



**Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Workforce Board Meeting**

April 23, 2026

Board approved during July 23, 2026, quarterly meeting

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Sue LeClair; Diane Frigon; Charlie Woodworth; Brandi Farrington; Bobbi Avery; Razell Ward, Secretary; Kelly Aho; Billi Mitchell; Laura Columbia; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Chris Winstead, Treasurer & Chair of Resources; Chris Waite; Tom Stevens; Erica Watson

Board Members Absent: Patricia Rumsey; Casey Maloney

Staff Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Manager

Others Present: Tom Fernands, EMDC; Jaida Bolstridge, EMDC; Heather Price, EMDC; Josh Brown, MDOL; Joe Pietroski, Kennebec County Commissioner; Robert Sezak, Somerset County Commissioner

Welcome

Cathy opened the meeting at 8:31 am. Since there were no new people, she dispense with introductions.

VOTED: To approve January 22, 2026, meeting minutes as written.

Motion: Razell Ward

Second: Chris Winstead

Vote: All in Favor

Financial Update: PY25 (Erin Benson as Sara McLaughlin is on vacation)

Erin stated that two contracts are active now: ARPA and WIOA PY25. The PY24 contract has been fully spent out. We are 80% of the way through ARPA and that ends in September. There is a thoughtful plan in place to ensure that funds are fully spent before then. These are funds being managed internally, and contracted out to various agencies and companies. As you may remember, ARPA covered the Community-Based Organizations program where MEIRS, MERN and WMCA were given mini grants to do outreach. It paid for the marketing campaign focused on disconnected youth, Fit First, an assessment tool that is being used by EMDC for youth participants and YLAT for foster youth. The remaining will be spent on transportation mini grants, which have already been contracted, and mostly spent out. After recently spending out the admin funds for PY24, CWMWDB is now beginning to use PY25 funds and has spent around \$28,000. The service provider is approximately halfway through PY25 funds. EMDC has until June 30, 2027, but they will need to be frugal in order to make the funds last through June 30 of this year. They will need a transfer of funds from DW to Adult, which we will get to after the financial report. Overall, we are 48% through that contract. No red flags right now of leaving money on the table. Moving on to the administrative detail, through the end of March we are ¾ through the end of the year. We have spent 74% of the budget if we include the ARPA contractual funds. If we remove them, as they skew things, looking at just the administrative budget, we are 57% through the budget. So, we are a little behind, but that is not a problem. It just means if we underspend, we can move more money into the next budget year. We do have some major expenses coming up. The local plan, which we contracted

with EMDC to write, will be almost \$20,000. And there is fiscal monitoring that will be done in May that will be less than \$5,000. We expect to finish the year at or below budget, but not this much below budget. More money will come in at the start of PY26, which is July 1, 2026.

Spending by Contract (Cumulative) through: 4/8/2026

Contract	Start	End	Actual			Budget			Remaining			% Spent		
			local board	EMDC	Total	local board	EMDC	Total	local board	EMDC	Total	local board	EMDC	Total
QUEST	10/1/2022	9/30/2025	\$ 189,969	\$ 1,169,725	\$ 1,359,694	\$ 189,969	\$ 1,169,725	\$ 1,359,694	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	100%	100%	100%
ARPA	6/1/2023	9/30/2026	\$ 397,042	\$ -	397,042	500,000	-	500,000	102,958	-	102,958	79%	0%	79%
PY24 WIOA	7/1/2024	6/30/2026												
Adult			\$ 66,902	\$ 602,112	669,014	66,902	602,112	669,014	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%
Youth			\$ 72,457	\$ 652,107	724,564	72,457	652,107	724,564	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%
Dislocated Worker			\$ 41,550	\$ 373,956	415,506	41,550	373,956	415,506	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%
			180,909	1,628,175	1,809,084	180,909	1,628,175	1,809,084	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%
PY25 WIOA	7/1/2025	6/30/2027												
Adult			\$ -	\$ 344,653	344,653	61,556	554,000	615,556	61,556	209,347	270,903	0%	62%	56%
Youth			\$ 27,495	\$ 336,698	364,193	64,300	578,699	642,999	36,805	242,001	278,806	43%	58%	57%
Dislocated Worker			\$ -	\$ 77,779	77,779	37,502	337,489	374,991	37,502	259,710	297,212	0%	23%	21%
			27,495	759,130	786,625	163,358	1,470,188	1,633,546	135,863	711,058	846,921	17%	52%	48%
Total			\$ 795,415	\$ 3,557,029	\$ 4,352,445	\$ 1,034,236	\$ 4,268,088	\$ 5,302,324	\$ 238,821	\$ 711,058	\$ 949,880	77%	83%	82%

