firm from the west coast, which is common to do, CCWI does this and we've discussed it as well. The firm is very good, but the process is very rigorous and more so than in the past. She stated that though Erin is not part of the process she is copied in on all correspondence. Sara also is finishing the wrap up of our monitoring of EMDC and rushed to get that in by June 30th and will be meeting with EMDC and issuing her report as soon as the monitoring with us is finished. She will be reaching out to Tim shortly to begin the organizational auditing as we have just finished the prior fiscal year. This is our official independent audit, and he usually begins this process around December.

Cathy asked for clarification on the state monitoring process and that they have hired someone to come in and audit/monitor us and we in turn monitor EMDC as providers for MDOL. This ensures that we are

following our contractual obligations to MDOL and EMDC is following their contract with us. Sara confirmed this and stated that the federal regulations make a big deal out of differentiating monitoring from auditing, and some of the key differences are that auditing is corrective in nature and monitoring is cooperative and about sharing best practices and more teal time. Where monitoring is always behind there is always things that get caught in the auditing process and Sara's goal is to get us to a point where we are ahead of problems before they are caught in the auditing process.

Updates

- **Reauthorization:** Erin recently sent everyone the most up-to-date information around the reauthorization for review. She stated that a benefit to membership of the National Association of Workforce Boards is that they send weekly updates that provide valuable updates and information. The latest events they've had throughout the summer included the AI presentation, an interview with the secretary of labor, and regional meetings. Erin attended the regional meeting and though there were not a lot of people there, there were some people from other states and one of the things they want us to do is host a visit from the congressional delegation as many of the congress people and senators are unaware of what we do. With the congressional people available until September 9th, we can host an event at the Lewiston Career Center with Susan Collins though everyone can be invited, Erin feels that Susan Collins would be the best person to invite based on the committees that she is part of. Erin can put together an event and get staff and clients there to have a meaningful discussion with Susan Collins to hear directly from us what we are doing and why it's so important, especially regarding the reauthorization that she can take with her. Everyone agreed that this would be a great idea and an important event, and that Erin should move forward with getting the event planned.
- **DOC/CDL-A Update:** Erin mentioned before that we are working with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Free World to deliver the CDL-A. Free World was holding conversations with NTI, the trucking company, because the CDL includes both classroom work and driving tests for completion and certification. Free World provides free classroom training, but someone would need to be contracted to provide the driving piece and testing. The DOC has stated that they want to handle this on their own, so Jason Wang from Free World reached out to Erin about doing something together without DOC. Erin is meeting with Jason and Bruce from the Maine Reentry Network around partnering for a program around those people who have been released from incarceration. She is still working with people to work with the jails in our region around needs and where we can assist residents and those preparing for or recently released.
- **IFA Update:** Erin heard from 5 of the 6 nonresidents so she went ahead with sending out the updated IFA to all the residents. The IFA stated that nonresidents would pay 15% of the costs of the information center at the Lewiston Career Center, which is a very large part of the area utilized by the One Stop partners, and addressed the concerns they had on having to pay when they are not residents of the facility. The payment for nonresidents for the information center costs was reduced to 10% with the residents needing to pay more and payments would be made based on a tiered system. There are two tiers, one is \$600, and one would be \$1,000 with organizations like BES, Community Colleges, etc. paying the higher \$1,000 price and the smaller organizations with less staff like the National Farm Workers Job Program paying the lower amount of \$600. Once agreed Erin sent out an update that showed what the original budget looked like and what the new tiered budget plan will look like with the adjustments with the

largest adjustment being to Vocational Rehabilitation with an additional \$900+. She has only heard back from one person so far and is hoping to hear from everyone shortly to have agreement on the new IFA and can get the signatures and get us into compliance.

Laurie stated that this sounds like it's been a cumbersome process. Erin stated that the difficult piece has been the lack of response from people that were necessary for making changes to the budget, which Laurie agreed can be frustrating as it holds everything up. Erin stated that when she brought up the usage of a tiered system of payment, she asked all nonresidents for their administrative budgets and how many staff were attached to it because she knew that community colleges have a larger budget than others for example, and only two people responded to that request despite reaching out multiple times for the information. Laurie thanked Erin for hanging in and continuing to work on this despite the lack of response and difficulty of accomplishing it within the timeline necessary for compliance.

