GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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July 30, 2026

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on July 30, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. at Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Company located at Lake 112 Wellborn Street, Blairsville, GA 30512. The following were present:

Members Present
Tim Bennett
Vicki Boling Jones
Shannon Cole
Amanda Edmondson
Ricky Carter
Chrystal Coker
Sanchez Harris
Stacey Madden
Tim McDonald
Michelle Murray
Mary Overholt
Terri Partain
Amy Poole
Tammy Rauch
Shelby Ward

Staff
Whitney Blair
Diane Jackson
Gina Kessler
Heather Feldman
Lynda Thompson
Alicia Page
Ebony Tucker

Guest
Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates

Members Absent

Lee Aurand-Hosey, Amber Gaddis, Lisa Hamby, Mike McGraw, Juergen Moller, Tonya Powers, and Beth Truelove were absent.

Call to Order/Welcome

Vicki Boling Jones, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Vice Chair Boling Jones introduced new Board member Stacey Madden, Director of Adult Education at North Georgia Technical College. Shelby Ward is now the President/CEO of Georgia Foothills United Way and is

remaining on the Board to fill the vacant Community Based Organization seat. Chrystal Coker, Community Services Director with Ninth District, Sanchez Harris, Business Owner of High-Definition Studio in Hall and Habersham Counties, and Juergen Moller, Operations and Engineering at Medmix, have also joined the Board. The Board has two vacant seats, a business seat for Lumpkin County, and a Labor/Union seat. A quorum was established.

Old Business

Vice Chair Boling Jones asked the Board for consideration and a motion on the minutes of April 30, 2026 Workforce Development Board (WDB) meeting. Shelby Ward made a motion to approve the April 30, 2026 meeting minutes. Amy Poole seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

One-Stop MOU

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director, explained that the MOU and Infrastructure Agreement must be renewed every three years. The MOU clarifies the role of the One-Stop and each partner's responsibilities. Federal law requires each partner to contribute to the cost of operating the One-Stop. The MOU edits were mainly informational updates, with no substantial changes. The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) cost methodology was revised to be based on facility use. WorkSource values its partners and wants costs to be fair; currently, only WorkSource and TCSG Employment Services have full-time staff onsite. The revised methodology better reflects partner use of the building and lowers costs for most partners. The Agreement was sent to partners for discussion and, after a few minor corrections, was resent for signatures and execution. WorkSource presented the MOU and IFA to the Board for approval and adoption. Vice Chair Boling Jones requested a motion to approve the One-Stop MOU. Tim Bennett made the motion, Terri Partain seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

WSGM Local Plan

Director Blair informed the Board that this year only updates were required to the Local Plan. The data tables were updated, and new sections were added covering employer-driven training and skills-based hiring. Sections on strategies, work-based learning, and other topics were revised. The plan was posted for public comment for the required 30-day period, and no comments were received. WSGM asked the Board for approval and adoption. Vice Chair Boling Jones asked the Board for a motion to approve the WSGM Local Plan. Amanda Edmondson moved to approve the Local Plan. Amy Poole seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Policy Update

Director Blair explained that the proposed policy revises how WorkSource Georgia Mountains coordinates Pell Grant funding with WIOA Individual Training Account (ITA) funds. Under the current policy, all participants whose cost of attendance—which is a document the college will release for students that estimates the tuition, housing, food, and books—essentially, the direct and indirect expenses of attending college for one year—exceeds available WIOA funding may retain Pell Grant funds for living and other education-related expenses. The revised policy would target this flexibility to participants with the greatest financial need while continuing to comply with federal financial aid coordination requirements.
Under the revised policy:

- Adult participants who qualify for WIOA Priority of Service, including individuals who are low-income or receive assistance such as SNAP, eligible Dislocated Worker participants, Out-of-School Youth, and Youth who meet WIOA low-income eligibility criteria, may retain Pell Grant funds for living and other appropriate education-related expenses when the cost of attendance analysis demonstrates unmet education-related costs.
- Adult participants who do not qualify for Priority of Service and Youth participants who are not Priority of Service. Those who meet the specified criteria will be expected to apply Pell Grant funds toward eligible training costs. Before WIOA, ITA funds are used.
- Flexibility remains to make exceptions based on individual situations.

The purpose of the proposed revision is to ensure that participants with the greatest financial need continue to receive the greatest level of support.

The policy also aligns with WIOA's emphasis on serving priority populations by preserving Pell Grant flexibility for Adult Priority of Service participants, eligible Dislocated Workers, and eligible Youth while requiring other participants to maximize available grant assistance before WIOA funds are committed.

This targeted approach promotes responsible stewardship of limited workforce funds, increases the number of participants who can be served with available training resources, and maintains flexibility for exceptional circumstances through an administrative exception process. Vice Chair Boling Jones asked for a motion to approve the policy update. Mary Overholt made a motion to approve the policy update. Tammy Rauch seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Selection of Nominating Committee

Vice Chair Boling Jones informed the Board that the secretary position was vacant and needed to be filled. She requested volunteers for a nominating committee. Vice Chair Boling Jones, Amanda Edmondson, and Terri Partain volunteered to serve on the committee.