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board Approved Local Board Budget July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Actuals through 3/31/26

Funding Overview (Multi-Year)	Formula		Discretionary		Total
	2024 WIOA	2025 WIOA	QUEST	ARPA	
Start Date	7/1/24	7/1/25	10/1/22	6/1/23	
End Date	6/30/26	6/30/27	9/30/25	9/30/26	
Award Amount	\$ 1,809,084	\$ 1,608,546	\$ 1,359,694	\$ 500,000	\$ 5,277,324
Local Board	180,909	163,358	189,969	500,000	1,034,236
Service Provider	1,628,175	1,445,188	1,169,725	-	4,243,088
Actual Spent as of 6/30/25	78,781	-	1,105,399	166,634	1,350,815
Local Board	78,781	-	175,291	166,634	420,706
Service Provider	-	-	930,108	-	930,108
Estimated Reserve for FY 26+	-	45,584	-	66,673	112,257
Local Board	-	45,584	-	66,673	112,257
Service Provider (Estimated)	-	-	-	-	-
FY 25-26	1,730,303	1,562,962	254,295	266,693	3,814,253
Local Board	102,128	117,774	14,678	266,693	501,273
Service Provider (Estimated)	1,628,175	1,445,188	239,616	-	3,312,979

Labor Allocation

65%

10%

24%

100%

Detailed Local Board Budget	2024 WIOA	2025 WIOA	QUEST	ARPA	Total
	2024 WIOA	2025 WIOA	QUEST	ARPA	Total
Salaries	33,702	38,865	11,527	26,880	110,973
Fringe Benefits	9,214	10,626	3,151	7,349	30,340
Travel	2,820	3,252	-	1,429	7,500
Supplies	1,161	1,339	-	-	2,500
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Outreach, Mktg & Advertising	-	-	-	-	-
Bank Fees	232	268	-	-	500
Conferences	3,032	3,496	-	972	7,500
Contractual	3,269	3,769	-	229,287	236,325
Dues and Subscriptions	1,161	1,339	-	-	2,500
Insurance	1,393	1,607	-	-	3,000
Organization Expense	16	19	-	-	35
Payroll Processing Fees	1,625	1,875	-	-	3,500
Professional Fees	-	-	-	-	-
Audit	6,037	6,963	-	-	13,000
Fiscal Mgmt.	27,169	31,331	-	-	58,500
Fiscal Monitoring	2,322	2,678	-	-	5,000
Local Plan	-	-	-	-	-
Postage & Delivery	46	54	-	-	100
Rent	2,890	3,333	-	777	7,000
Software	5,109	5,891	-	-	11,000
Telephone and Network	929	1,071	-	-	2,000
Total, Administrative	102,128	117,774	14,678	266,693	501,273

Budget without Contractual - Program

98,859

114,005

14,678

37,406

264,948

151,473

57%

113,476

3/31/2026
YTD Actuals

YTD	% budget	Remaining	Forecast	Projected
YTD	% budget	Remaining	Apr-Jun	Surplus
59,841	54%	51,132	22,500	28,632
24,946	82%	5,394	9,380	(3,986)
2,066	28%	5,434	-	5,434
633	25%	1,867	-	-
(1,527)	0%	1,527	-	-
341	68%	159	-	-
1,545	21%	5,955	-	5,955
218,084	92%	10,241	-	-
1,258	50%	1,242	-	-
2,199	73%	801	-	-
-	0%	35	-	-
2,379	68%	1,121	-	-
-	0%	13,000	-	-
45,000	77%	13,500	-	-
-	0%	5,000	-	-
-	-	-	19,860	(19,860)
94	94%	6	-	-
4,801	69%	2,199	-	-
6,621	60%	4,379	-	-
1,277	64%	723	-	-
369,557	74%	131,716	-	16,176

