

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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April 28, 2022

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Workforce Development Board (GMWDB) met on April 28, 2022 at 4:00 PM. The meeting was held at the Lavonia Railroad Depot located at 1269 East Main Street, Lavonia, GA. The following were present.

Members Present

William Chafin
Shannon Cole
Mitch Griggs
Deborah Mack
Mike McGraw
Rhonda McLean
Terry Merck
Juergen Moller
Beth Williams
Shelby Ward
Jon Williams
Mark Winters

Staff

Danielle Avelar
Ebony Tucker
Judy Reynolds
Niki McPherson
Heather Feldman
Nona Turk
Gina Kessler
Amarylin Neill

Guest

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Shelley Logan
Greg Vitek

Members Absent

Melissa Armstrong, Vicki Boling, Jody Cooley, David Cagle, Ricky Carter, Chris Dockery, Andrea Gibby, Tim McDonald, Betsy McGriff, Mary Overholt, Tonya Powers, Sandra Williams, and Alex Warner were absent.

Call to Order/Welcome

Rhonda McLean, Board Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. Chair McLean congratulated board member, Beth Williams on her retirement from Vocational Rehabilitation in June. She thanked Beth for her years of service on the GMWD Board. This was her last meeting since the Board is not scheduled to meet again until July. A roll call was completed, and a quorum was not established.

Cour D'Alene, ID 83815. Coding Clarified is currently on the State's Approved Provider List and was initially approved by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

The program is Professional Medical Coding which costs \$3,999. The program is offered online and is for 16 weeks plus a 2-week internship. Includes all supplies, books, and testing fees; Industry recognized credential- CPC, Certified Professional Coder.

Their Completion Rate is 85%, Training Related Employment Rate, 85%, Credential Rate, 95% and the Average pay is \$22 an hour.

WSGM Staff reviewed and based on their performance, status on state ETPL, and comments from other WorkSource area, approved the Provider and Program on a temporary basis of 1 year and 10 participants.

Youth Program Update and Policy Change

Due to lack of a quorum the Youth Program Policy change was not presented.

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor provided a Youth Program update to the board. She announced that the youth department has been busy taking in new applicants and are currently accepting applications for all programs. She went on to announce that a teacher had been hired for the SHIFT GED classroom, and the class will be capped at seven participants. Several GED grads pre-pandemic have returned to transition to college. Ebony stated that 20% of youth funds must be spent on work experience, but due to the pandemic this has been difficult. Thinking outside of the box, they partnered with Atlanta Career Rise to offer a five-week virtual work experience program. Participants will attend zoom meetings Monday-Wednesday for 90 minutes each day and complete journals and soft skill modules. They will learn about different careers and Industries, as well as create resumes and cover letters. At the end of the 5 weeks participants earn \$1000 which is \$200 per week of participation.

The youth department will be starting a new program called WIOA Ambassadors where there will be five previous participants selected that have successfully completed the program to travel to events, job fairs, committee, and board meetings, to provide a youth voice on certain topics. Ebony stated she felt the more the youth can see successful people that look like them the more they would be motivated.

Mental health and substance abuse has been of great concern since the pandemic and now the program will be able to provide supportive services for these services. Ebony will be looking for someone that can provide these services through referral and invoicing.

Ebony talked about the expansion of barriers for eligibility. The needs additional assistance barrier has been underutilized in the past and now the state has provided more guidance to qualifying students for services. The program can now look at a prospective participants employment history, living arrangements, educational history, social, medical, and family barriers to qualify for services. These participants must also be suitable for programs offered and income eligible. Ebony gave the example of a participant who is in a single parent household that receives food stamps can now qualify for services, as well as a participant living in public housing and receiving public assistance

Reports / Announcements:

Budget

Nona Turk, Senior Financial Assistant, gave a report on the budget that was included in the agenda packet. The report was for the period ending March 31, 2022.

As of March 31, the available funds for Adult/DW programs were \$794,024.75 with \$475,631.65 of obligations and expected expenses. These funds are set to expire June 30, 2023, except for \$25,449 that expires June 30 of this year.

The Youth program had \$523,942.48 available with \$175,907.83 of obligations and expected expenses. These funds expire June 30, 2023.

The National Dislocated Worker Grant had a balance of \$395,104.02 with \$300,893.85 obligations. This was set to expire on March 31st but has been extended until March 2023.

The High Demand Career Initiative grant had a balance of \$102,028.46 and is completely obligated.

