



**Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Operations Committee Minutes
January 8, 2025**

Approved by Operations
Committee:

Approved electronically
2.13.2025

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Chris Winstead, Treasurer/Chair of Resources

Absent: Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member/Youth Committee Chair

Others Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Analyst; Sam Giasson, Youth Services Director, EMDC

Call to Order

Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:33am.

Review and Approval of the Last Meeting Minutes

Voted: Approval of the December 11, 2024, meeting minutes.

Motion: Grant Provost

Second: Razell Ward

Vote: All present in favor

Financial Update-Sara

Sara presented the most current budget overview through December 31st. She explained that she and Erin have been closely monitoring spending with a few concerns. When reviewing the administrative budget, we have a budget of about \$474,000 which is double what we normally have due to the marketing contract and the CBO mini grants. We are currently at 48% of the budget through December, which is pretty perfect for where Sara likes us to be. Looking at the individual line items in the budget Sara has no concerns currently.

She moved into the overall board spending, that represents the five contracts that we have and the start and end date for each one. This overview shows all the funding available to us via these contracts and currently we have just under 6million dollars available to us and of that we have spent 1.81million. Sara re-ordered how the budgets are broken down because we got the contract modification for the Career grant that is now ending March 2025. This is the contract where we received a small increase of about \$10,000 and we are at 96% and we will have no trouble with spending out the remaining admin portion of the grant. Sara and Erin will have discussions with EMDC on whether they will be able to spend their \$9,000. Erin jumped in at this point to inform everyone that she does not see a problem with EMDC spending their portion as well since they need to have a “user training” that will involve a lot of various staff members, recruiting and participating that will quickly eat up the funds. Sara changed the budget to reflect on this spending, taking that amount off the yellow risk status that she originally had it listed under. Sara explained that she is closely watching both the PY23 WIOA funds and the Quest funds regarding spending on the EMDC side of the budget. She explained that the board has spent out all the PY23 WIOA funds and has started spending on the PY24 funds. However, EMDC has only spent about 48% of their PY23 WIOA funds and cannot begin to spend the PY24 funds until the PY23 are completely spent out with almost 1million dollars left to spend. When looking at the breakdown of spending, EMDC would need to spend \$164,000 monthly to spend out those funds. When looking at recent drawdowns from October-December it is possible they may be able to spend out those funds, but she will continue to watch that spending. She went on to review her concerns with the Quest spending by EMDC as well stating that the funds need to be spent by the end date of September 30, 2025 and EMDC has currently spent only 42% of their funds. The board can only spend equal to the program spending, so we can’t spend our funds if they don’t spend theirs. She broke down the needs for that spending and explained that EMDC will need to spend approximately \$78,000 monthly to complete the funds before the end date in September. Between October and December, they are only averaging drawdowns of around \$25,000 a month, which would leave funds unspent on the completion of the contract. She and Erin are having discussions with EMDC about coming up with a plan and showing them reassurance on how the spending will happen.

When reviewing the other contracts Sara has no concerns with spending currently. Erin said that she has been keeping an eye on Quest since February 2024 regarding EMDC spending. Erin stated that she takes data from reports that show her all the participants and breaks it down into quarters, and how many are enrolled each quarter from the goal of 158. Ginny Carrol stated that meeting enrollment goals in a “special” National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) grants is key. The last

time Erin checked there were 101 enrolled, which means 19 monthly enrollments need to happen and this has only been met once since the beginning of the grant. She told EMDC that they need to increase spending and enrollment to meet the grant needs and ensure there are no funds left on the table. Razell asked for clarification of enrollment numbers again. Erin explained that we are currently at 101 out of 158 leaving 57 slots that need to be filled, which would mean enrolling 19 people per quarter to meet the goal of 158 by the end of the fourth quarter in September. Part of the problem is that participants need to meet eligibility for services and not everyone who is eligible for services is also eligible for Quest. EMDC has made Quest a priority for enrollment and expenditures. Erin is reaching out to Sam to see if there is anything that he can do, like the Union Construction Academy that was held last year to work on enrollments within a county jail in our region. Part of the problem with working with the jail is that people who are incarcerated are there for any length of time and are hard to connect with.