Service Provider Report

Heather Price reviewed enrollment in all three programs, goals vs. actual. In every program, 3rd quarter actuals exceeded the 4th quarter goals. She also shared that while enrollment is high, not all counties are seeing their appropriate percentage of that enrollment. EMDC is working hard to ensure that all counties are being supported through continuous outreach to new and current partners.

ADULT Service Summary	Q1 Goal	Q1 Actual	Q2 Goal	Q2 Actual	Q3 Goal	Q3 Actual	Q4 Goal	Q4 Actual
A. New Enrollments	24	107	48	197	71	294	95	
B. Carry-Ins	93	91	93	91	93	90	93	90
C. Total Adult Enrollments (A+B)	117	198	141	288	164	384	188	
YOUTH Service Summary (Aged 14-21)	Q1 Goal	Q1 Actual	Q2 Goal	Q2 Actual	Q3 Goal	Q3 Actual	Q4 Goal	Q4 Actual
A. New In-School Enrollments	3	15	6	22	9	27	13	
B. In-School Carry-Ins	16	17	16	17	16	17	16	17
C. New Out-of-School Enrollments	6	23	13	44	19	70	25	
D. Out-of-School Carry-Ins	62	51	62	51	62	51	62	51
E. Total Enrollments (A+B+C+D)	87	106	97	134	106	165	116	
DW Service Summary	Q1 Goal	Q1 Actual	Q2 Goal	Q2 Actual	Q3 Goal	Q3 Actual	Q4 Goal	Q4 Actual
A. New Enrollments	11	13	22	28	33	45	43	
B. Carry-Ins	18	25	18	25	18	23	18	24
C. Total DW Enrollments (A+B)	29	38	40	53	51	68	61	

Enrollment percentage breakdown by county			
County	Goal Percentage	Actual PY 2025	Actual PY 2025 Enrolled
Androscoggin	25.40%	45.10%	337
Franklin	15.40%	9.50%	71
Kennebec	25.20%	14.50%	108
Oxford	14.40%	19.50%	146
Somerset	19.50%	11.40%	85

Heather mentioned that EMDC received over 500 referrals during the 3rd quarter and reviewed the current cohorts in the region. They include CDL programs in Skowhegan and Oxford Hills; Teller Training in Lewiston; CNA programs in Franklin County, Central Maine Health, Skowhegan, Oxford Hills, Central Lincoln-Maine Health, Augusta Adult Education, and Spruce Mountain; PSS/CNA in Lewiston; PSS in Franklin County; CRMA in Oxford Hills; Phlebotomy in Spruce Mountain and Franklin County; CCMA in Gray-New Gloucester; Heat Pump/Solar Installer in Oxford Hills; and a Pre-Apprenticeship/OJT with Reed & Reed. Among all WIOA programs, 74 participants are being supported through these programs.

Charlie Woodworth asked who were included in the percentages of participants served in each county. Heather said it reflected participants in all WIOA programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth (both In-School and Out-of-School). Charlie noted two stress areas in Franklin and Somerset, and what are the strategies to better serve those counties. Heather said that EMDC is looking to find more community partners and businesses with whom to work. Erin said that she and Heather met recently with the Franklin County Children's Task Force, who work with parents of children on training and employment opportunities. They will likely become a good referral partner. Erin is also planning a strategy with Franklin County Jail and local businesses to create a pathway from incarceration to employment. EMDC has also worked closely with Franklin County Adult Education to support people in their trainings. Charlie said they are teaching digital skills in the jail and offered to connect Erin with their instructor. Heather mentioned that EMDC works closely with WMCA, who often send in referrals. Tom Fernands mentioned that transportation is a major barrier to employment in Franklin and Somerset counties. Tom also reminded the board that WIOA requires participants be available to work, so connecting with incarcerated people must begin after their release.

