

Approved by Operations
Committee

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

Board Members Present: Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Chris Winstead, Treasurer & Chair of Resources

Not Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair

Others Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Manager; Patti Saarinen, EMDC Director of Workforce Services

Call to Order

Grant Provost called the meeting to order at 8:37am.

Review and Approve Last Meeting Minutes

VOTED: To approve January 10, 2024, meeting minutes.

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

Provider Update –Patti Saarinen

Enrollments:

<u>WIOA Title</u>	<u>Planned for 3rd Qtr.</u>	<u>Actual (as of 2-9-24)</u>
Adult	109	68
Dis. Wkr.	43	39
Youth (In school)	25	13
Youth (Out of School)	80	52
QUEST	145	61

Adult and Youth enrollment numbers have significantly dropped this program year. The CWM board has done contracts with 3 community-based organizations, and we started seeing referrals from each of them this quarter. It has become a bit of a struggle to determine if we should enroll in Adult or QUEST as many of the participants qualify for both programs, in particular New Mainers who we have traditionally enrolled as adults.

There have been several small layoffs in our 5 counties, and we have sent staff to all the scheduled Rapid Response sessions. Jocko Fuel warehouse in Jay laid off 16 hourly workers, this was the largest.

So far this quarter, which began Jan. 1st, we've had 155 referrals of which 30 were Youth-specific and 8 were QUEST. During this time, we had 21 new registrations: 2 were youth, 12 Adults, 4 DW and 3 QUEST.

QUEST Grant:

We are at 42% of our QUEST enrollments for this quarter. We have had 8 new QUEST referrals and 3 registrations so far this quarter. As stated above, many referrals qualify for both QUEST and Adult, and we try to determine which program will serve them best.

Staff have reconnected with El Rancho De La Vida in Somerset Co. and the Augusta Recovery Reentry Center (ARRC) in Kennebec Co. We have also been asked to present at an Androscoggin sober house through Recovery Connections of Maine. All of these are places with possible QUEST referrals.

Attended the statewide monthly meeting with David Delaney, the QUEST Program Manager for the Bureau of Employment Services. We submitted the second quarterly report on Jan. 23rd.

Employer Projects:

Foundation/PSS/CNA Healthcare Pathway with Lewiston Adult Education; this is a registered apprenticeship training. New cohort started 8/21/23. EMDC is supporting 11 students: 6 Adult, 4 QUEST, 1 DW, 1 OSY

Update – EMDC is supporting another student (new total of 12). Training to conclude in March 2024.

Lewiston Adult Education. Teller training started 12/14/23 – 4/15/24. EMDC supports 5 students: 4 Quest, 1 adult.

Jan 15 – pre-apprenticeship with AFL-CIO. We are working with 5 students who will hopefully go on to apprenticeships; not all of them completed registration in time for the pre-apprenticeship. We are working closely with Sam at the AFL-CIO to get as many students involved as possible. Of the 5, there is 1 Adult and 4 Quest.

January 23 – Spruce Mountain CCMA. EMDC is supporting 6 people: 4 Adult, 2 Quest. All have been registered and enrolled in WIOA.

January 23 – Oxford Hills CDL training. EMDC is funding 4 people: 1 OSY, 3 Adult. 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.

February (no set date) – Oxford Hills CDL-A Daytime class; this is not specifically a project. It is thought that many of these students will have tuition paid in part or full by their current employers.

Upcoming:

March (no set date) – Region 9 CNA training. No other information is available at this time.

March (no set date) – Lewiston Adult Ed. A new Healthcare Pathway training cohort will begin.

Completed:

CNA at Region 9 Adult Education. Training began on 10/10/23. There are 5 students enrolled and supported by EMDC: 3 Adult, 1 QUEST, 1 OSY.

Update 1/9/24 – CNA training concluded on 1/5/24. All 5 students received certificates of completion for class hours and clinicals.

CDL Oxford Hills started on 10/03/23. EMDC is supporting 3 students for this training: 1 DW, 1 OSY, 1 Adult. One of the 3 is only receiving support services (his tuition was paid for by CSSP).

Update 1/10/24 – One person has successfully passed this training (Adult). The other 2 are still working on it.

Other News:

Reed and Reed – Started 2 OJT's for pre-apprenticeship; 1 DW and 1 QUEST

Developed a new work experience site at Focus on Me Learning Center in Rumford; placed a youth on 1.24.24

Met with Spencer Morse, Rolfe Corporation, and are training 2 of their laborers in CDL, looking for a possible OJT for upcoming new hires.

Met with Moody's Collision Center in Lewiston to discuss apprenticeship and OJT.

Met with Rancourt Shoes along with the Maine Apprenticeship program and Lewiston Adult Education regarding their need for hand stitchers. Proposed a plan combing all resources for new training opportunity.

A group composed of MDOL, EMDC, KVCC/UMaine met with DuraMag, The Shyft Group, in Kennebec County. They offered various support regarding employment, retention, and workforce development initiatives.

Working with Oxford Hills Chamber of Commerce Education & Training committee on an upcoming seminar series for local employers.

Three of the newer EMDC staff attended Bridges Out of Poverty training on 2/7/24.

Board membership Update

Erin stated that Sam Hight has joined the board recently and she is currently working with someone from Irving in Dixfield. She recently spoke with Doug Cyr while in Aroostook County and Billy Mitchell regarding possibly joining the board and she will meet with them again next week.