Grant said that connecting with Bruce on the workforce board would be good to start a discussion around how to make something like this partnership and enrollment for incarcerated individuals happen. Erin stated that she has been in contact with Bruce constantly and has already had a few meetings with him and others. The Maine Re-Entry Network is one of our CBOs for the mini grants and have already sent us a lot of referrals but none of them turned into enrollments. This prompted a meeting between them and EMDC to discuss how we can better ensure that referrals from them will turn into enrollment and meet those eligibility requirements. Grant explained that he got 2 participants from Pharoah’s House who were incarcerated with the county jail, and they may have information on how to partner and make those connections work in our region. Erin is exploring working with the recovery houses in our region as well as with new Mainers to see how we can work on enrollments. MEIRS, another CBO mini grant recipient, has a 39% enrollment rate from referrals. Cathy asked what the eligibility requirements are for Quest, Erin said she will send them out to everyone for review but said that they are focused on a few areas that include justice involved, new Mainers, women with children and people in recovery. They are interested in Infrastructure, Health Care and clean energy, which thus far we have done very well with Infrastructure and Health Care. Grant stated that Roxanne Heuskel with Adult Ed is starting a green energy job training program for new Mainers and that there could be opportunities to find some participants eligible for the Quest grant. Cathy asked to clarify that people may not qualify due to the area of interest. Erin said that anyone can be helped, regardless of the occupation they seek. However, the focus is on infrastructure, green energy, and health care, sectors where many jobs are going unfilled. Razell wanted to know if participants need to live in the region or they need to work in the region. Erin said if they live in the region they can work and train outside the region, if someone is incarcerated, they need to consider what address they are using for eligibility. Grant stated that this was the case for his example, who lived in Rome but worked in Portland.

Provider Report-Sam

Enrollments:

<u>WIOA Title</u>	<u>Planned for PY24 3rd Qtr.</u>	<u>Actual (as of 1/6/25)</u>
Adult	148	146
Dis. Wkr.	55	42
Youth (In school)	22	12
Youth (Out of School)	65	60
QUEST	158	101

EMDC finished out the 2nd quarter strongly. Our Adult, Dislocated Worker and Out-of-School-Youth quarterly goals were all met; with In-School Youth numbers at 92.31%. We are off to a great start for the 3rd quarter: 98.7% of our Adult enrollments, 76.4% of Dislocated Worker, 92.3% of our Out-of-School-Youth, and 54.5% of In-School Youth. Given that we are one week into the quarter, we are expected to achieve our goals and then some. Since November 11th (as of 1/7/25) we’ve had 399 referrals, of which 22.3% were from BES. It is noted that we have received 247 online inquiry forms from the My Maine Future landing page, over half (61.9%) of the referrals during this period. Given the large volume of inquiries, EMDC has designated one WDS to respond to them. The WDS who has been designated as the point person for all BES referrals has continued this process, which is going well. We are in the process of hiring for several positions in the region, including a Director of Workforce, Workforce Development Specialist, and two Workforce Support Specialists.

QUEST Grant:

We continue to work towards increasing QUEST enrollments and are at 63.3% of the total goal (101 out of 158). As often stated, many referrals qualify for both QUEST and Adult or DW, but we are diligently focusing on QUEST enrollments this quarter. Please see Other News for a list of places staff have visited this past month; many of these have possible QUEST referrals.

Employer Projects:

Spruce Mountain Adult Education. Currently in progress. CMA training with classes and clinicals being done in conjunction with Franklin Memorial Hospital. Class dates are 11/5/24 – 03/14/25 with clinicals beginning 03/17/25. They will do 160 hours of clinical and then sit for the NHA exam. EMDC enrolled 6 students: 4 Adults, 1 OSY, and 1 QUEST.

Maine AFL-CIO: Completed. Maine Union Tradeswomen Program, a five-week intensive training that will prepare women for careers at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and apprenticeships with the Ironworkers, Plumbers and Pipefitters, Sheet Metal Workers, and Laborers. Four weeks (120 hours) of intensive structural welding training followed by an additional week of instruction with the Union Construction Academy. Class dates: 11/11/24 – 12/13/24. There was no cost to participate, and stipends were available for qualified participants. EMDC enrolled 5 participants: 2 Adults (CWM); three others were enrolled in the Northeast region. While the Pre-Apprenticeship has ended, the students are now seeking apprenticeships.

In Progress:

Foundation/PSS/CNA Healthcare Pathway with Lewiston Adult Education; this is a registered apprenticeship training. A new Mod 3 (CNA) round started on 12/9/24; EMDC has 24 students; 18 Adults, 2 QUEST, and 2 Youth.