Heather also reviewed upcoming cohorts, which are smaller than usual due to the time of year. They include PSS/CNA, Phlebotomy, CRMA, CMMA/OJT, Pre-Apprenticeship/OJT through Educate Maine, Union Construction and Metal Trades, and 3 AGC Construction Academies at EMCC, KVCC, and CMCC. EMDC continues to meet with businesses to determine training needs. Heather also mentioned all the

partner events that EMDC plans to attend across the region to connect with job seekers and businesses. Heather shared the following success story:

MJL PID: 980788 was found eligible for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programming as an Adult. At enrollment participant identified an interest in pursuing a career in the medical field as a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant.

Upon enrollment, she was working full-time as a cashier at Walmart earning approximately \$18 an hour. Her work history had been primarily in retail, but she had worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant prior to moving to Maine.

Her strengths include a strong work history, prior experience working in the healthcare field, independent transportation, stable housing, income from employment and an employer supportive of her goals. Her barriers were primarily financial and a lack of additional education needed to obtain high wage in demand employment in the healthcare field.

She was accepted into an apprenticeship program through Educate Maine at Central Maine Health as a Medical Assistant Apprentice. WIOA Adult funds supported: On-the-Job Training (OJT) wages at Central Maine Health, scrubs, shoes, laptop, laptop bag, headphones, blood pressure cuff, stethoscope and a watch with a second's hand.

Participant successfully completed the Medical Assistant Apprenticeship and has transitioned into the role of Certified Clinical Medical Assistant at Central Maine Health Urology full-time where she is now making \$20.75 an hour. That is an estimated annual wage increase of almost \$6,000. In addition to an increase in wage, participant is receiving health insurance that is fully paid by her employer.

Cathy thanked Heather for her report and asked Erin to review the Request for Transfer. Erin mentioned the significance of enrollment numbers. EMDC met the overall Adult goal for the program year after the second quarter. They have served more than twice the number of participants as targeted. In the Youth program they were two short of meeting the year end goal at the end of the 2nd quarter. This has led to many more people being helped, but has also put a significant strain on finances. Erin has been monitoring EMDC's draws, and has been expressing concern since November through emails to EMDC leadership. The latest one was sent April 10, a copy of which was shared with board materials. Based on the average bi-weekly Adult draw and the remaining number of draws through the end of the program year, Erin estimated that EMDC would run out of Adult funds in May. Erin explained to the board that Adult and Dislocated Worker funds are part of the same funding stream, so money can be transferred between programs if there is a need. In the April 10th email sent to Chief Operations Officer Jennifer King, Erin pointed out the available balance of \$230,700.42 in the Dislocated Worker fund. Submitting the average DW draw, based on the previous 5, throughout the rest of the program year would leave a surplus of \$130,181.12. Erin suggested transferring money from DW to Adult. Erin explained the process to the board, which is the use of a state form that must be approved by the board and sent to the MDOL with board minutes acknowledging this approval. MDOL must then sign off. Erin shared the form, which outlines the amount of Adult funds already expended, and the request to transfer \$120,000 from DW to Adult. EMDC is not serving many Dislocated Workers because there are jobs available and they don't need the help. They want to get back to work quickly and many companies are eager to hire them. This transfer of funds is not about cutting off the knees of one population to serve another. It is about spending money where the greatest need exists. Brandi Farrington asked if the

average was being maintained, or could there be a drop—where was it trending. Erin explained that she removed the low and high ends and used the numbers that were consistently around the \$56,000+ average. Tom mentioned that expenditures were hard to pinpoint as you never knew who would walk through the door and what they would need. Typically they would see a drop in the summer, but post pandemic that has shifted. EMDC is not seeing a slowdown. In central western Maine, EMDC supports mostly short term trainings that aren't bound by the time frames of traditional college semesters.

VOTED: To approve a transfer of funds from Dislocated Worker to Adult in the amount of \$120,000.

