

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION  
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS  
1856 THOMPSON BRIDGE RD., SUITE 3 ♦ GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA 30501  
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**January 29, 2026**

**Minutes**

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on January 29, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. at the Hall County Government Building located at 2875 Browns Bridge Rd, Gainesville, GA 30504. The following were present:

**Members Present**

Tim Bennett  
Ricky Carter  
Shannon Cole  
Amber Gaddis  
Vicki Jones Boling  
Timothy McDonald  
Mike McGraw  
Rhonda McLean  
Terri Partain  
Amy Poole  
Tonya Powers  
Tammy Rauch  
Shelby Ward

**Staff**

Alicia Page  
Danielle Avelar  
Diane Jackson  
Gina Kessler  
Heather Feldman  
Judy Reynolds  
Whitney Blair

**Guest**

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates  
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates

**Members Absent**

Lee Aurand-Hosey, Amanda Edmondson, Deborah Mack, Michelle Murray, Christine Osasu, Mary Overholt, Dana Skelton, and Beth Truelove were absent.

**Call to Order/Welcome**

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

## **Old Business**

Chair Powers asked the Board for consideration and a motion on the minutes of the October 30, 2025 Workforce Development Board (WDB) meeting. Ricky Carter made a motion to approve the October 30, 2025 meeting minutes. Amy Poole seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **New Business**

None

## **Reports and Announcements**

### **WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report**

WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director Whitney Blair informed the Board that a link to the State Plan was emailed to the Board for review and comment. WSGM received a competitive apprenticeship grant from the State. The Top State for Talent Apprenticeship grant is an initial \$250k with the potential for another \$250k, if the state's goals are met. WSGM is looking to enroll 100 apprentices over the next 18 months, and these dollars are to help us incentivize employers to begin apprenticeships in the WSGM region. To do this, WSGM will collaborate closely with its partners at Lanier Tech, North Georgia Tech, and Tammy Rauch of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) Business Services.

WSGM also received the annual Rapid Response grant of \$60k. These funds are earmarked for layoff aversion activities. In previous years, WSGM has been fortunate to experience minimal layoffs in the WSGM area and has been able to direct these funds to Incumbent Worker Training to upskill current employees for its local businesses. Hopefully, that will be the direction WSGM pursues again this year.

In mid-November, the TCSG team performed WSGM's annual audit. TCSG reviewed the financial, programmatic, and administrative records and policies. The staff work hard to prepare for this week—reviewing files and documentation and compiling the requested information to send to the state, and as always, they deserve credit for the great work they do. Ebony Tucker, Diane Jackson, and Danielle Avelar on the programs side and Alicia Page, Cheryl Smith, and Nona Turk on the Finance team. Director Blair reported that their work has once again paid off, and WSGM received a clean monitoring with no findings or observations.

WSGM will be bringing several items to the Board in April. WSGM will soon release an RFP for the One-Stop Operator and bring a recommendation to the next meeting. WSGM is required to go out for bid for the One-Stop Operator every three years. Additionally, WSGM will be renewing its One Stop MOU and Infrastructure Agreement and updating the Local Plan.

WSGM has updated the following local policies to reflect required changes made at the State level:

#### **Rapid Response Policy:**

- A section regarding Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grants and Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grants has been added.

#### **Participation and Exit Policy:**

- Defines “meaningful services” while allowing flexibility regarding the duration of service activities.
- Establishes guidance for addressing loss of contact during Follow-Up Services.

Selective Service Policy:

- Guidance for determining cases of knowing and willful failure to register.

Adult/Dislocated Policy:

- Defines the terms suitability, reasonable, appropriate, and necessary for training services.
- Provides local areas flexibility in making participants' training decisions that are aligned with federal expectations/standards and fiscally responsible practices.

## **Programs Update**

Adult/Dislocated Worker Supervisor Danielle Avelar informed the Board that, due to the adult funding levels, WSGM paused enrollment in July 2025. Since then, WSGM has slowly reopened the application process and has been very intentional and selective in approving participants to ensure WSGM can responsibly manage funds and meet performance requirements.

