

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION  
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS  
1856 THOMPSON BRIDGE RD., SUITE 3 ♦ GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA 30501  
PHONE (770) 538-2727 FAX (770) 538-2729  
July 27, 2023

**Minutes**

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on July 27, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Diner located at Rabun County Civic Center, 201 W. Savannah Street, Clayton, GA 30525. The following were present:

**Members Present**

David Cagle  
Ricky Carter  
Shannon Cole  
Amanda Edmondson  
Mitch Griggs  
Deborah Mack  
Timothy McDonald  
Christine Osasu  
Tonya Powers  
Tammy Rauch  
Beth Truelove  
Shelby Ward  
Jon Williams

**Staff**

Whitney Blair  
Danielle Avelar  
Heather Feldman  
Diane Jackson  
Dawn Bruce  
Niki McPherson  
Alicia Page  
Gina Kessler  
Ebony Tucker  
Nona Turk  
Catherine Allen

**Guests**

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates  
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates  
Greg Vitek, Workforce Strategies Group LLC  
Shelly Logan, Workforce Strategies Group LLC  
JoAnne Taylor

**Members Absent**

Vicki Boling, William Chafin, Chris Dockery, Jennifer Fleming, Mike McGraw, Terry Merck, Juergen Moller, Mary Overholt, Dana Skelton, Brooke Stall, and Sandra Williams were absent.

**Call to Order/Welcome**

Tonya Powers, Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. A quorum was established.

## **Consideration of Minutes**

Chair Powers asked the Board for comments or a motion on the minutes from the April 27, 2023, WDB meeting. Shelby Ward made a motion to approve the April 27, 2023, meeting minutes as written, and Christine Osasu seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Old Business**

## **New Business**

### **State Policy Updates**

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director, informed the board that approval is required from the board for state policy changes. WorkSource staff requested that the board permit staff to update local policy to reflect state policy as changes are made. Staff will inform the board of state changes and would still need board approval for other policy changes. Mitch Griggs motioned to allow board staff to make changes according to state policy without preliminary board approval. Deborah Mack seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Whitney Blair informed the Board that the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) now has the Rapid Response funds instead of the Department of Labor. WSGM received about \$75,000.00 of those funds. TCSG has updated its Rapid Response Policy to clarify the funding for local rapid response activities and funding for disaster events. TCSG updated their Registered Apprenticeship Policy to include a definition of requirements to be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and what paperwork/performance needed to be tracked for apprenticeships. They also updated their Supportive Services Policy to clarify supportive services provided during follow-up and for co-enrolled participants. Participants are not allowed to receive supportive services during follow-up.

### **Provider Application**

Danielle Avelar, Adult/Dislocated Worker Supervisor, informed the Board that WSGM had received two provider applications since the previous board meeting. First, Phoenix Institute, which is in Gainesville, GA. Phoenix Institute is not currently on the State ETPL. They submitted two programs for consideration. Emergency Medical Technician and Emergency Responder. Based on their performance, WSGM staff recommended denial of the Emergency Medical Technician program. Timothy McDonald motioned to deny the program, and Mitch Griggs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The performance for the Emergency Responder program submitted did not meet the performance standards for WSGM; therefore, Staff recommended denial. Timothy McDonald made the motion to deny, and Deborah Mack seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Norcross Institute of Allied Health applied for approval of two training programs, Diagnostic Medical Sonography- AAS and Diagnostic Medical Sonography Certificate program. This school is currently on the State's ETPL. WSGM staff has approved these programs on a trial basis.

## **Business Services Update and Information**

Niki McPherson, On-the-Job-Training (OJT) Program Coordinator, informed the Board of the Business Services that WSGM offers. The Business Services are: Incumbent Worker Training, On-the-Job Training, Internships, Registered Apprenticeships, and Specified Training.

The Incumbent Worker Training assists employers with the cost of training for permanent full-time employees. Examples of types of training are training employees on new equipment, Lean Six Sigma, or enrolling employees in classes to obtain a certification. Reimbursements can be fifty to ninety percent depending on the company's size. Maximum reimbursement is \$12,000 per employee or \$75,000 per project. Shelley Logan and Greg Vitek with the Workforce Strategies Group mentioned some of these programs in previous meetings. One that started recently was based on employers' needs was the SAIL program, which stands for Supervisory and Industry Leadership. The SAIL program is a 12-week program at Lanier Technical College that covers topics like Problem Solving, Communicating for Results, Emotional Intelligence, Continuous Improvement, HR Do's & Don'ts, Performance Management, Safety Focused, and leading meetings. WSGM funded this program, and we were able to put \$7,500 back into the employer's hands.