Reports and Announcements

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report

Board Certification

Director Blair explained that the Local Area is required to complete Board Certification every few years. The process includes reviewing the WDB bylaws and confirming that the Local Board meets composition requirements. For example, at least 51% of Board members must be business representatives, and the Board must include representatives from Adult Education, Economic Development, and other relevant areas. Director Blair shared that WSGM's WDB certification documents were submitted to and approved by the State. Diane Jackson ensures compliance and submits all required documentation. Ms. Jackson does an outstanding job, and her hard work is appreciated.

State Waivers

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) received several federal waivers this year. The following waivers have been approved:

- Waiver of the Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Expenditure Requirement
- Waiver of the Requirement for Local Areas to Make All 14 Youth Program Elements Available

- Waiver of the Requirement to Establish and Maintain a Comprehensive AJC in Each Local Workforce Development Area

WSGM is still awaiting additional guidance on implementation requirements and next steps.

Apprenticeship Grant

Thanks to the hard work of staff, Danielle Avelar, Lanier Technical College, and North Georgia Technical College, WSGM was able to expend the first half of the Apprenticeship Grant. Only five Local Areas received this additional apprenticeship funding. WSGM's apprenticeships focused primarily on advanced manufacturing and included a pre-apprenticeship program with nine Youth graduates. The second round of funding is expected soon. WSGM looks forward to applying lessons learned from counterparts across the State and expanding beyond manufacturing to include healthcare and education apprenticeships in the second round.

Funding

WSGM received the programmatic allocations for the upcoming year. Overall, total funding was level with the previous year. WSGM continues to try to be creative and look for additional funding sources to ensure funding sources are maximized.

One-Stop Update

Marsha Hopkins with Hopkins Associates explained that during the past quarter, April 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026 the One-Stop Career Center had 75 customers. In addition, the Youth Center had 100 students. The numbers are lower than usual due to holding new adult enrollments pending funding availability and the lack of a permanent GED teacher. Also, the intake and enrollment process has changed, allowing customers to complete more required steps by phone and online instead of coming into the One-Stop office.

Hopkins Associates continue to plan and host bi-monthly Partners Meetings in the One-Stop training room. The purpose of these meetings is to learn about available services, share updates from each partner organization, and promote referrals. Each meeting has a focus topic. At the May 2026 meeting, the guest speaker was Michael Fisher with Ninth District Opportunity. He presented an update on the Unity Project, a collaborative effort in Gainesville to create a center for resources for those who are unhoused. Plans are underway for a facility with space for multiple organizations to offer services to assist these individuals in moving forward with their lives. Employment training will be part of this.
The July meeting focused on the programs of Wellroot. The presenter was Shannon Cassas. Ms. Cassas described multiple services being offered, especially those involving foster children and their transition from foster care to independence.

The next Partner Meeting will be on Tuesday, September 29, 2026 at the One-Stop Center at 11:00 a.m. The minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website: http://onestopworkgamtns.org/.

This past quarter, Hopkins Associates participated in meetings with area Chambers of Commerce and various civic groups. Hopkins Associates visited employers in several counties to discuss workforce issues and described the services of WorkSource Georgia Mountains and the One-Stop. They continue to reach out to various human services organizations throughout the region to establish links between WorkSource Georgia Mountains and other partners.

Budget

Alicia Page, GMRC Finance Director, presented the budget report for the period ending June 30, 2026. As of June 30, 2026 the available funds for the Adult Program were $511,939 with $135,127 in obligations, leaving a remainder of $376,812. The Dislocated Worker Program had available funds of $122,919, with $39,321 in expenses, leaving a balance of $83,598. The Youth Program had $274,978 available, with $14,970 in obligations and expenses, leaving $260,007. The Quest Grant was fully expended and expired on September 30, 2025. The State Apprenticeship Grant had available funds of $9,025.98, and the Rapid Response Grant had a balance of $55,398.

Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, explained the performance report included in the agenda packet. The performance reported was through May 2026. The Adult program met or exceeded all measures. The Dislocated Worker program met or exceeded all measures except the measurable skills measure. The Youth program exceeded all measures. Ms. Tucker explained the five performance measures WSGM is required to meet.

Executive Director Heather Feldman announced that she had been contacted by USA Today for information and photos about the WorkSource Georgia Mountains Apprenticeship Program, which received a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) award last year. A story about the awarded Apprenticeship Program will appear in USA Today in September 2026. The information will be emailed to the Board once published. Executive Director Feldman thanked the WorkSource staff, North Georgia Tech, and Haering in Hart County. Also, last week, Executive Director Feldman was informed that the GMRC would receive two new NADO impact awards this year – City of Cornelia Festival and Event Park Project (Economic Development) and Apprenticeship & Talent Pipeline Initiative (Workforce Development).

Adjournment

Vice Chair Boling Jones requested a motion to adjourn. Amy Poole made a motion to adjourn. Amanda Edmondson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Board Chair, Tonya Powers

Secretary