### **One-Stop Update**

Marsha Hopkins with Hopkins Associates explained that during the past quarter, October 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 the One-Stop Career Center had 114 customers. In addition, 77 individuals participating in GED classes visited the One-Stop Career Center.

The November One-Stop Partners meeting featured Shannon Cole, Dean of Adult Education for Lanier Technical College. Mr. Cole and Shelby Ward, Dean of Adult Education at North Georgia Technical College, updated the group about programs and services being offered at both schools. Due to the weather, the January bi-monthly Partners Meeting was canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at the One-Stop Center at 11:00 a.m. Minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website located at: <http://onestopworkgamtns.org/>

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, and other WorkSource staff members, along with Ms. Hopkins, have been serving on United Way of Hall County's One-Hall Committee on Financial Stability. The One-Hall Committee is currently planning a specialized Job Fair for individuals seeking entry-level jobs. The Committee is identifying employers and will plan and conduct two days of preparatory sessions in March for the applicants before the Job Fair in April.

In December, Hopkins Associates arranged for a presentation to members of the Rotary Club of Gainesville by Levi Koebel, Regional Operations Manager for TCSG's Office of Workforce Development. Ms. Hopkins met with students and faculty at Brenau's College of Communications and Business to discuss internships and entrepreneurship. Hopkins Associates is rescheduling a planned presentation about the One-Stop to a group of parent liaisons from the Hall County Schools.

Hopkins Associates continues to reach out to organizations and individuals throughout the region to share information about available workforce programs and services. Hopkins Associates sincerely appreciates the support and input of the Workforce Development Board.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with Hopkins Associates at (470) 577-0823 if you have any questions or suggestions regarding the One-Stop operation.

## **Budget**

Alicia Page, GMRC Finance Director, explained the budget report for the period ending December 31, 2025. As of December 31, 2025 the available funds for the Adult Program were \$1,163,501, with \$ 710,489 in obligations, leaving a remainder of \$ 453,011. The Dislocated Worker Program had available funds of \$305,610, with \$116,011 in expenses, leaving a balance of \$189,598. The Youth Program had \$548,786 available, with \$287,685 in obligations and expenses, leaving \$261,101. The Quest Grant was fully expended and expired on September 30, 2025. WSGM received the State Apprenticeship Grant, with a balance of \$246,933.

## **Performance**

Danielle Avelar, Adult/Dislocated Worker Supervisor, explained the performance report that was included in the agenda packet. The Adult program exceeded all measures except credential attainment and measurable skills gains, which should improve going forward. The Dislocated Worker program did not meet the employment Quarter 2 measure or the measurable skills measure, and median earnings are not shown due to the small number included in the measure. The Dislocated Worker Employment for Quarter 4 measure and the credential attainment are both currently being exceeded. The Youth program exceeds all measures except for the measurable skills gains, which will improve once new data is loaded.

## **Business Services Presentation**

Tammy Rauch, Business Services Regional Coordinator with TCSG, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the services offered through TCSG, including Technical Colleges Services, Quick Start, and the Office of Workforce Development, as well as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1 and Title III funds.

There are 22 colleges and 88 campuses in Georgia that offer Technical Education, Adult Education, and Economic Development. Technical education includes certificates, diplomas, and degree programs. Adult Education services include Adult Literacy, High School Diploma Equivalency, English as a Second Language, and Work-Readiness and Economic Development, which offer short-term, noncredit, customizable training leading to industry-recognized credentials. Quick Start provides customized Workforce Training as an incentive for companies that invest in and create jobs in Georgia.

WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA Title I is funding to support training and career services to individuals with barriers to employment. WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser) Employment Services provides funding to assist any person eligible to work in the U.S. in finding jobs.

Ms. Rauch explained Business Services and Customized Recruitment. Both Business Services staff and Customized Recruitment staff support employer needs by connecting job seekers with employment opportunities. Ms. Rauch also shared the WorkSource Georgia Portal and all the resources available within it.

## **Adjournment**

Chair Powers requested a motion to adjourn. Vicki Jones Boling made a motion to adjourn. Terri Partain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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Board Chair, Tonya Powers

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Secretary, Deborah Mack