

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
WORKSOURCE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS
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April 24, 2025

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Workforce Development Board (WDB) met on April 24, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. at the Lavonia Railroad Depot, 1269 East Main Street, Lavonia, GA 30553. The following were present:

Members Present

Tim Bennett
David Cagle
Ricky Carter
Shannon Cole
Amanda Edmondson
Mitch Griggs
Deborah Mack
Christine Osasu
Amy Poole
Tonya Powers
Tammy Rauch
Dana Skelton
Shelby Ward

Staff

Danielle Avelar
Whitney Blair
Heather Feldman
Alicia Page
Diane Jackson
Gina Kessler
Ebony Tucker
Laura Brown

Guest

Ashley Rose Dodd
Terri Partain
Greg Vitek, Workforce Strategies Group LLC
Shelley Logan, Workforce Strategies Group LLC

Members Absent

Vicki Boling Jones, Chris Dockery, Amber Gaddis, Timothy McDonald, Mike McGraw, Rhonda McLean, Michelle Murray, Mary Overholt, Beth Truelove, 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 thanked everyone for their attendance. A quorum was established.

Old Business

Consideration of Minutes

Chair Powers informed the Board that the minutes from the meeting on January 30, 2025 were included in their emailed agenda packet. Chair Powers asked for a motion to approve the January 30, 2025 minutes. Shelby Ward motioned to approve the minutes, Mitch Griggs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

New Provider Applications

Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor, informed the Board that WorkSource had received a new provider application for North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) for the Social Work Assistant Diploma and the Social Work Degree training programs. The cost of the diploma program is \$7,504 and is 48 credit hours. The cost of the degree program is \$8,180 and is 51 credit hours. Both programs are new at NGTC; therefore, no performance measures were submitted. WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) staff reviewed and, based on the programs being identified as growth and demand occupations for the WorkSource Georgia Mountains area, approved the programs.

Reports/Announcements

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Report

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains Director, informed the Board on the WorkSource Georgia Mountains activities since the previous meeting.

TCSG MONITORING RESULTS

WorkSource had a clean audit with no findings or observations. The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) Office of Workforce Development (OWD) staff look at information from the programmatic and financial sides of the program. Director Blair credited the finance team, Alicia Page, Nona Turk, Cheryl Smith, and the program staff. Ebony Tucker and Danielle Avelar did a great job of ensuring WSGM completed what was required for case management. Diane Jackson ensured that WSGM gathered all the necessary eligibility documents and did not serve anyone that was ineligible. Ms. Jackson also provided all the information auditors requested regarding the Workforce Board. Director Blair noted that she is proud of her staff and often receives compliments about their helpfulness, friendliness, and professionalism.

PRE-SCREEN AND APPLICATION

Director Blair was excited to share that WSGM has launched online screening and application tools. The tools are computer, phone, and tablet friendly. Interested individuals or referrals can go to the website and fill out the screening tool and, in most cases, receive a call back the next day from a staff member. With the new platform, WSGM can add its branding, and the survey results are securely stored. The screening and application look more professional and inspire more confidence that the personal information asked for will be managed correctly. The tool saves time for both the applicants and staff as it helps determine qualifications or if the applicant is ready for training on the front end.

Once a staff member reviews the pre-screen and believes the individual would be a good candidate for the program, the applicant is sent a link to the online application. The applicants can start and save their progress if needed, but once submitted, it goes directly to the intake staff to be put in line for review, and the participant receives an email letting them know the next steps.

YOUTH CENTER UPDATE

WSGM began leasing the suite beside the One-Stop offices as a Youth Center that opened around February 2020. Once COVID ended and the Youth Center could be used, the center hosted the WSGM on-site GED classes, workshops, and a clothing closet. Ebony Tucker has done a great job utilizing the space over the years, but unfortunately, the youth allocations have not entirely kept up with our needs. After much discussion with the Executive Director, Heather Feldman, and the finance staff, WSGM has decided not to renew the Youth Center lease for the upcoming year. It is more important to put those funds back into the budget and make them available for participant use. The good news is that WSGM has a great One-Stop space and will be converting the training room area for the youth. WSGM will be able to continue offering the GED program as well as workshops. WorkSource will continue to work with its partners in the area to ensure other needs are met as they arise.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

In a bright spot for the Youth Program, WSGM received a transfer of a little over \$271,000 in funding from WorkSource CSRA. With Youth Program allocations continuing to shrink and the lack of information about this year's allocations, the transfer gives WSGM a little cushion. WorkSource Georgia Mountains owes credit to, and thanks, Ebony Tucker for reaching out to her peers and working so hard to get additional funding for the Youth Program.