Skowhegan Adult Education. CDL training started on 9/17/24. EMDC contacted 12 students and only 1, an Adult, opted to receive services; tuition was covered, and most did not feel they needed the supportive services.

Spruce Mountain Adult Education. Culinary Arts training started on 10/1/24; this is a 16-week training. EMDC enrolled 2 Youth.

Augusta Adult Education and Maine Veteran's Homes. CNA training started on 9/16/2024. EMDC enrolled 2 Youth (this is not a project for this round).

Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education. CDL- 7 students from 4 past cohorts are still in training or drive time.

Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education. CDL training starting 10/8/2024. EMDC enrolled 4 students: 3 Adults and 1 QUEST.

Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education. C N A training starting 10/7/2024. EMDC has enrolled 1 student.

Completed:

Region 9 Adult Education. CNA training started on 9/10/24 and ended 11/13/24. EMDC enrolled 4 students: 2 QUEST, 1 Adult, and 1 Youth. All 4 students passed the CNA state exam.

Skowhegan Adult Education. CNA training at Mt. St. Joes started on 9/17/24 and ended on 11/13/24. EMDC enrolled 8 students: 1 Dislocated Worker, 1 OSY, 2 QUEST, and 4 Adults.

Upcoming:

There are several upcoming projects set for this winter/spring: Oxford Hills/Nezinscot Adult Education (CDL and CNA); Maine Veteran's Homes (CNA); Lewiston Adult Education (Teller Training and Trades Training Mod 2); Skowhegan Adult Education (CDL).

Other News:

Community Partners we met with:

- MSAD #52
- MERN
- Multiple Adult Education offices
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Maine Dairy Association
- Somerset County Connect
- MEIRS (Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services)
- Maine Veteran's Homes
- Washington County Community College
- Skowhegan Outdoors
- Job Corps
- Victor Esposito -Waterville
- BES in Augusta, Lewiston, and Wilton
- Lisbon High School
- Dirigo High School
- Molly Ockett School
- Maine Agrability with Maine Voc Rehab
- Center for Entrepreneurial Studies
- Unique Systems Skills
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension
- Visible Edge

Staff Training: WorkforceGPS Apprenticeship Opportunities for Individuals Reentering Their Communities Post Incarceration, EMDC Workforce Trainings (Financial Aid, MSGs and Credentials, Business Services, Teams Training, Progressive Employment), New Ventures Match Savings webinar.

Businesses we met with: Madison Public Library, Daddio's Restaurant, Ware Butler, T&L Garage, Tractor Supply, CMMC, Angstrom, Reed & Reed, Fredrickson Farm, Dirigo Veterinary Care, West Minot Mill Work, RSU #16 Central Office, Somerset Humaine Society, Randy's Automotive, Turcotte's Auto Repair, Messer.

EMDC's Director of Youth Services attended the 25th Annual NAWDB Youth Symposium in Phoenix, AZ 11/18-11/20. A youth customer successfully completed an OJT WE at Give IT Get IT. Currently working on securing an OJT for another youth participant with Messer in Westbrook.

Youth Work Experiences are underway at the Molly Ockett School, Tree Street, MEIRS, Center for Entrepreneurial Studies (2), and the Somerset Humaine Society.

EMDC staff completed the Opportunity Ready facilitator training. This is a curriculum that EMDC will be utilizing to teach cohorts in an effort to improve work readiness.

Updates-Erin

- **WIOA Reauthorization:** The WIOA Reauthorization was going to be thrown into the continuing resolution and did not pass in the first or second one. Then Congress made a skinny continuing resolution where it was taken out and that one did pass. But currently, we still have no information to move forward. There are 72 programs that have funds attached to them that have not been reauthorized by Congress and the Doge Committee made a statement that they could take all 72 and eliminate them. These programs include WIOA, Veteran services, Head Start, etc. so that will never pass due to the importance of those programs. Erin sent an email to all the senatorial and representatives in Maine reiterating the facts that 50% for training plus 25% that the state can take off the top will definitely affect numerous programs. Erin forwarded this letter to everyone and will continue to update on any new information.
- **IFA Update:** The sticking point was including usage that was based on square footage and the Bureau of Rehab Services will not sign off on anything without consideration for usage. The usage information we received from BES is incorrect because it is not a complete count, so Erin asked Sara to use that to create something that will move forward.
- **Marketing Campaign/Transportation:** Erin followed up with what Sam had previously stated that the marketing campaign is providing a lot of referrals. She reached out to Loretta for a number on how many people from the campaign have enrolled in services which she has not received yet but will get that to everyone by the end of the week. The numbers look great, but not all the 200 Sam mentioned are youth and not all of them are eligible for services, so this is the most important information to know.

