

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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July 25, 2024

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on July 25, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. The meeting was held at Reflections at Lake Toccoa, 201 Black Mountain Rd., Toccoa, GA 30577. The following were present:

Members Present

Terry Merck
David Cagle
Ricky Carter
Shannon Cole
Amanda Edmondson (Zoom)
Mitch Griggs
Deborah Mack
Timothy McDonald
Rhonda McLean (Zoom)
Mary Overholt (Zoom)
Tonya Powers
Tammy Rauch
Beth Truelove
Shelby Ward

Staff

Danielle Avelar
Whitney Blair
Heather Feldman
Diane Jackson
Gina Kessler
Ebony Tucker
Nona Turk
Alicia Page
Chris Highland
Judy Reynolds

Guest

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Shelley Logan, Workforce Strategies Group LLC
Hannah Selvaraj, Youth Program Participant
Brandon Lounsbury attended as the representative for Board member Amber Gaddis
Alisha Hontz attended as the representative for Board member Christine Osasu
JoAnne Taylor (Zoom)

Members Absent

Vicki Bofing, William Chafin, Chris Dockery, Jennifer Fleming, Amber Gaddis, Mike McGraw, Dana Skelton, Christine Osasu, Jon Williams, and Sandra Williams were absent.

Call to Order/Welcome

Tonya Powers, Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcome the attendees. Chair Powers thanked everyone for their attendance. A quorum was not established. The meeting began with the agenda items that did not require a vote to allow time to establish a quorum.

New Business

New Provider Applications

Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor, informed the Board that WorkSource had received a new provider application for Lanier Technical College for the Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) training program. The cost of the program is \$15,300 and is 65 credit hours. The completion rate is 100%, the Credential rate is 100%, and the average wage is \$35 per hour. WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) staff reviewed and approved the program based on performance.

Quest Grant Report

Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor, provided a report on the Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST) Grant. Ms. Avelar explained that prior to the QUEST Grant, WSGM had the Disaster Relief COVID-19 Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) from 2020 through 2022. The QUEST Grant was received in 2022 and expires in 2025. The state received 15,000,000 in QUEST funds and \$12,000,000 in NDWG funds. WSGM received \$706,267 in QUEST funds and \$489,490 for NDWG. The QUEST Grant focuses on assisting the untapped workforce, which includes the long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, individuals who received pandemic unemployment, individuals who lost one day of employment during COVID, and self-employed individuals who became under-employed or unemployed. One of the programs that WSGM offered was the Building Futures Welding Program. WSGM partnered with the Salvation Army and Good News at Noon. WSGM had a total of 10 participants in the program. Eight were homeless, and six of the eight completed training. Three are employed full-time, one is in an internship, one is pending, and three are searching for employment. Tammy Rauch, with TCSG Business Services, assisted the participants with their resumes and finding employment. WSGM started with \$325,969 for the first round of QUEST funds, and the second round was \$380,298. The remaining balance is \$161,723. WSGM is looking for opportunities to help bring the money to other communities and locating the untapped workforce. One way we can use the funding is Accelerated Training Programs, which include boot camps that can be completed in three to five weeks. Local employers can benefit from the funds by setting up On-the-Job (OJT) Training and Internships. Internships are paid at \$15.00 per hour for 80 to 480 hours. For OJTs, employers can receive 50 percent to 75 percent reimbursement of the trainee's wages during training to cover the cost of the training. Ms. Avelar thanked the board for helping relay the information to your communities.

Reports / Announcements:

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report

Whitney Blair, Director, informed the Board that WSGM had received our funding for this program year. Director Blair shared a slide that showed the allocation history since 2018. Overall, state WIOA funding has been reduced due to the formula used at the federal level weighing so heavily on the state's UI numbers.

WSGM received a slight increase in Youth and Adult funding, but the total funding is still less than last year's due to cuts in Dislocated Worker funds. That is why additional funds like the QUEST grant Danielle Avelar discussed are necessary. The QUEST grant allows us to co-enroll participants and maximize their performance without spending our regular program dollars. As those dollars decrease, WSGM must look closely at suitability to ensure that the participants enrolled have the ability to complete training and find employment in order to meet area performance goals.

