

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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January 30, 2025

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on January 30, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. at the Hall County Government Center, 2875 Browns Bridge Rd., Gainesville, GA 30504. The following were present:

Members Present

Tim Bennett
Vicki Boling Jones
David Cagle
Ricky Carter
Shannon Cole
Amanda Edmondson
Mitch Griggs
Mike McGraw
Timothy McDonald
Rhonda McLean
Michelle Murray
Christine Osasu
Amy Poole
Tonya Powers
Tammy Rauch
Dana Skelton
Shelby Ward

Staff

Danielle Avelar
Whitney Blair
Heather Feldman
Diane Jackson
Gina Kessler
Ebony Tucker
Alicia Page

Guests

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Greg Vitek, Workforce Strategies Group LLC
Hannah Selvaraj, Youth Program Participant
Cole Kaminski attended as the representative for Board member Mary Overholt
Carol Jackson attended as the representative for Board member Beth Truelove
JoAnne Taylor

Members Absent

William Chafin, Chris Dockery, Amber Gaddis, Deborah Mack, Mary Overholt, Beth Truelove, Jon Williams, and Sandra Williams were absent.

Welcome

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Director, informed the Board that Hopkins Associates would report on the One-Stop to allow time for Chair Powers to arrive.

One-Stop Update

Marsha Hopkins, One-Stop Operator, gave a brief update on the One-Stop office. The One-Stop Center served 233 customers from October 1st through December 31, 2024. The Youth Center served 112 people during that same quarter, for a total of 345. The bi-monthly Partners Meetings at the One-Stop Center have continued to strengthen the links between organizations and individuals interested in workforce development in the region. The purpose of these meetings is to learn about the services available, share updates from each partner organization, and promote referrals. Each meeting focuses on a specific topic of interest. The meetings begin with a guest speaker who fields questions from the group following the program. Over lunch, conversations result in stronger collaborations between organizations and better service delivery. At the January 28, 2025, meeting, 35 people attended, and several for the first time. The guest speaker was Toni Brown, District Manager for Family Connection. The group learned about the county-by-county system of effective networking to link together and share information about various services and resources available to strengthen families. Several Partners gave examples of the great value of working with their county's Family Connection program. One of the excellent resources Family Connections has made available is a comprehensive directory of human services for each county. The directories are available online. The next Partners Meeting will be on Tuesday, March 25th, at the WorkSource Georgia Mountains One-Stop training room at 11:00 a.m. Workforce Board members are always welcome to attend. The minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website: <http://onestopworkgamtms.org/>

Hopkins Associates continues to share information about workforce programs and services available to employers and individuals in the region. Hopkins Associates appreciates the opportunity to work with the partners and the Board. The Board's suggestions and ideas for improvement are certainly welcome.

Workforce Strategies Group LLC Report

Greg Vitek with the Workforce Strategies Group gave an overview of their activities. Fall 2024 was busy. Georgia Mountains Works (GMW) has added four new employer partners: Caldwell Electrical Contractors, Lawson Air Conditioning and Plumbing, Marine Specialties, all located in Hall County, and Corrugated Replacements, Inc. in Union County. Including the four new partners, the total number of manufacturing–trade–related partners is 41.

GMW manufacturing employers toured Albaform, Murray Plastics, Performance Food Group, and JTEKT. Four hundred forty students participated in the tours.

The spotlights highlighted success stories from Gainesville High School Skills USA apprenticeship and a Quality Control apprenticeship graduate, Christy Norris, who was asked to speak at the Technical College System of Georgia Apprenticeship Summit. Since we met last, SAIL and LEAD have had 70 graduates with Supervisor & Leadership Skills. SAIL and LEAD begin again in February. Companies are investigating captive programs for their employees, which WIOA Incumbent Worker funds support as applicable.

GMW facilitated the development of the Train the Trainer program. GMW met with 12 employers to help define the program requirements: topics, competencies, and class parameters. GMW hopes to have the curriculum completed in September.

Under the Apprenticeship Navigator grant, GMW is working on the development of monthly webinars with questions and answers. These webinars will be available on their website for training.

Call to Order

Tonya Powers, Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcome the attendees. Chair Powers introduced the new Board members, Tim Bennett with Hearing, Michelle Murray with Panel Built, and Amy Poole with Northeast Georgia Health System. Tim Bennett arrived later during the meeting. Chair Powers thanked everyone for their attendance. A quorum was established.

Old Business

Consideration of Minutes

Chair Powers informed the Board that the minutes from the October 24, 2024, Board meeting were included in their emailed agenda packet. Chair Powers asked for a motion on the October 24, 2024 minutes. Shelby Ward motioned to approve the October 24, 2024, meeting minutes, and Rhonda McLean seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

New Provider Applications

Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor, informed the Board that WorkSource received a new provider application from Advanced Technology Group at 5600 Roswell Road, Suite F, 270 Atlanta, GA 30342. Advanced Technology Group is on the State's Approved Provider List.