The On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program provides wage reimbursements to employers while training new employees. The reimbursements range from 50% to 75%, depending on the employer's size. The training can last up to eight hundred hours or \$12,000 of reimbursement per trainee. The smaller businesses really benefit from this program because the cost reimbursement is so significant. Truck-it-Up is a diesel truck repair company in Hall County with under twelve employees. They have used the OJT program four times to fill positions created by increased demand for their services. Mrs. McPherson shared a success story about Dan Southard and Polystone Creations at a previous Board meeting. Polystone Creations is a small business in White County that was thrilled to be able to use Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to train a new hire.

Internships are paid learning experiences that take place in a workplace for a limited period. The maximum number of hours is 480, and interns are paid \$15.00 per hour. Interns can work up to 40 hours per week. While we would like internships to lead to permanent employment, the employer is not obligated to offer employment. Interns can be placed on WSGM payroll or the employers. Internships are a great way to assess a prospective employee while receiving assistance on special projects. An internship is a great way for potential employees to gain experience to succeed in a career. WSGM has been able to assist several counties. The City of Cornelia was able to train a new firefighter, and Franklin County brought on an Administrative Intern to assist with the backlog of filing.

Registered Apprenticeships last two years and comprise on-the-job and classroom training. The apprentice receives a nationally recognized credential. The employer would receive a reimbursement of up to \$15,000 in training costs. WSGM has helped fund the IMS Gear, Specialty Appliance, Sherwin Williams, and Murray Plastics companies. The Workforce Strategies Group LLC had shared information with the Board about the registered apprenticeship programs. These are the first of its kind in the State. The first Quality Control Apprenticeship (QCA) cohort graduated four apprentices from four individual companies, spanning three different counties in the WSGM region. The second QCA cohort launched with eight apprentices from seven manufacturers in three counties within our region. This program was funded by WIOA dollars, which helped to put \$57,000 back into the hands of the employers.

Specified Training is based on the employer's needs by blending any of our business services. One Specified Training that was recently successful was a collaboration between a school system and an employer. The school system identifies graduating seniors who want to transition to full-time employment. The employer

can onboard full-time employees and have them trained at a technical college one day a week to gain needed skills to perform the job. Lumpkin County school system is in its second cohort this year in a partnership with BTD. WIOA funded four of the eight students, saving BTD \$12,000 in training costs. Accelerated training programs are offered throughout the year, with many taking place during the summer to help transition graduating seniors to full-time employment. WSGM Business Services coordinates with employers to come in and interview the students once they pass their certification test.

Over the past year, WIOA has reimbursed over \$91,000 to regional employers.

### **Reports/Announcements:**

#### **WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report**

Whitney Blair gave a Director's Report. She thanked Niki McPherson for her presentation and let the Board know that instead of doing an entire morning of Board training, we would do a deep dive into each department during the board meetings. Workforce Strategies will present on their Sector work in October.

She shared an allocation update for PY23. She also included numbers from the last five years showing the budget cuts that had been made. Youth have seen an almost 43% change, nearly 40% for Adults, and almost 30% for Dislocated Workers. Whitney Blair thanked the Board for their flexibility over the years in allowing changes to programs and policies that would enable staff to continue serving participants. She also thanked the staff for thinking of creative solutions to serve participants with less funding available.

Whitney Blair announced staff changes. Catherine Allen will be moving from Adult/DW Outreach Coordinator to Program Assistant, and Ginger Little will be moving from Adult/DW Case Manager to Youth Case Manager. Job descriptions for the Adult/DW side openings will be posted on the GMRC website in the next week.

TCSG monitoring begins October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Results will be reported at the October board meeting, and we hope for a clean report.

#### **Budget**

Nona Turk, Senior Financial Assistant, explained that as of June 30, 2023, the available funds for the Adult Program were \$376,557, with \$266,159 obligated. The Dislocated Worker Program's available funds were \$33,473, with \$5,539 in obligations. The Youth Program had \$862,813 available with \$156,441 of obligations. The HDCI Grant had \$58,557 available. This Grant was set to expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> however, the grant has been extended to December 31, 2023. The Rapid Response Grant had \$32,933 available and is set to expire on December 31, 2023.