In addition to successfully requesting additional QUEST funds, WSGM applied for and received a final year of Sector grant funding of \$120,000. WSGM had a small remainder of our previous Sector money of about \$17,000 to add to that, for a total of about \$137,300 for the sector work, and Workforce Strategies will once again lead that effort.

WSGM recently negotiated performance for the next two years. Continuous improvement is still being pushed at the federal level, so the goals went up again. WSGM has yet to receive the final performance numbers for the year that ended June 30th, but WSGM is in good shape thanks to the work done by all the staff this year, supporting participants and ensuring the data to track them is entered correctly.

Every two years, WSGM undergoes a Board Certification process. TCSG reviews the Board's composition to ensure WSGM has the correct number of business representatives, adult education, economic development, etc. WSGM did receive certification for the next two years. Director Blair thanked Diane Jackson, who gathered all the information, ensured we had the correct representation, and kept us organized.

WSGM received word that our monitoring will be in February instead of the usual September date, so WSGM will begin preparing for that late this year. At the October meeting, WSGM is planning to do Board training, since WSGM has had several new members over the last year. WSGM will also put together updated information and binders for the Board.

Budget

Nona Turk, Senior Financial Assistant, explained the budget was included in the agenda packet emailed to the Board before the meeting. The report was for the period ending June 30, 2024. The available funds for the Adult Program were \$593,082.95 with \$233,794.01 obligated, which leaves a remaining balance of \$359,288.93 that will expire on June 30, 2025. The Dislocated Worker Program's available balance was 23,884.32, with \$52.87 in obligations. The Youth Program had \$772,863.68 available with \$220,963.89 in obligations, leaving a remaining balance of \$551,899.79. \$84,004.32 of the balance will expire on June 30, 2025. The remaining balance of \$467,895.47 does not expire until June 30, 2026. The High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) Grant had a balance of \$15,741.09 and will expire on December 31, 2024. WSGM recently received a PY24 HDCI Grant for \$120,000.00, which can be used until June 30th, 2025. The Rapid Response Grant had \$40,875.37, expiring on December 31, 2024. The QUEST Grant had \$391,592.04 and \$114,5654.77 in obligations. The QUEST funds will expire on September 30, 2025.

One-Stop Update

Benjie Hopkins, One-Stop Operator, gave a brief update on the One-Stop office. From April 1, 2024, through the end of June 2024, the One-Stop had 383 customers, a little over a 10 percent increase from the first quarter of the calendar year. In addition, the Youth Center had 213 customers during the second quarter. Many of these were participants in the on-site GED program. Hopkins Associates plans and hosts bi-monthly Partners Meetings at the One-Stop Center. The purpose of the meetings is to learn about services available, to share updates from each partner organization, and to promote referrals. For over seven years, these meetings have expanded to include a wide range of community programs and resources related to workforce development in the region. Each meeting has a focus topic. These topics are determined from

group discussions concerning common issues in service delivery. At the most recent meeting on May 28, 2024, 35 people attended, five of these for the first time. The guest speaker was Glenda Watts with Hall Area Transit. Ms. Watts provided information about the WeGo transportation system operating in Hall County. The next Partners Meeting will be on Tuesday, July 30, 2024, at the One-Stop Office at 11:00 a.m. The focus topic will be childcare resources. The minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website: <http://onestopworkgamtns.org/> Hopkins Associates continues to reach out to share information about workforce programs and services available to employers and individuals in the WSGM region. Hopkins Associates welcomes the Board's input regarding ideas for outreach and improvements in service delivery. Please contact Hopkins Associates if the Board has questions or suggestions regarding the One-Stop operation. Hopkins Associates at 470 577-0823.