- **WORC/WANTO/ARPA:** All the grants have been submitted or assistance with submitting them was completed. Erin and Carrie assisted Mike Roughton from the Manufacturing Association of Maine with his submission of the Work Opportunities in Rural Communities (WORC) grant that he submitted, which if awarded would not yield any funding directly to the board, but would establish apprenticeships and curriculum that helps with the 4.0 manufacturing and edition of automation, robotics and electrical which Erin has heard from businesses is something that they really want and need within our region. Mike has not heard anything on this grant yet, but she will keep everyone posted once word is back.

The Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grant was completed and submitted by Erin and has not heard anything as of this time. Again, she will update everyone once she hears back herself.

Regarding the ARPA funding, \$500,000 was set aside for us and \$200,000 was approved and is funding the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and the marketing campaign with FuseIdeas. A proposal for the remaining \$300,000 which was approved and Erin's signed it, MDOL signed it and it's currently within the MDOL Procurement Department for the final approval for moving forward with the Fit First project and the Oxford Counties high schools. Erin has already been in contact with both Fit First staff and the five area high schools about holding the piloting event for that program. These funds will also assist with paying for the transportation vans, helping to get people to work.

- **Board Membership:** Erin spoke with a gentleman from AMI, but he has chosen not to join the board at this time. She emailed both the Chambers of Commerce in Augusta and Waterville, and Kim in Waterville is very responsive and stated that she will think about it and send along suggestions to Erin, which she has done before, but unfortunately yielded no memberships. She has not heard anything from the Augusta Chamber and plans to stop in-person to speak with them about possible connections. We are still in need of a board member from the Kennebec area and though Bruce Tisdale has not been removed from the board, he has not been actively involved or attended any meetings since January 2022. This will need to be addressed in the future once someone from Kennebec is on board. Erin mentioned that we cannot afford to have people on the board who are not active, and currently there are a few people on the board who

are not attending meetings and being active. Chris Winstead suggested someone within the banking industry that she met with and again came up empty.

Laurie mentioned that she spoke with Laura Benedict from the Red Barn recently and she is very involved in community organizations and ongoing. Laurie is going to schedule a luncheon meeting with her and Erin to discuss her participation with the board or CWMWDB programs.

We have no one from Kennebec and no one from banking on the board and Erin would like to have people from these sectors on the board. We have plenty of people representing healthcare and manufacturing so she would like to concentrate on the counties and sectors not represented.

- **Marketing Campaign:** We have received the analysis and report from Fuselideas which was sent to everyone for review. The focus groups are scheduled in Androscoggin County at the Lewiston Public Library on August 21st and then in Franklin County in Farmington at the Legion Hall on August 22nd, Kennebec County at the Waterville Public Library on August 27th, Oxford County at the Oxford Community Center on August 28th and the final focus group in Somerset County at the Skowhegan Community Center on August 29th. Laurie will be attending each of them with Erin as the Chair of the Youth Committee to bring that information to the committee and see how they can assist from there. Erin asked Shannon Saxby from YLAT to moderate the event, but she was unable to do it and suggested a Navigator who could moderate. Erin has reached out to her and is going to connect when she is back from vacation. Her goal is to get someone who knows how to connect with the youth and ask the questions we need answers to.

The other piece to this campaign is the workforce workshop that is being planned for September. This is an opportunity to bring together all the frontline staff that within the law states "here are your required partners and you all work together" but she feels that there is a large disconnect between everyone. Because we all work with various agencies and programs there is not a seamless workforce. Many people, despite being partnered, have no idea who does what and what programs or projects are out there, so we are missing opportunities to work together and get the largest benefits for our participants in all areas. Save the Dates were sent out for the September 27th event being held at the Augusta Civic Center. There are 13 required partners in our region and 3 of those programs are not currently being operated in our region. Erin set aside seating and reached out to everyone on how many seats they have and to get a head count and the names of everyone who will attend on their behalf. She asked Commissioner Fortman to come and provide a brief welcome, which she agreed to do. She has also set up Community Credit Union to provide their presentation on Bridges to Poverty session. The goal is to know who we are serving and how best we can serve them. There will be an explanation of each of the 13 programs and then we will have discussions at the round tables with assigned seating to ensure that one person from each area is at a table to collaborating. There will be cards on the table with examples of situations to help everyone work together and create scenarios on working together with areas of our programs and open eyes on who does what and how we can work together moving forward. Ginny Carrol from MDOL also wants to join and contribute as well.

