

SC WORKS

UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board Meeting
Via In Person, Virtual and Conference Call
Monday, August 2, 2021
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

Members Present: Ann Blanton, John Calhoun, Candi Lalonde, Kassie Burton, Taiese Kidd, Debbie Walling, Julie Bagwell, Roberta Kinard, Max Crawford, Darron Wilson, Roy Lowe, Chad Ulmer, and Matt Wiggins

Members Absent: Scott Coleman, Theresa Stover, Shunna V. Jeter, Dale Callum, Betty Carol Jones, Camilla Haigler, and Kevin Crouch

Staff Present: Ann Skinner, Billy Morgan, and Linda Lagroon

Guest: Katie Craven and Ursula McFadden, GLEAMNS; and Melissa Rodgers and Zach Nickerson, SC Department of Employment and Workforce

Welcome, Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Ann Blanton welcomed members and guests. The meeting was called to order.

The meeting conference call roll call was conducted by Linda Lagroon.

Approval of Minutes for May 3, 2021: <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Ms. Blanton reminded members that minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived on-line. There was a motion by Debbie Walling, seconded by John Calhoun, to approve the minutes. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

Vote on Incoming Chair – Ann Blanton

The next item is to approve Chair elect, Ms. Taiese Kidd. Ms. Blanton thanked Taiese Kidd for being willing to serve. Darron Wilson motioned to approve Ms. Taiese Kidd as the Chair of the Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board, which was seconded by John Calhoun. The motion approved unanimously.

Reports

Usage Report – Ursula McFadden

Ursula McFadden reviewed the Quarterly Usage Report which covered July 2020 through June 2021. Staff and Partners are making sure that individuals know the Centers are open daily by appointment to receive needed services. Individuals are continuing to visit the Centers for a variety of services as seem with the number of customer visits. The Business Services Team are doing well with reaching out to employers to let them know that the Centers are available for employer services, which is evident by the number of Open Positions for Staff Managed Job Orders. Currently, staff are working on improving the partner-to-partner referral process to make it more uniform.

Caseload Report – Linda Lagroon

Contractor Enrollment report showed an average of 49 participant enrollments for 4.5 case managers, which is an increase over the last two reports. The expected active caseload per case manager is 55. The contractor is continuing to recruit and enroll clients.

Fuji Update – Billy Morgan

Fuji Manufacturing has announced its plans to stop all manufacturing at the Greenwood location. This affects 420 employees.

Due to Fuji and Upper Savannah fielding calls from employers wanting to connect with Fuji workers, staff worked with Fuji on a unified response. This response informs that it will be in the spring of 2022 before any sizeable layoffs occur which will continue through the end of the year. As the end draws near, onsite and/or offsite job fairs will be held to help the dislocated workers connect with employers.

Partner staff are planning to be onsite each week to assist with resumes, to offer workshops, perform mock interviews, help with SC Works accounts and to answer general questions about unemployment. Staff are also there to connect affected employees with new job opportunities, to inform them about training and to help them get enrolled in programs that will lead to their next job.

Hiring Events – Billy Morgan

Recently, there were two successful in-person hiring events at Piedmont Technical College. Workforce Development staff partnered with Piedmont Tech to have job fairs that coincided with the Manufacturing and Healthcare Career Showcases that were scheduled.

The Manufacturing, Logistics and Skilled Trades event was held on July 20, from noon-2PM. There were 21 employers in attendance and 108 job-seekers.

The Healthcare event was held on July 23, from 9am-noon. There were 33 employers that attended and 84 job-seekers.

Proposed Priority of Services Definition Change – Ann Skinner

There are three main sources of funding. Upper Savannah receives funds to serve adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Dislocated Workers are individuals who have lost employment as a result of a plant closure or slowdown. Youth have a barrier to employment. Adults generally are low income and/or basic skills deficient. Workforce Boards have the ability to expand eligibility for the adult program so up to 25% can qualify through the Upper Savannah Workforce Board's priority of service.

The Workforce Board had temporarily given priority to individuals seeking training for a medical career which they could enter within one year. The temporary designation was in effect as long as the nation was under an emergency declaration. The hope is that the emergency would soon be over, but there still would be an urgent need to train people for medical careers. The Workforce Board has historically prioritized manufacturing and healthcare training. Manufacturing is still important, but manufacturers have options when there is a skill shortage. They can use cross trained staff or hire temporary workers. Healthcare requires licensed professionals, and a hospital cannot use food service workers to take vital signs and distribute medicine. So far, the area has enrolled about a dozen individuals as a result of the priority of service change. Upper Savannah staff request that the policy be made permanent so the Upper Savannah Workforce Division could continue to help fill critical shortages. Ms. Skinner said there would be a need for board vote on four items; and if there were no objections, all four could be documented with one vote.

