

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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July 31, 2025

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on July 31, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. at the Union County Community Center located at 129 Recreation Rd., Blairsville, GA 30512. The following were present:

Members Present

Ricky Carter
Shannon Cole
Amanda Edmondson
Deborah Mack
Timothy McDonald
Michelle Murray
Mary Overholt
Terri Partain
Amy Poole
Tonya Powers
Tammy Rauch
Dana Skelton
Shelby Ward

Staff

Heather Feldman
Alicia Page
Diane Jackson
Ebony Tucker
Whitney Blair
Laura Brown

Guest

Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Shelley Logan, Workforce Strategies Group LLC

Members Absent

Vicki Boling Jones, Amber Gaddis, Mike McGraw, Rhonda McLean, Beth Truelove, Christine Osasu, Jon Williams, and Sandra Williams were absent.

Call to Order/Welcome

Tonya Powers, Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. Chair Powers introduced a new board member, Terri Partain. A quorum was established.

Old Business

Chair Powers asked the Board for comments and a motion on the minutes from the April 24, 2025 Workforce Development Board (WDB) meeting. Deborah Mack made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Mary Overholt seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

New Provider Applications

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director, informed the Board that WSGM received a new provider application for Piedmont University for the Master of Science in Athletic Training program. The cost of the program is \$22,892 and is thirty-two credit hours. The completion rate is 90%. The training-related employment rate is 85.71% and the average wage is \$21 per hour. WorkSource Georgia Mountains staff reviewed and based on the occupation being a high-growth field, approved the program.

Reports and Announcements

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report

Director Blair informed the Board about the WSGM activities since the previous meeting. WorkSource Staff updated the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy to reflect changes at the state level. The changes were primarily updates on actions the State will take when reviewing ETPL performance that providers should be aware of.

WSGM is on an application pause as of July 1, 2025. Nearby WorkSource Areas, Northeast Georgia, Northwest Georgia, and Cobb are on a waitlist as well. The purpose of this pause is to assess the obligations for the remainder of the summer and fall semester and ensure that WSGM can provide tuition vouchers and supplies as expected. WorkSource staff are meeting monthly with Finance. Alicia Page, Finance Director, and her team do an excellent job of keeping up with the obligations and projecting expenses to keep us aware. WSGM will pick up individuals as funding allows. WSGM was lucky to have carryover funds from the Adult and Dislocated programs last year. WSGM is trying to be cautious and avoid making the phone call to a participant that we cannot pay the tuition or childcare that the participant counts on. WSGM enrolled about ten students last week and is hopeful that by the time of the next Board meeting, at the end of October, the waitlist will have ended.

Director Blair reported that WSGM is on a bit of a hot streak for National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) awards. WorkSource has won one every year since 2020. The project this year was “Empowering Employers Through Apprenticeships: A Georgia Mountains Works Webinar Initiative.” The project was completed by Workforce Strategies using the Apprenticeship Navigator Grant that WSGM received from TCSG last October. Director Blair thanked Workforce Strategies for the progress they have made in advancing our manufacturing sector strategy.

Director Blair updated the Board on the summer training cohorts. In Stephens County, a manufacturing program was launched with North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) and Stephens County High School. WSGM had five participants who all graduated. One student, who completed the Work Based Learning at ASI, was hired and received a pay raise. Delta Authority, GM Wood Products, and Carry On Lavonia also hired graduates from the class.

The Electromechanical cohort that started in 2020 launched again this year with a mix of nine Adult and Youth participants. It is in partnership with Lanier Technical College (LTC) and the Georgia Poultry Federation. Graduation is next week, and all nine participants are set to graduate. On the final day of classes, employers will be on-site to interview participants. Based on previous history, we expect all graduates to be offered positions.

The Leadership class offerings in partnership with NGTC and LTC are kicking off. The Lanier Tech SAIL class began on Tuesday with students from six employers, and North Georgia Tech is set to start on August

13 at the Toccoa Campus. Three employers have signed up so far, and they are still taking students. The class did start with a manufacturing focus, but WSGM had government and other sectors participate, which they found incredibly beneficial. Director Blair stated that if the board or anyone interested would like to participate, especially in the Toccoa class, please speak to Shelley Logan, Greg Vitek, or reach out to the WorkSource office.

Director Blair informed the Board that the PY24 Impact Report was included in the agenda packet and placed on the tables. The report's numbers are from July 2024 through June 2025, which is a snapshot of who WSGM served and where our dollars went.