Laurie asked if Erin considered inviting any of the FSS staff to the event. She stated that she considered it and forgot to include them, Laurie stated that there are multiple voucher programs that have FSS programming within them. Laurie and Erin will connect to discuss this further and create contact lists for who should be included in the invitation for the workshop. Erin stated that some additional funding to cover costs will be needed and the challenge is working with the limited spacing for attendees that we have. Though not all frontline staff will be able to attend, her hope is to get at least one staff member from each area and if it works well and yields good results then it is something that can be held again on a larger scale.

- **NECEC:** The Northeast Clean Energy Council is a nonprofit that Erin spoke with recently and he has worked with the Governor's energy council previously and is interested in getting people to understand all the jobs and what they will be that will open with the clean energy transition coming to Maine and the pathways to those positions. Erin would like to connect him with Razell and the Adult Education system and the 5 Oxford County high school students who completed courses with Adult Ed. Erin recently went to the Workforce Sector Summit and is preparing to go to another one on Friday that is focusing on media sectors. She is looking for Razell to provide more information around this topic and what positions are available and what the future upon graduation looks like.
- **Performance Measures:** Erin has a meeting coming up with MDOL to review and negotiate the performance measures, which happens every two years. There are 5 performance measures that are reviewed which revolve around the success of those we assist. So, when someone exits a program MDOL looks at their success after 6 months, are they still employed, etc. then they look again after 12 months. Another measure they review is the medium income earned by those completing programming, the credential rate of those who earned credentials that we assisted with getting into training. The final measure is measurable skills gains, this includes someone who may be enrolled in the community college system and after their first semester did, they complete the class, did they pass the class that will provide a measurable skills gain from that. Erin just received the performance report from Josh and will send that report to everyone for review, there are tabs for everything including each region and the state and whether you got within 90% of your negotiated goal. CWMWDB got within 90% of almost all the negotiated goals, many of them were over except for the credentialing goals. Some of the reason for this lack is that when someone graduates' program we must get that information from them to upload that credential into MJL to get credit for it. Unfortunately, once some people get the assistance from us that they need they no longer respond to us and so we miss those follow-up connections. Erin has talked to Tom about ways that we can increase that rate, but overall, it looks good.

We were very involved with the negotiated rate that the state had with the federal government and now it's each individual region that is going to do performance measures with the state. They will never be 100% as if it unattainable, so what we do is look back, using Tom, to see what we have done in the past, what's doable and what we can do to raise the rate. Sometimes the state will ask for something that we feel is not attainable and we will come back to them with a suggestion that we feel works better and is a reachable goal. Erin will have the initial meeting this week and then Cathy and Joe Pietroski and Erin will need to look at it for approval.

- **Industry Update in October:** Erin appreciated Chris Waite providing the broadband industry update at the last board meeting. She was looking to see if Cathy would like to discuss her industry at the October board meeting and include another staff member. She feels continuing these industry updates is important and that she and Chris have had continuing conversations about getting training completed and working on the broadband needs he discussed. Cathy said that she can certainly plan on doing an update on her industry in October.

Open Discussion/Any New Business

Erin mentioned that when she was traveling for a meeting in Oxford, she passed by the Iron Workers Local 7 building off the interstate in Clinton. Grant said that that is the home base and where training is completed. Grant said that on Sam recently brought the women in apprenticeship over to learn about the fabricating machines and how to run welding machines and cut metal, and it went very well.

Adjourn

Cathy Witherspoon adjourned the meeting at 9:30am.

Next Operations Committee meeting: Thursday, September, 8:30am-9:30am in-person via ZOOM

Next full board boarding meeting: Thursday, October 24, 2024, 8:30am-10:30am via ZOOM