Financial Update – Sara McLaughlin

Sara gave an overview of the budget, the Opioid grant ended in December and all the funding was spent so we will not be paying anything back. WIOA PY22 funding will be ending in a few months and is currently only at 62%. Sara brought up service provider report numbers and there is a difference in reporting enrollments versus the spending she is seeing. Erin explained that she looks at budgets and enrollments after the second quarter in January and feels that both the dislocated and youth funds will be spent, but she is concerned with adult funding. She also mentioned that the discrepancy being seen is due to more time and funding being spent on youth than in other areas. A lot of time dislocated workers are not having funding used on work experience, training, and support services. She mentioned that there are numerous training opportunities that are free, and this has affected spending around dislocated workers. Moving forward Sara will mention to the board that the numbers being seen will not always correlate regarding enrollment and spending. There was question on whether there will be an

increase in spending now that the Opioid grant money is gone, however Erin mentioned that due to the Quest funding there is issue with spending down other funds. With other resources having an abundance of funding there are multiple free opportunities, and she is concerned about spending amounts around adults.

The Quest grant has now taken the place of the Opioid grant and is currently at 89%, with 96% of the local board administrative funds and 88% of the program funds being spent. Erin feels that this will likely be extended as well. ARPA funding is on hold while the federal and state review our practices on the mini grants that were discussed previously. PY23 WIOA will not be spent until PY22 WIOA is spent out and this was recently transitioned a few weeks ago when administrative funds for PY22 WIOA were spent out. Sara gave a reminder that these are formula funds and so if EMDC does not spend all of their funding we will not have to give anything back.

Sara mentioned that on an administrative side there is a fiscal budget of \$448,000 to get through the year, which is almost twice what it normally is due to the mini grants through ARPA. We are at \$141,000 and should be at 58% and are at 32%, but we are close to the budget. Sara has no concerns with any line items. The high-end items being seen are due to front loading expenses. There are a few funds that will carry into next year and therefore she has no concerns.

Erin stated that the mini grants being discussed are the funds that are set aside for the CBO's that are covering the five counties from the RFA that was sent out. These are just beginning and the money will need to be spent by September and December of this current year.

Open Discussion/Any New Business

ED Review: This will be held until the next meeting. Cathy has the evaluation reviews, and she will discuss it out to everyone at the next meeting.

MOU/IFA: Erin gave an update that at this time all but one payment has been received. We are currently waiting for payment from CSBG and Jamie Clifford. She sent an email letting her know when it arrived, but we have not received it yet. Erin is waiting for the state to give the figures to her for her to start negotiating the IFA, she got all the extensions on board except for the Bureau of Rehab services as they are waiting for the final figure as well because they feel they have been overcharged. As soon as that is completed all the signatures will be in place and the IFA will be done by June.

Erin is working with Next Level Now, who have contracted to provide technical assistance. She met with someone who is gathering information for Erin that includes policy templates, examples of customized and incumbent worker training.

Oxford/Somerset tour: Erin took a tour and sent a copy of what she did on that tour. She met with Op Box and toured the business; they make recycled plastic material that is used for multiple things and contracted with Klink for materials. He has contracted to make tiny homes across the country.

Cathy has been very interested in a navigator program and they met with Community Credit Union to discuss expanding on the program they currently have in the Lewiston area and bringing it to other areas.

Erin also met with the Lights Out Gallery in Norway and went to the Recovery Center, the Northern Forest Center and had discussions with everyone on partnering and braiding resources. She also met with the Economic Developer Director in Rumford, Irving, and the Wilton Career Center and CTE out of Mt. Blue regarding their culinary program and getting the students into Sugarloaf positions.

She met with the Director for the Skowhegan Chamber of Commerce and presented at the County Commissioners and met with Christian Savage, the Director for the Somerset Economic Development who has written us into a grant he received for \$25,000 to provide marketing in the Somerset County area.

Erin has used each of these meetings as opportunities to braid resources and connect various partners with each other to widen the available resources being utilized and to make better partnerships within the community. She connected the Lights Out Gallery with A4TD that works at getting seniors 55+ into the workforce and are one the required WIOA partners. She connected the Fit First people with Irving and Doug Cyr since their HR department was very interested in the work Fit First does. She spent time around the Oxford County area and felt it was important to go there and make connections.

Chris mentioned that as Erin is beginning to hear conversations regarding housing that Mike Wilson from the Northern Forest Center and Rob Riley helped deploy financial assets to buy real estate in the Millinocket region and be able do workforce housing are interested in other projects in areas that include the Oxford area. Chris volunteered to make introductions with Mike and Erin to open discussions around partnering projects and funding opportunities.

ARPA Proposal 2: Erin sent everyone the ARPA proposal and she is re-doing a few things and gathering a few items for the state to complete the process. She will send out the RFP for the marketing campaign that will be sent out on Thursday, February 15th. She will include the list of marketing agencies that she is looking to send the RFP to and would like anyone who may have other agencies they know of to send her that information to add to the list as well. She currently has 8 marketing agencies sent to her from the state and she has some from doing a search on her own, at this time she has about 19 agencies she is going to reach out to.

Chris mentioned Ethos that they work with, he stated they are good to work with but are very expensive. Erin mentioned that she did not put the amount available in the RFP to leave room for negotiating pricing. Chris also mentioned Design Labs and Sutherland Weston Marketing, Erin will add them to the list if they are not already there.

Erin was also needing volunteers to be part of the review committee, Chris and Laurie agreed to be part of that committee. She is going to reach out to Ben Hawkins as well, he does some work

for us on the website and other needs from time to time. Chris agrees to not putting the price into the RFP so that they can come to us with pricing and room for negotiating.

Grant asked about high-risk status and was informed that we were off high-risk status with no follow up in July. Erin has the letter from Kim Moore and stated that there is no further follow-up, and the high-risk status will not happen again.

Adjourn

Grant Provost adjourned the meeting at 9:15am.

Motion: Razell Ward **Second:** Chris Winstead **Vote:** All present in favor

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 8:30am-9:30am via ZOOM

Next full board meeting: Thursday, April 25, 2024, 8:30am-10:30am via ZOOM