One-Stop Update

Marsha Hopkins with Hopkins Associates gave an update on the WorkSource Georgia Mountains One-Stop. During the most recent quarter, April 1 through June 30, the One-Stop Career Center had 299 customers visit, and the Youth Center had 83 GED students visit. This figure was up slightly from the previous quarter.

Hopkins Associates continues to plan and host bi-monthly Partner Meetings at the One-Stop. The purpose of these meetings is to learn about services available, to share updates from each partner organization, and to promote referrals. These meetings have expanded to include a broad range of community programs and resources related to workforce development in the region with a focus topic. At the July 29th meeting, thirty-one people attended, including three first-time attendees. Our guest speaker was Levi Koebel, Regional Operations Manager at the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) Office of Workforce Development (OWD). Mr. Koebel explained the various services related to employment offered through TCSG. Tammy Rauch, OWD, TCSG, also spoke about employment services available, and those for employers. The next Partner Meeting will be on Tuesday, September 30, 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/>

Budget

Alicia Page, Finance Director, explained that the budget was emailed to the Board before the meeting. The report is for the period ending June 30, 2025. As of June 30 the available funds for the Adult Program were \$695,025, with \$ 80,345 in obligations and projected expenses, leaving a remaining balance of \$614,680 to be spent on the Adult Program. The Dislocated Worker Program had \$ 12,060, all of which was obligated, meaning WSGM has fully expended all the PY24 FY25 Dislocated Worker funding. The Youth Program had available funds of \$896,102, with \$95,885 obligated, which leaves \$800,216 to be spent on Youth Programs and that includes the new PY25 funding that was received in April of this year. All Sector Strategy and Rapid Response funding has been fully expended. The Quest Grant has a balance of \$15,555, which will expire on September 30, 2025. WSGM has expended the Apprenticeship Navigator Grant as well.

Georgia Mountains Works MFG Sector

Shelley Logan with the WorkSource Strategies Group gave an overview of their activities. Manufacturing makes up 17% of the workforce in our 13-county region, which is the same as last year. The next two highest employment sectors are healthcare and retail. Georgia Mountains Works has five new employer partners: Catapult Construction, located in Lumpkin County; Fieldale Farms, Habersham County; Geveko Markings, Hall County; GM Wood Products, Stephens County; and Mincey Marble, Hall County.

WorkSource Strategies Group visited seven manufacturing companies in the region, and five were with existing partners: ADC, Bitzer, Caldwell, Fieldale, Haering, Panel Built, and VDL.

WorkSource Strategies toured ASI in Stephens County. North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) had the Quality Tech Control (QTC) Apprentices accompany them on the tour. One of the most interesting things about ASI is that 30% of their workforce are current and former Work-Based Learning students. They have also toured Panel Built in Union County. Panel Built is currently undergoing expansion. Next month, WorkSource Strategies will be touring Linde-Wiemann in Hart County.

WorkSource Strategies Group changed how they collect and promote the job openings of the Manufacturing (MFG) sector partners. WorkSource Strategies Group retrieves the employer job openings posts from the WorkSource Georgia Portal and shares them on the Georgia Mountains Works social media pages. The new process will increase partnership and eliminate duplication of efforts.

The SAIL & LEAD Training Program graduated twenty-eight students in Supervisor Training. Georgia Mountains Works Manufacturing Employers developed this program. During this Fiscal Year, WorkSource Georgia Mountains, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) funded seven of the sixteen companies that participated in this training.

The Apprenticeship Navigator Webinar Series is complete and posted on the YouTube channel and the website. The webinar will help employers implement a registered apprenticeship.

WorkSource Strategies Group will be partnering with TCSG to make the transition from high school Work-Based Learning to company apprenticeship seamless. This transition will come with funding assistance. Industry Maintenance Apprenticeship will be redesigned to fast-track based on need. Also, work continues creating Train the Trainer as requested by GMW MFG Employer Partners. In September, GMW will have an in-person MFG Sector meeting at Lanier Technical College.

Youth Program Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, provided an update on program performance for PY24 through the third quarter as of May 10, 2025. The Adult Program exceeds all performance measures except for Measurable Skills Gains. The Dislocated Worker Program is meeting or exceeding all measures, and the Youth Program is also meeting or exceeding all measures. Ms. Tucker noted that she will present final performance outcomes for all programs at the October meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Powers requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Amy Poole made a motion to adjourn, Terri Partain seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Board Chair, Tonya Powers

Secretary, Deborah Mack