

Local Elected Officials (LEO) Board Meeting
October 24, 2024
3:00PM

Minutes

The Local Elected Officials (LEOs) met on October 24, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held at The Lumpkin County Public Library located at 56 Mechanicsville Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533.

CALL TO ORDER

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. A quorum was not established. The following were present:

Members Present

Chris Dockery (Lumpkin County)
Tara Simmons (Stephens County)
Travis Turner (White County)
Jim Conley (City of Blairsville)

GMRC Staff Present

Heather Feldman, Executive Director
Gina Kessler, Executive Assistant
Whitney Blair, WorkSource Director
Diane Jackson, Administrative Assistant
Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor
Ebony Tucker, Youth Supervisor

Guests

Deborah Mack
JoAnne Taylor

Consideration of Minutes

Due to a lack of a quorum, the minutes from September 29, 2021, October 27, 2022, and October 26, 2023, meetings were not considered.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Reports / Announcements:

Whitney Blair, WSGM Director, provided an update on the activities for WorkSource. The Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs served 696 occupational skills training participants during PY23 and enrolled 316 new participants for a 20% increase from PY22.

This number included students who participated in occupational skills training, were served by case managers to assist in their job search or completed training. The participants were monitored for success for one year. Those eligible for occupational skills training received tuition, books, supply assistance, and supportive services like gas money and childcare.

During PY23, WorkSource paid over \$1.1 million to support students attending occupational skills training, with about 16% of that number going to supportive services and the rest toward tuition, books, and supplies. The median wage for participants completing training was \$22.00, and 87% of participants were employed after one year.

Participants primarily attended North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) or Lanier Technical College (LTC); WSGM also served students at the University of North Georgia, Piedmont University, and Brenau University, and other area schools. Students were also assisted in earning their GED or credits to complete their high school diploma and then transitioning to further their education or entering the workforce through partnerships with NGTC and LTC Adult Education and area Mountain Education Charter schools.

Interest in short-term training continues to increase, with many participants attending Dalys or other providers to earn their CDL-A. In response to the demand for short-term training from job seekers and employers, WSGM has actively sought and promoted available short-term programs. WorkSource has continued to work with Arrendale Transition Center, NGTC, and Kubota to provide training and jobs to participants at the center. These participants can be hired at Kubota and make \$18 an hour during training. Once they complete and pass their welding test, they make \$21 an hour. The retention rate is high at around 75% for one year after training.

New this year and a project WorkSource is proud of is the partnership with Good News at Noon and the Salvation Army. WorkSource was able to hold a boot camp for seven homeless individuals. The welding trailer was parked onsite at the Good News shelter. WorkSource staff worked hard to find jobs for the participants to interview, which were within walking distance of the shelters. WorkSource purchased bicycles for participants to assist with their employment and worked to help one individual get his son into childcare with the fees waived so he could attend training and be available for employment. The homeless population is a challenge. Director Blair stated that she was proud of the WorkSource staff for stepping up and going the extra mile.

Students have put in 5000 hours of study time at the One-Stop Youth Center. 15 students have earned occupational skills certifications while attending GED classes, and 40% of participants are transitioning to post-secondary education, employment, or other occupational skills training. This year, WorkSource staff brought employers to talk about their jobs with the students to give the students a snapshot of what having a full-time job would entail.

Business Services has continued to grow with OJT, IWT, WEX, internships, and apprenticeships, all available options for participants and employers. WSGM has paid more than \$265,000 to area employers this year through training or wage subsidy reimbursements.

Sector Strategy work has continued with efforts concentrated on the manufacturing industry. WSGM has contracted with WorkSource Strategies to do this work, and they are very engaged and doing an excellent

job. This effort includes a steering committee for employers, community partners, stakeholders, and K-12 and post-secondary educators. One employer's priority for PY23 was a Leadership Academy. The employers involved met with LTC and created a curriculum for the program to be offered through the Economic Development Department. The program has been an immense success; multiple classes have been held at LTC and NGTC. Companies that took part included Kings Hawaiian, Specialty Appliance, Panel Built, Patterson Pump, ASI, and more. WorkSource is continuing the programs this year and has filled classes at LTC and NGTC for fall enrollment and plan another for the spring. Companies are eligible for Incumbent Worker training dollars to help subsidize training.

Our regular PY22 funding, which ended June 2023, totaled \$2.4 million. In PY23, our allocation decreased slightly to around \$2.3 million. However, we have planned for these decreases and actively seek other available funding sources.

Due to the success of the Quest Grant, WorkSource was awarded additional Quest dollars, making the total amount received around \$900,000 since September 2022. WorkSource has 11 more months to expend the remaining \$185,000 in Quest funding. Director Blair is confident that WorkSource will put the Quest money back into the community. The Quest funds have served over 100 individuals so far. WorkSource also received additional dollars from the State due to the Sector programming, totaling \$120,000 plus \$70,000 for Rapid Response, which helped make up the deficit of regular WIOA dollars. WorkSource Georgia Mountains was also one of the three local areas picked by the State to apply for an Apprenticeship grant, which Director Blair submitted on October 24th.

At Georgia Mountains, we are one of the few areas in Georgia that provides the majority of services through in-house staff. Director Blair believes that the connection case managers have to the participants they serve is one of the most significant reasons for our success. The staff genuinely care about the lives they touch and the success of this region and your cities and counties. Director Blair stated that she appreciated all that each of the Local Elected Officials do to support WorkSource and the Regional Commission. If WorkSource could assist in any way or an elected official would like more information on WorkSource Georgia Mountains, they should reach out to Whitney Blair or any of the staff.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Greg James, CLEO