The program was for ICSC2 Certified Information Systems Security Professional Certification, a 40-hour program that can be completed in 1 week. The tuition is \$5997 and includes all books and testing fees. Their Completion Rate: 100% Training Related Employment Rate: 100% Credential Rate: 0% Average pay: \$10.70. The credential rate and the average wage do not meet the WorkSource Georgia Mountains required performance goals.

Recommendation: WSGM Staff reviewed and based on their performance, recommend denying.

Chair Powers asked for a motion on the WSGM staff recommendation. Ricky Carter made a motion to deny Advanced Technology Group. Mitch Griggs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Reports / Announcements:

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report

Director Blair welcomed the new members. WSGM has updated the Disposition, Retention, and Pre-Award policies to reflect the latest state policy and guidance, offering more details on the processes that must be followed.

WorkSource will undergo monitoring on its programs and finance sides in a couple of weeks, and WorkSource has been busy preparing and sending items to the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). Director Blair informed the Board that WorkSource would have an outcome report at the April meeting.

The Governor's High Demand Career List was released. Director Blair explained that it is an initiative that TCSG and the State Workforce Board engage in and does not directly impact the local areas. WorkSource still has a local in-demand list for the Georgia Mountains Region. WorkSource is not required to add occupations from the Governor's list. The Governor's list is much more wide-ranging, with professions such as actors, real estate agents, lawyers, and aestheticians all included on the list. Director Blair anticipates the Governor's list will cause some confusion among the public and providers that WorkSource will have to work through, but she wanted to make the Board aware of the new occupation list.

WorkSource will update the High Demand List for the Georgia Mountains Region and bring it to the Board for approval this spring. The standard process is to send the list to our stakeholders, employment services like Tammy Rauch, with TCSG and our college and university partners. WorkSource will also use the data on the Governor's list this year since the information was recently gathered. WorkSource will make any suggested updates and have a draft copy for the Board at the April meeting.

TCSG has selected our area for two pilot programs. One is the Apprenticeship Navigator pilot, which provides the region with \$50k to educate employers on apprenticeship opportunities and how to access them. This was a competitive pilot. Director Blair thanked Greg Vitek and Shelley Logan for all the splendid work their team is doing in this space.

The Adult Education Co-Enrollment pilot partners with Lanier Technical College and North Georgia Technical College Adult Education departments. WSGM staff and the colleges spent a morning at the TCSG offices recently discussing a process to make our referrals more productive. Director Blair stated, "I have to brag about our functional relationship and how easy it is to work with the technical colleges in our area. This is an excellent region for partnerships where we are all focused on best serving individuals and not only how it will impact our specific programs."

WorkSource applied for and received three Additional Funding Requests (AFRs) from TCSG, totaling an additional \$198,000 for our area's Adult, Dislocated, and Youth programs. Receiving these dollars reflects our record in the Georgia Mountains area, where we prioritize spending funds on participants and are looking for creative partnerships.

WorkSource received two NADO awards this year. One was for the Bright Start Welding Program, a partnership with Good News at Noon, Salvation Army, Workforce Innovators of America, and the local homeless population. Director Blair thanked Danielle Avelar for the outreach and case management work and Diane Jackson for the intake work. Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, won an award for the work done in the Youth Center and for having employers come in and interview the youth students.

Budget

Alicia Page, Finance Director, explained the budget included in the agenda packet emailed to the board before the meeting. The report was for the period ending December 31, 2024. The available funds for the Adult Program were \$869,274, with \$586,017 obligated, which leaves a remaining balance of \$283,256. The Dislocated Worker Program's available balance was 759,152, with \$63,130 in obligations and a remaining balance of 696,022. The Youth Program had \$281,823 available with \$235,914 in obligations, leaving a remaining balance of \$45,909 to be spent on Youth programs. The High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) Grant had a balance of \$17,298 and will expire on June 30, 2025. The QUEST Grant had \$386,418 available and will expire on September 30, 2025, and is expected to be fully expended. The Apprenticeship Navigator Grant had a balance of \$46,683 with an expiration date of June 30, 2025, and is expected to be fully expended.

Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, explained the most recent performance numbers for quarter one of PY24. WorkSource Georgia Mountains had met or exceeded all performance measures except for the employment for quarter four and measurable skills gains for the Adult program. The Dislocated Workers Program is meeting or exceeding all performance measures except for credential and measurable skills gains, and the Youth program met all performance measures except for the measurable skills gains. The performance numbers should increase as participants complete their training and data is uploaded.

Adjournment

Chair Powers requested a motion to adjourn. Mitch Griggs made a motion to adjourn. Rhonda Mclean seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Board Chair, Tonya Powers

Secretary, Deborah Mack