Motion: Chris Winstead

Second: Brandi Farrington

Vote: All in Favor

Response to Financial Monitoring

Erin explained that both programmatic and financial monitoring is required by the federal government: the state must monitor the regional boards, and boards must monitor their service providers. The state has not engaged in financial monitoring for four years and was cited by the USDOL during its monitoring. This is supposed to happen yearly. To resolve the finding, the state hired Eide Bailey to undertake the task. Eide Bailey reviewed financial information associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity grants awarded to the Central Western Maine Workforce Board (CWMWDB) for state fiscal year 2023 and 2024. At the conclusion of that monitoring, CWMWDB received a letter dated November 24, 2025 outlining a list of findings with a request to respond by December 19, 2025. The letter identified questioned costs totaling \$7,909, to which we were given the opportunity to provide documentation to support these questioned costs or refund \$7,909 to the Maine Department of Labor, using non-federal funds, by December 19, 2025. Erin and Sara worked together to respond to these questioned costs, presenting information that would absolve the board of any costs in a letter dated December 19, 2025. Erin sent a copy of both letters to the board. After hearing nothing for several months, Erin received an email on April 8 from Marilyn Leinbach, Director of the Security and Employment Service Center in the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, stating that “upon review of the response provided and further discussion with Eide Bailly, the finding remains.” She offered to discuss it further. Erin reached out to Marilyn and set up a meeting for April 29. Erin and Sara feel that the board will not owe money. Chris mentioned that this same company has been doing oversight for MJRP, and he has a dedicated full-time staff member to pull all the information they are requesting. He agreed that they are treating it like an audit rather than a review and feels they are challenging to work with. Chris offered to attend the meeting on April 29.

Board membership/Leadership (Chair/Vice Chair)

Cathy mentioned that the board had a vice chair. Dick Kropp, the relatively new HR director of Central Maine Healthcare (CMH), offered to assume the position at the January board meeting. However, CMH was purchased by an out of state healthcare conglomerate, and Dick's position was eliminated. Cathy has expressed an interest in stepping down from the chair position, but will stay on through December. Both the Chair and Vice Chair position must come from the business representation on the board. Erin will be reaching out to all the business representatives to understand their desire/ability to fill these roles.

Local Plan RFP

In March, Erin sent an email to CWM chambers and an economic development entity to request help in disseminating an electronic survey. Three responded: Mid-Maine Chamber, LA Chamber and JLLF

Chamber. All three distributed the survey through email, newsletters, and/or social media. Erin sent the survey to the board and requested they pass along to other businesses they knew, and Erin sent it to 36 businesses she has met with personally. Two focus groups have been scheduled in Waterville and Lewiston on May 1 and May 4 respectively. Jaida said there were 32 responses as of this morning. There is representation from each of the region's five counties, but only one response each from Oxford and Franklin counties. She is hoping more businesses will respond in these counties. Jaida shared some trends she is seeing from the responses. There is strong representation from manufacturing, industrial, and healthcare businesses as expected. 26 of the 32 expect business growth/expansion over the next few years. Core workforce challenges identified: 21 said attracting workers; 16 said retaining workers; 14 said competition between employers; and 15 said lack of technical or trade skills. Top skills gap identified was soft skills, followed by technical and trade skills, and digital skills. When asked about general workforce utilization, 18 mentioned job fairs; 14 posted jobs on Maine Job Link; 8 On-the-Job trainings and 8 apprenticeships. The previous week, EMDC sent out a participant survey to 600 past WIOA participants. There are 23 responses to date with representation from every county with Franklin being the lowest (2). EMDC will resend to generate more responses. Most common services received were training and certifications (12); career counseling (6); and job searches (3). Key findings: 20 of 23 connected to training/education; 19 of 23 reported improved job skills; and 18 of 23 feel more prepared for employment. Top barriers reported: lack of training/credentials (8); mental health /stress (6); having a disability (5); transportation (3). Gaps in support included additional money for training, employer connections and networking, mental health support, and career counseling. These findings are important as they provide the bulk of information that will inform the actual strategies for the plan. Jaida stated that anything learned from these surveys and the focus groups will shaping the direction of the board's work over the next four years. Tom gave an overview of the data, which board members were sent via email. The regional data presented covered an industry and occupational snapshot, population demographics, education levels, employers by size, labor force participation rate, transportation access, homelessness, and substance use disorder. All of this data will be used to inform strategies over the next four years. Erin stated that the plan must be short and to the point. It must outline the challenges and ways the board and its service provider will address those issues. Every board meeting we can assess progress. Several board members offered to send out the business survey to acquire more feedback.