#### **One-Stop Update**

Marsha Hopkins, One-Stop Operator, gave a brief update on the One-Stop office. One-Stop Partner meetings are held every other month on the last Tuesday of the month at 11:00 a.m. (held in the odd months Jan., March, etc.) The purpose of the meetings is to share information, collaboration, and referrals. The core partners are the Area Technical Colleges, Lanier, North Georgia, and Athens; Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Wagner Peyser – Technical College System of Georgia, Legacy Link, and WorkSource Georgia Mountains. Additional partners include other social services agencies and

organizations serving individuals or families who often need employment services. Meeting attendance is averaging about thirty participants. At each meeting, there is a guest speaker and a focus topic, followed by a time for collaboration over lunch, and then a period for sharing announcements from all Partners. Minutes of all meetings are posted on the One-Stop website under "Our Partners" <https://onestopworkgamtns.org>

On May 30, 2023, the Program was presented by: Dr. Marshall Bruner, Director of Brenau Center for Counseling and Psychological Services. His topic was: "Mental Health in the Workplace." On July 25, 2023, the program was presented by Jessi Emmett, Judicial Accountability Division Director, Court Administration for the Northeastern Judicial Circuit, which is Hall County and Dawson County. Ms. Emmett discussed the many options available through courts for offenders willing to follow strict requirements regarding daily drug screenings, attendance at school or work, participation in support groups and counseling, and other guidelines. Ms. Emmett reported that the recidivism rate for the participants in these court programs is significantly less than for individuals who do not participate. Hopkins Associates were very pleased to have Workforce and GMRC Board member Deborah Mack in attendance!

The next Partner Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 26, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. at the One-Stop training room. All are welcome to attend.

The number of customer visits to the One-Stop Center in the most recent quarter, from April through June 2023 was 346, up from 207 people from the same quarter last year.

Benjie Hopkins and Marsha Hopkins continue to attend meetings of organizations and groups in the region, representing One-Stop and sharing information about the programs and services available. A special thanks to Workforce Board member Ricky Carter; he and his wife organized a meeting of representatives from five organizations in Hartwell. All these people were interested in knowing more about what is offered through WorkSource Georgia Mountains and its Partners. Benjie Hopkins and Marsha Hopkins met with the group to discuss their specific needs and suggest resources for them.

Marsha Hopkins stated that they appreciate all the board members as well as the WorkSource and Georgia Mountains staff for their support and let them know that their input is always welcomed.

Board Member Ricky Carter said he appreciated WorkSource, Benjie, and Marsha Hopkins for coming to Hart County. They met with five different organizations. The organizations in attendance were Habitat for Humanity, Hart Life Pregnancy Center, Cornerstone Church Food Bank, and Recovery Life.

Mr. Carter suggested a good place to get the word out would be the Health Department and a one-page flyer with information about the program to give to organizations.

### **Workforce Strategies Group LLC Report**

Shelley Logan with the Workforce Strategies Group gave an overview of their activities. Phase five has been funded. They also have a newsletter that goes out every month, and 50% of people that receive it open it and read it. They have five new Manufacturing employer partners that was finalized in the newsletter. The Sail program was designed by the Manufacturing Sector of the employer partnership. There will be another SAIL cohort starting on August 15, 2023. There are four seats left, and now is the time to register.

As part of the Sector Strategies, they create resources. The resources depend on what the partners need to increase their workforce development and access to existing programs. The wage report is a new one that Sector Strategies is in the process of developing. It only focuses on manufacturing positions that the employers selected, and it is only for our region.

The Industrial Maintenance Workgroup has set its charter, and its purpose is to enhance already existing apprenticeships related to industrial maintenance and advanced manufacturing, which is the number one occupational priority of all the manufacturers in the area.

Career Paths are a huge topic. The manufacturing employers have asked how they get involved at every level to where the career paths are happening. One of the levels they wanted to know about was work-based learning. Work-based Learning is where the high school students come in and work. Next month, Workforce Strategies will have a panel discussing how to capture talented youth through work-based learning. One of the speakers will be Tyler Smith, an attorney, and he will be speaking on legally employing teens in manufacturing and that you can employ 16- and 17-year-olds. The six graduates from Lumpkin County that went to work at Satellite are still employed.

### Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, explained the most recent performance numbers for PY22. Adult performance exceeds all measures. The Dislocated Worker performance is exceeding all measures except for the credential rate, and the Youth Program performance is meeting or exceeding all except for the credential rate. The Youth's measurable skills gains are up 139% since the last report. Even though the Youth is not meeting the credential rate, this measure has increased by 11% since the last meeting.

### Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.



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Board Chair, Tonya Powers

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Secretary, Deborah Mack

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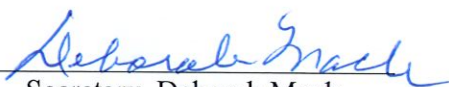
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