One-Stop Update

Marsha Hopkins with Hopkins Associates gave an update on the WorkSource Georgia Mountains One-Stop. A One-Stop Partners Meeting was held on March 29, 2022. The purpose of these bi-monthly meetings is to learn about services available, to share updates from each partner organization, and to promote referrals among organizations. At the last meeting, three individuals attended for the first time. They represented: Vocational Rehabilitation; Gainesville High School Work Based Learning; and Good Samaritan Food Ministries. Our guest speaker was Mr. Stacey Reece, Owner of Spherion Staffing in Gainesville. He described examples of ageism in the workplace, and he also discussed other barriers to employment.

During the period of January through the end of March 2022, the One-Stop had 174 customers. With changes in Covid restrictions, our Partners, Vocational Rehabilitation and Georgia Department of Labor have resumed their schedules to have staff members available in person at their offices at the One-Stop. Benjie and Marsha continue to participate in several community organizations to share information about workforce programs and services available to employers and individuals in our region. The minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website: <http://onestopworkgamtns.org/> Please contact Benjie or Marsha Hopkins for any questions regarding the One-Stop operation at Hopkins Associates 470 577-0823.

Workforce Strategies Group LLC Report

Greg Vitek and Shelley Logan with Workforce Strategies Group gave an overview on their activities.

Sector Strategy Process

On May 11, 2022 at Lanier Tech, Workforce Strategies will hold the first in-person Steering/Employer meeting since Covid began.

Preparation of the next phase of the Sector Strategy grant application for 2022-2023 is in progress.

Remain focused on Manufacturing with expansion to all the skilled trades.

Increase focus on special populations as sources for workforce and utilize participation on high schools through Work Base Learning advisories to connect students to employer needs.

Career Pathway

The activities with the utilization of Be Pro Be Proud and the school systems participating in 2022 through May are Union, Dawson, Banks, Hall, Gainesville, Lumpkin, Franklin. Additional systems to be scheduled in fall and then spring 2023.

Employability Skills

The videos produced by the individual schools are being enhanced with lesson plans prepared by UNG faculty. The lesson plans facilitate the easy and effective usage of the videos to develop and reinforce the person skills so important to the youth. The lesson plans are being further augmented with case studies provided by the region's employers.

Training

A 2nd cohort of the Quality Control Apprenticeship has begun this quarter; eight apprentices from seven companies, is being offered at Lanier Tech as the group of apprentices is primarily located in that region. With demand, we can offer the program at NGTC as well.

Supervisory and Leadership Training: A group of employers are working together to define a focused training plan for first line supervisors. The intention of the Employer Sector members is to have a program that is the right size, duration, and scope for the employers in our region.

Marketing

The RFP for the Sector Strategy website has been rewritten with support for an industry advisor and is being reissued to potential contractors. The decision should be completed by the end of May.

Performance

Chair McLean explained that WorkSource Georgia Mountains is meeting or exceeding all performance measures. WorkSource presented two reports, the first showed the performance numbers just for the Georgia Mountains area and the second showed all the areas in the state.

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, explained the youth performance. Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor explained for a youth participant to exit the program as a positive for performance, they must have earned a credential, maintained employment second and fourth quarters after exit, as well as earning a measurable skills gain each program year that they were enrolled. Currently the youth program is not meeting the measures for employment or measurable skills gains. Ebony explained that for program year 2021 the program had a lot of participants that were still enrolled but had only earned a credential and were either not working or were working with no credential. This was negatively impacting performance numbers, so these participants were exited over four quarters during PY2021.

WSGM staff are now identifying participants the first quarter after exit that may not be employed and inviting them to Employability Workshops/Bootcamps and Job Fairs for them to have employment by the 2nd and 4th quarters. The program will also offer incentives for participants that are maintaining employment during follow-up. She explained that the program now has flexibility in defining what a training milestone is and this will also help participants meet measurable skills gains. For PY22 first quarter there were 35 participants exited with credentials and employment.

Rhonda asked if students were questioned during follow up as to why they were not working and what were the reasons given. Ebony answered some students were having to stay home in parental roles, some were working jobs such as Uber, Doordash and Instacart which allowed them flexibility to work only when needed, and a few were still reluctant to work due to covid and having elderly caregivers. Shelly asked if we talked to the employers about the need for schedule flexibility for youth participants. Ms. Tucker stated that they have, and more and more employers are trying to incentivize employees with flexibility the longer they are employed. Shelly also asked if the kids were just job hopping or quitting. Ebony answered it is a combination of the two and that is why she feels the soft skills training is a key component in employment retention. She indicated their program performance is not far off from the other programs in the area.

Adjournment

Chair McLean adjourned the meeting at 4:45PM. She informed the Board that the information that required a vote would be brought back at the next called meeting and an email would be sent out to let everyone know. She thanked everyone for their attendance.



Vice Chair, Vicki Boling



Secretary, Deborah Mack