Workforce Strategies Group LLC Report

Shelley Logan with the Workforce Strategies Group gave an overview of their activities. Summer is still a happening time for Georgia Mountains Works (GMW), Region 2 MFG Sector Workforce Development Strategy. GMW has received three new employer partners: ALBAFORM, Lawson Air Conditioning and Plumbing in Hall County and American Woodmark in Stephens County. The Occupational Priorities survey will go out to employers at the end of July, which will drive workgroup and training activities.

GMW manufacturing employers toured Morito Scovill in Habersham County and Freudenberg NOK in White County. GMW had a facilitated conversation with employers on Competency Based Job Descriptions Workshop. Mrs. Logan shared an example of a competency-based job description for industrial machinery mechanics.

GMW shared participant spotlights from Christian at IMS Gear, Jeynci, John Soules Foods; and Christina and Sabrina, ALBAFORM. These spotlights highlight promotions and success stories from apprenticeship, Supervisor and Industry Leadership (SAIL) and the Leadership Excellence and Development Program (LEAD), and boot camp offerings. GMW also attended the ASI's Work Based Learning (WBL) Graduating Student event. SAIL and LEAD had over twenty graduates for this past quarter. SAIL at Lanier Technical College is sold out. There are 11 seats that remain at North Georgia Technical College. WSGM's OJT funds support these programs.

Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Worker Program Supervisor, explained the most recent performance numbers for quarter three of PY23. WorkSource Georgia Mountains had met or exceeded all performance measures except for the measurable skills gains for the Adult funding.

New Business

Chair Powers announced that a quorum had been established and that the Board could now vote on the action items.

Consideration of Minutes

Chair Powers asked the Board for comments and/or a motion on the April 25, 2024, WDB meeting minutes. Timothy McDonald made a motion to approve the April 25, 2024, meeting minutes and Deborah Mack seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Local Plan

Director Blair explained that each local area must develop and submit a comprehensive four-year local plan to the Governor. The plan was posted for public comment for 30 days- no comments for the public were received during this time period.

Board member Ricky Carter commented that he had read the plan and that he was specifically looking for three things. The first was the Mission Statement, which he found on page 22. The second was how to get the word out. He found that on page 22, Table 1.16 shows strategic focus areas and associated goals. Mr. Carter stated that WSGM has cooperation, collaboration, and communication. He asked about coordination and how to coordinate with other groups such as Chambers, Health Departments, and Pastor organizations. These organizations hear people's problems, and they could share WSGM services. Literacy Centers, alternative education organizations such as Mountain Ed and others would also be important. Coordination with these organizations could help to get the word out about WSGM services. The Public Awareness section states that outreach should be created for employers. WSGM should create outreach to potential employees as well. Mr. Carter also suggested using participants who have gone through the program.

Director Blair thanked Mr. Carter for taking the time to read the plan.

Chair Powers asked for a motion to approve the plan with the mentioned updates made by Mr. Carter. Mr. Carter made a motion to approve the plan with the mentioned updates. Mitch Griggs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adult/Dislocated Worker Policy Updates

Director Blair informed the Board of the required policy updates. State policy updates required that the local policy be changed. The following items were adjusted in the local policy to reflect the changes at the state level:

- **Data Validation Policy:** Data Validation is the series of internal controls to verify the reliability of data. The Data Validation Policy was updated to reflect the changes at the state level, including referencing TEGL 23-19 and the source documentation list published by USDOL (TCSG manual, section 4.2, Data Validation WIG)
- **Apprenticeship Policy:** Local policy updated to reflect a clarification of the use of WIOA funds for apprenticeship (TCSG manual, section 3.4.1.7)
- **Career Services Assessment Policy:** Updated language regarding the Individual Employment Plan, Individual Service Strategy, and Objective Assessment (TCSG manual, section 3.3.1)
- **Follow-up Services Policy:** The Follow-up Services Policy was expanded to include updates from the State (TCSG manual, section 3.4.6)
- **Supportive Services Policy:** Local policy updated to ensure compliance with documentation and services provided (TCSG manual, section 3.4.4)

Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.


Board Chair, Tonya Powers


Secretary, Deborah Mack