Proposed Training Policy Changes – Ann Skinner

Area training policies are detailed in the 2020 Upper Savannah Workforce Plan. Updates are needed to meet employer's demand. The list of proposed changes and recommended were reviewed:

1. Eliminating requirement that providers have a physical location in North Carolina, South Carolina, or Georgia to increase competition.
2. Offer training in skills trades including carpentry, plumbing, electrical and building inspector. Add patient care technician to training list.
3. Increase training cap from \$7,500 to \$10,000.
4. Eliminate requirement that training providers for fixed price training agree to bill half after program completion/placement.

The Workforce Board was asked to amend the training policies to allow contracting with providers directly for training rather than solely relying on the Eligible Training Providers' List. To be on the list, providers must agree to furnish performance information about all trainees, not just ones who received WIOA funding. Most state technical colleges have elected not to be on the list leaving a void of in-demand low-cost training. Upper Savannah staff can (with board approval) document that there is not sufficient training on the list and instead contract directly with the vendor. Staff anticipates contracting with Piedmont Technical College and possibly some of the county K-12 schools that have training available to adults.

Proposed Supportive Services Change – Ann Skinner

Staff recommended that the Supportive Services Policy be updated to include purchasing inexpensive pay-as-you-go cell phones for clients unable to get a phone. Greenwood has a public transportation trial, but riders must call for a ride. WIOA would not purchase I-Phones or the latest Samsung phones

but the least expensive phone which would allow clients to check their work schedules and request or schedule a ride. It is anticipated the phone and starter airtime would be less than \$120.

2021-2022 Budgets – Ann Skinner

The budget spreadsheet was reference from the handouts which were distributed via Thursday. The overall funding has decreased. The area is getting slightly more new money, but it has less carryover than in the past. The area had carryover (funding left over from last year) because it received \$283,609 in one-time funding, mostly from the state board but also \$50,000 from another workforce area. Ms. Skinner explained that carryover funds are necessary because the budget year starts July 1, but areas do not receive the bulk of their funds until November.

The area had worked hard to reduce costs. Upper Savannah lost a full-time position and replaced the position with a part-time contractor. GLEAMNS lost a staff person, and the position is still vacant. Upper Savannah has aggressively sought other funding. Some COG costs are paid for through other grants such as the Rural Health grant. It is good to be able to spread costs across contracts, but it means less time is available for key functions. As the area is dealing with less funding, more mandates have been handed down from the state. Contractor staff will have to key funding information for each client resulting in a couple hours of staff time per client over the course of a year.

The Workforce Board was shown a summary of staff and operating expenses for GLEAMNS. They have four and a half case managers and two business services representatives covering seven counties. GLEAMNS requested a 3% cost of living increase for staff, who missed a previous agency-wide cost of living increase because GLEAMNS had an 18-month contract with Upper Savannah at the time. State employees received a 3% increase in July. GLEAMNS works side-by side with SCDEW and DSS (both of which have openings). Ms. Skinner said if the request was not granted, she anticipated GLEAMNS staff would leave.

Ms. Skinner requested the Workforce Board take two actions. The first is to transfer \$250,000 from dislocated worker to adult. Last year, the area served more adults than dislocated workers. Adult funding was reduced so we will need to transfer some to continue to serve adult clients. The next action is to request \$400,000 in additional dislocated worker funding. It is anticipated that client costs will be \$300,000, and Upper Savannah will need \$100,000 in staff and operating expenses. This is in addition to nearly \$96,000 in left over rapid response funding which will be repurposed.

Ms. Kidd asked if the Board members had any questions. There was further discussion about training funding and the cost-of-living increase. She then asked if a member wanted to make a motion to adopt the priority of service update, the training policy changes, the supportive services addition, and the adoption of the budget with the two action items. The motion was made by Darron Wilson and seconded by Ann Blanton. Ms. Kidd called for a vote. It passed unanimously. (Keeping with Robert's Rules of order the chair did not vote.)

Adjourn

Chair Taiese Kidd called the meeting to conclusion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Skinner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director