WORKFORCE WEDNESDAYS

Director Blair shared the new initiative that WSGM is a part of in Hart County. Terri Partain, who was present at the meeting with the Hart Industrial Business Authority, got WSGM looped into the Hart County Archway Partnership they have going on with the University of Georgia (UGA). Something that came out of the partnership is Workforce Wednesdays: Skill up and Stand Out! A copy of the flyer was placed on the tables for the Board members. Once a month, WorkSource, TCSG Employment Services, Hart County Resources, and partners will be at the Adult Learning Center to help with resumes and applications and share training opportunities. Ms. Partain has been working hard to get the word out, and WSGM has been using its resources to target individuals. WSGM is hoping these Wednesdays will become a resource and have a positive impact on residents and employers.

One-Stop Update

Hopkins Associates could not attend the meeting; therefore, Director Blair shared the One-Stop update. During the most recent quarter, January through March 2025, the One-Stop Career Center served 296 customers, and the Youth Center served 163 students. Hopkins Associates continues to plan and host bi-monthly Partners Meetings at One-Stop. The purpose of these meetings is to learn about available services, to share updates from each partner organization, and to promote referrals. 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. At the most recent meeting on March 25th 35 people attended and several of them were first-time attendees. Guest speaker, Jay Parrish, Chief of Police for the City of Gainesville, led a discussion about better coordination of local services, especially for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The next Partners Meeting will be Tuesday, May 27th at the One-Stop Center at 11:00 a.m. The focus topic will be Family and Children Services. The minutes of all One-Stop Partners meetings are available online at the One-Stop website: <http://onestopworkgamtms.org/> Hopkins Associates participate as members of several community and regional organizations, sharing information about workforce services and resources available through WorkSource and the One-Stop Center. Hopkins Associated welcomes input from the Workforce Board members and staff.

Budget

Alicia Page, Finance Director, explained the budget in the agenda packet was emailed to the Board before the meeting. The report is for the period ending March 31, 2025. As of March 31st the available funds for the Adult Program were \$1,128,042 with \$404,054 in obligations and projected expenses. Leaving a remaining balance of \$723,988 to be spent on Adult Programs. The Dislocated Worker Program had available funds of \$72,718 with \$44,032 in obligations and projected expenses, leaving a remaining balance of \$28,685 to be spent on Dislocated Worker Programs. The Youth Program had available funds of \$386,971 with \$167,033 in obligations and projected expenses, leaving a remaining balance of \$219,937. All the Sector Strategy Grant funds have been expended.

The Quest Grant had a balance of \$103,581. These funds will expire on September 30, 2025, and are expected to be fully expended prior to the expiration date. The Apprenticeship Navigator Grant has been fully expended.

Georgia Mountains Works MFG Sector

Shelley Logan with the Workforce Strategies Group gave an overview of their activities. Georgia Mountains Works (GMW) has added three new employer partners: Medmix, in Hall County; Corrugated Replacements from Union County; and Mincey Marble, in Hall County. GMWs met with eight employers. They also met with Terri Partain and discussed apprenticeships. GMWs attended Be Pro Be Proud at Franklin, Union, and White County High Schools. The Dawson County Chamber invited GMWs to accompany them on their industry visits. They also attended the Hart County Industry Round Table with Ms. Partain. GMW recently toured Harbin Lumber in Hart County. The Supervisory and Leadership (SAIL) Program has a total of 29 students who are scheduled to complete it next month. GMW has 186 touches for apprenticeship navigators, which include a 15-minute webinar for the employer. The webinars are recorded and are on their website.

Performance

Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor, explained the most recent performance numbers for quarter two of PY24. The Adult Program met or exceeded all measures. The Dislocated Worker Program exceeded all measures except for credential attainment. The median earnings for Dislocated Workers were not showing due to the low number of exiters. The Youth Program exceeded or met all measures. Ms. Tucker shared a report in the agenda packet that showed the effectiveness of serving employers. WSGM was third out of the 19 WorkSource Areas in the state.

Chair Powers announced that this is the last meeting for Board member Mitch Griggs. Sadly, Workforce Development is losing him from the Board; however, he will still be part of the region for Economic Development. Mr. Griggs has been a WDB member since 2011, when the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission took the program over. Mr. Griggs has not missed any meetings throughout his membership. He has been with Economic Development for seventeen years. Mitch will be joining Economic Development in Dublin, Georgia.

Mr. Griggs stated he has been with Economic Development for 30 years, 17 of which were in Union County. Mr. Griggs is proud of the work that was done in Union County. He stated he is fortunate and excited to be going to Dublin. One of the things he will miss the most is the people in this region, GMRC, and WorkSource Georgia Mountains.

Adjournment

Chair Powers requested a motion to adjourn. Mitch Griggs motioned to adjourn, Shannon Cole seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.


Board Chair, Tonya Powers


Secretary, Deborah Mack