Executive Director's Report

Erin provided a new board member orientation to Erica, Laura, Casey, and Patricia. She thanked them for their participation and offered to share the presentation with anyone who was interested.

Kelly Aho has agreed to take the chair duties of the Youth Committee.

Erin attended two conferences in March: the Jobs for the Future (JFF)/Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) grant called Fair Chance to Advance (FC2A) and the National Association of Workforce Boards. The FC2A meeting included Labor, Education and Corrections people from four states. It was exhausting work to define the issues and solutions of bring the three departments together so as to provide seamless support for incarceration to employment. JFF has hired two respected firms to join us on this journey: Mathematica for evaluative purposes and Coleridge Data for Impact, that will link data among the three departments. It occurred to Erin that if these agencies can perfect a system for people coming out of incarceration, this same system can be used for any WIOA participants. Additionally, CWMWDB

does not have any correctional facilities in the region, but every county has a jail. Erin and Laura Rodas from MDOC stated that we need to keep jails in mind as we move through this work.

The NAWB conference was good, especially around expectations for funding from the Trump administration. There was a particularly helpful session from the NAWB staff and the two political advocates they employ. Erin was invited to a small group session with Deputy Secretary of Labor Henry Mack. While at first he seemed eager to learn of the needs and ideas, he soon stated a few points that were not based on fact. He said that Florida was the only state truly engaged in apprenticeship—Maine is well represented in the apprenticeship field. He mentioned that one in five workforce boards serve less than 100 people—which is inaccurate according to the USDOL website. He might be using the word serve to mean trained. While we do train several people, some want immediate employment. We help them achieve their goals. The conversation was respectful and there was a great deal of time focused on Oklahoma and Louisiana's efforts to get rid of regional boards, and their state governments not following procedure. No matter what was said or shared, he continued to state those same bullets at a larger meeting and posting it on LinkedIn on his way home. It is an unsettled time. Razell mentioned that the administration are looking to cut Adult Education and move it to Labor with no funding. Erin mentioned that Job Corps and the Senior Community Service Employment Program, run by A4TD, are also looking to be cut completely. Tom mentioned National Skills Coalition offers webinars on this information.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has a new director. Former Director Libby Stone-Sterling has taken the position of MDOL's Deputy Commissioner. In an email to MDOL, Commissioner Fortman shared that as of April 6th, Steve Ball began serving as Bureau Director for BRS. Steve served as Interim Bureau Director at the Bureau of Labor Standards in 2024 and was serving as Senior Policy Advisor in the Commissioner's Office prior to taking this leadership position. Commissioner Fortman said Steve brings more than 27 years of leadership experience across complex organizations, with deep strengths in management, leadership, and policy. His career has spanned international development and humanitarian work in Southeast Asia, teaching here in Maine, and representing U.S. national interests abroad.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is complete and Erin is in the process of getting appropriate signatures. Erin has reached out to the MDOL requesting a budget for the Lewiston Career Center so she can begin to update the Infrastructure Funding Agreement.

Every two years the local boards must negotiate the five performance measures, by which the state and federal government judge the outcomes/work of WIOA in the region. The five measures include employment in 2nd Q after exit, 4th quarter after exit, median income, credential attainment, and measurable skills gains. The state is in the process of negotiating with the feds, of which EMDC's Tom Fernands participated. As soon as those negotiations are complete, the state will begin negotiations with the board.

Adjourn Meeting:

Cathy adjourned the meeting at 10:05 am.

Next Board Meeting Date: Thursday, July 23, 2025, in-person event, location TBD