

Local Elected Officials (LEO) Board Meeting
September 29, 2021
2:00PM

MINUTES

The Local Elected Officials (LEOs) met on Thursday, September 29, 2021, at 2:01pm via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER

Greg James, Chairman of the Local Elected Officials (LEOs) called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. A quorum was established. The following members were present:

Members Present and County Represented

Greg James (Rabun County)
Lamar Paris (Union County)
Charles Turk (Banks County)
Jason Macomson (Franklin County)
Richard Higgins (Hall County)
Marshall Sayer (Hart County)
Chris Dockery (Lumpkin County)
Jimmy Hooper (Banks County)
Michelle Ivester (Stephens County)
Travis Turner (White County)
Liz Ordiales (City of Hiawassee)

GMRC Staff Present

Heather Feldman, Executive Director
Gina Kessler, Executive Assistant
Whitney Williams, WorkSource Director
Diane Jackson, Intake Supervisor

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Minutes from the October 8, 2020, meeting was previously emailed to the members. Chairman James asked for consideration of the minutes. Motion was made by Jim Conley to approve the minutes. Travis Turner seconded, and motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business

REPORTS

Chairman James asked if Heather Feldman, GMRC Executive Director had anything she would like to share. Heather explained the requirements of the LEO Board. One being that the LEO Board meet at least once a year. Last year the Board met on several different occasions due to having to elect a new Chairman and Vice Chairman and due to required changes being made to the bylaws. Today's meeting was to fulfill that requirement and to also have Whitney Williams, WorkSource Georgia Mountains Director provide a report to the Board on an overview of PY20 activities and performance.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) Funding Overview

Whitney Williams, WorkSource Georgia Mountains Director gave an overview on the activity of WorkSource Georgia Mountains. The Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs served 587 occupational skills training participants during PY20. Students included in this number participated in occupational skills training, were served by case managers to assist in their job search or have completed training and were being monitored for success for one year. Those eligible for occupational skills training received tuition, book, and supply assistance along with supportive services like gas money and childcare.

Participants primarily attended North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) or Lanier Technical College (LTC), but we also served students at University of North Georgia (UNG), Piedmont and Brenau among other area schools. Students were also assisted in earning their GED or credits to complete their high school diploma and then transitioning to further their education or entering the workforce through partnerships with NGTC, and LTC, Adult Education, and area Mountain Education Charter schools.

Interest in short-term training continues to increase with many participants attending Dalys or other providers to earn their CDL-A. In response to the demand for short-term training from job seekers and employers, WSGM has been actively seeking and promoting available short-term programs. In the previous program year, two new short-term programs were launched. In partnership with Hall County Treatment Court, and LTC a Manufacturing Fundamentals program was kicked off where eligible participants attended LTC to learn the basics of manufacturing including blueprint reading, Six Sigma, OSHA 10, earning a Forklift Certification and more. Additionally, a partnership with Gainesville High School, LTC and the Georgia Poultry Federation also proved fruitful with the launch of the first ElectroMechanical Academy cohort. Participants earned in-demand skills from a curriculum designed by area poultry employers. All students completed, earning multiple certifications, have been working full-time with some even being promoted since then, at area poultry companies. This innovative latter partnership between workforce, employers and educators earned a National Associate of Development Organization Impact award.

The Youth Department continues to bring innovative ideas to their Route 180 Youth Center and has held over 80 virtual and in-person workshops for Youth across the region over the previous program year. GED classes at the center have also resumed which we were all very excited about. The Youth program continues to seek out students with barriers and try to guide them on their career pathway.

Business Services continues to grow with On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), Work Experience (WEX), and Apprenticeships all available options for participants and employers to take part in. Since July 2019 WSGM has paid almost \$275,000 to area employers through reimbursements for training or wage subsidies and we expect our Business Services Department to continue to flourish as we become better versed in what we can offer and promoting these programs and how they can positively impact both the employers and workforce in our region.

Sector Strategy work has continued with efforts concentrated on the manufacturing industry. WSGM has made great strides and the group we contract with to spearhead this work, Workforce Strategies is engaged and doing an excellent job. This effort currently includes a steering committee composed of regional employers, community partners and stakeholders, and K-12 and post-secondary educators. Workgroups focused on Career Pathways, Outreach, Training, and Employability Skills meet consistently and we have seen positive results. Career Path materials are set to be shared in the next weeks with Career Technical Agriculture Education (CTAE) staff across the region, and an employability skills video library created by high school students from almost all 13 counties, is available for all work-based learning teachers to use. This work also created a first of its kind Quality Control apprenticeship with curriculum created by area employers who will also be involved in grading the student's capstone projects. Due to demand, a second Quality Control cohort is expected to begin this January. A professional video promoting work-based learning and careers in manufacturing was also produced and shared with all K-12 schools and other stakeholders in the region.

WSGM regular PY20 funding, which ended June 2021, totaled \$2.9 million. Total funding received for our program year beginning July 1, 2021, is a little over \$2.5 million, a 13.8% decrease for this year. However, we also experienced a decrease the previous year and managed to continue to serve the region well and innovate and we expect this trend to continue. The EMSI report was made available and there was a lot of excellent data but the one item that was highlighted was the benefit-cost ratio. As a result of the Georgia Mountains programs, participants receive the training and support they need to become gainfully employed or to increase their earnings. As participants earn more, the region's economy, and consequently Georgia's economy, experiences increased tax revenues and public sector savings. Across all the Georgia Mountains programs, the region's taxpayers will see a benefit-cost ratio of **2.79**, a positive benefit-cost ratio.

WSGM's performance was once again stellar this program year. Across all programs, 86.6% of participants we assisted were still employed one year after training. At Georgia Mountains, we are one of the few areas in Georgia that provides most of our services through in-house staff and I truly believe that the connection our case managers have to the participants they serve is one of the largest reasons for our success. The staff truly cares about the lives they are touching and the success of this region and each of your cities and counties. I appreciate all that each of you do to support WorkSource and the Regional Commission and if we can assist you in any way or you would like more information on the work we are doing please do not hesitate to reach out.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Travis Turner and seconded by Liz Ordiales. The meeting was adjourned at 2:15pm.

Greg James, CLEO