In regard to the transportation piece, Erin met with GoMaine and she is putting together an RFA for businesses/business partners to apply for funding to solve their employee transportation issues—could be van pools or bikes, etc. The RFA will include utilizing GoMaine's survey and heat maps to understand the needs of employees to determine the best plan for the applicant. Erin will get the rest of her part completed to prepare for a February launch if possible.

- **NSF Engines Grant:** Erin was in Brunswick the previous day with about 50 other entities and was able to discuss proposals and learn more about other programs working on this and how it all fits together. She is going to re-do the proposal and get it to the other workforce boards and adult ed. Erin mentioned that she was surprised there was no one there from the community college system and Chris said moving forward to include him in all information like this and he will ensure that either he or someone will be there. She mentioned that the information was sent to Deans and not to other staff, which Chris confirmed probably made everyone think of

research and not the ancillary careers that are attached to it. Erin said that there won't be money coming to our region, but she is counting on some of our businesses involved in the supply chain.

- **Tradeswomen Collective:** Erin went to the collective meeting and is trying to get Laura Fortman and the Governor to join in the May event as part of her initiative to get more women into trades. We are applying for the WANTO grant again that will be released in April and will be due in the beginning of June. She is working with tradeswomen to ensure that what we think they need is truly what they need.
- **Board Membership:** Erin mentioned that we need to look at active board members and those who are not or have not been active for lengthy periods of time and replace them with involved members. We have some members who have not been active for more than 3 years and she feels that based on the reports that she sends out shows a need for someone from education on the board. She called Ginny and was told that a Superintendent would fit this need, Chris said that someone that would be a good person to reach out to would be Jackman interim Superintendent Kelly MacFadyen. Cathy recommended SAD58 Superintendent Laura Columbia and feels she may be interested. Erin will reach out to each of them and will update everyone. Chris said he knows a few people in the Jackman Leadership Group, and he is happy to make connections with Erin if she would like. Erin said she would love to meet them as we have not made any connections in this area. There is also a need for a Vice Chair of the Operations Committee so if anyone has any suggestions reach out to Erin so that she can follow up.
- **Local Plan:** Erin sent out a breakdown that Carrie created using Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT that includes 6- plans from Maine that created a list of all the commonalities. We will be using these to create our local plan and ensure they are included, as well as looking at advanced manufacturing and training that are available in our area and the space economy that is growing. Erin will present at the full board meeting to better explain the elements that she is looking at currently. She is hoping to have a draft plan by the April meeting that everyone can read. She investigated the cost of having someone else write the local plan, but after researching and having EMDC create it last time at \$20,000 she feels that she can write it herself. She reached out to Lee, and we can use EMDC for the data portion and she reached out to Mark McNerney for ways to utilize the CWI for information also. Chris stated that if EMDC looks for payment he has access to all the information and Erin can pull reports and data for free, he will also see if he can add her to the license. He also stated that both CM and KV have been getting into the advanced manufacturing training doing a lot of work with Bath Ironworks and Portsmouth and increasing their training. He feels that a conversation with both Dwayne and Elizabeth to see how to bring those from Fairfield and Auburn and into the more rural areas working with Adult Ed and the CTE partners. She agreed and said that having Mike Roughton from the Manufacturer's Association of Maine there would be helpful as they have done a study with businesses on their needs and such. She mentioned to Chris that she was going to get us together with them last time we met regarding short-term training and how we can partner better. He said that he was thinking of a conversation with the community colleges and adult ed regarding the Quest numbers to discuss funding sources and what's available and how to mix funding. He feels that communication between adult ed and the community colleges will assist students with needs and assistance for pathways and costs that they are unaware there is funding for.

Adjourn

Cathy Witherspoon adjourned the meeting at 9:30am

Next Full Board meeting: Thursday, January 23, 2025, 8:30am-10:30am via ZOOM

Next Operations Committee meeting: Wednesday, February 8, 2025, 8:30am-9:30am via ZOOM