

SC WORKS

UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Executive Committee Meeting
via Conference Call
Monday, August 3, 2020
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

Executive Committee Members Present: Ann Blanton, Theresa Stover, Taiese Kidd, Betty Carol Jones, Camilla Haigler, and Darron Wilson

Executive Committee Members Absent: Scott Coleman

Other Board Members Present: Scott Cain, and Debbie Walling

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

Guest: Katie Craven, GLEAMNS; Melissa A. Rodgers, SC DEW; Chad Ulmer, SC Vocational Rehabilitation; and Sam Leaman, USCOG

Welcome and Call to Order

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

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

Workforce Plan Approval

Ann Skinner discussed major changes that will impact Upper Savannah the most. The three most important questions for the board are: who is served? what training is provided? and how are resources used?

Training Plan (handout)

Ann Skinner said the local plan should support the state plan. She showed an outline comparing the two. For the most part, Upper Savannah is refining its 2016 comprehensive plan to build on successes and to address the pandemic. Upper Savannah faces a reduction in funding at a time when more people need services. Since the May meeting, centers have reopened and services are offered remotely as well.

Target Group Plan – Who is Served? (handout)

Billy Morgan discussed strategies to serve more people. The State allows for a window of 30% of adult participants to be enrolled who do not meet the low income or public assistance recipient and/or basic skills deficient criteria. Upper Savannah had a smaller window – 10%. With the additional \$600 unemployment compensation income included in the household income, some people who may need services would not be income eligible. In April, the threshold was changed to allow up to 30% of participants that were not low income to be enrolled, which was the same as the State, and defined “seeking training for an in-demand medical field” as a criteria. One person was enrolled as a result of the policy change.

Billy said that Upper Savannah would like to continue with a 30% window like the State, and to use a locally defined criteria for the window. After talking with front line staff, Upper Savannah workforce staff think that the most prevalent barrier is poor work history. Poor work history would be defined as “is not currently working full time and has not worked consecutively for one employer 18 months during the last 36 months” to allow more people to be served. Billy said that it is important that the local area is not more restrictive than the state and he thinks that the poor work history criteria could allow us to serve residents who need assistance.

Training Priorities – What Training is Provided? (handout)

Ann Skinner said training priorities are the heart of the plan. She reminded committee members that the board sponsored a survey of nearly 200 businesses inquiring about training needs. Upper Savannah along with Piedmont Technical College and 10 school districts distilled training programs into four groups. Ann showed the color-coded chart which has the training leading to the highest return on investment in green.

Because Upper Savannah does not have the funding to support all training, priority is training that supports the two most important sectors: manufacturing and health care. Not all training is directly for those industries. For instance, Upper Savannah supports IT training because both manufacturing and health care require computer skills. Ann suggested using the color chart as a guide. Classroom training supporting the top two levels (green and yellow) which are needed in manufacturing or healthcare could be considered for funding. Training for other occupations would be limited to On-the-Job Training and partner funded initiatives. Ann said that the board needs to establish policies for the staff to follow so decisions are consistent. She asked for the following limits so that training could be offered to more clients.

- Require 50/50 agreement for training which costs more than \$4,500 after federal/state grants are applied (1/2 paid at enrollment, 25% at credential attainment, and 25% at employment).
- Limit training to \$7,500 per client with a maximum training length of one year. In the past, Upper Savannah has had a two year and \$14,000 training maximum. With current funding will need to reduce cost per trainee to serve more participants.
- Establish a policy that says if training is twice as expensive as other items on list, will not include on list.

Budget (handout)

Ann Skinner discussed the program year budget. At the June meeting, it was decided to operate on a continuing resolution until more information was received. Since that meeting, Upper Savannah has

- Received a \$126,011 grant for dislocated worker training which will allow the Upper Savannah Area to hire part-time workers in centers,
- Applied for a FEMA grant to get 75% of COVID-related costs reimbursed (security and janitorial services), and
- Been notified that the Upper Savannah Area can apply for a \$233,609 discretionary grant to replace lost funding for adult/dislocated workers and/or youth.

With these actions, staff are planning for Upper Savannah to receive level funding for this program year.

To allow Upper Savannah staff to manage workforce activities until the scheduled Workforce Board meeting on September 14, staff would like to recommend the following:

1. Continue with existing contracts (GLEAMNS) as voted on in the November 2019 meeting,
2. Keep existing staff and centers,
3. Pay for COVID-related costs to keep staff and customers safe,
4. Cap training for individuals to allow staff to serve more people, and
5. Allow staff to submit budget for discretionary funding if the deadline is prior to September 14, which in that case, staff would ask that new funding to be distributed 1/3 to each adult, dislocated worker and youth.

Darron Wilson made a motion to accept the planning recommendations by Upper Savannah staff as presented. The motion was seconded by Taiese Kidd and unanimously approved by the committee. Ann Skinner invited the committee to review the entire plan which would be uploaded to the Upper Savannah web page for comment.

Enrollment Review

Billy Morgan gave a brief review of enrollments. The Upper Savannah Area has five and a half case managers. According to the contract, a full case load would be a case manager managing at least 55 active participants. If a case manager falls below 80% (about 44), then the submission of a corrective action plan is required. Changing the policy and outreach efforts has helped with enrollments.

With the pandemic, offices and centers closed for several weeks. Since reopening, staff has seen caseloads steadily increasing. Upper Savannah is happy with the outreach efforts and staff continues to work with the Grantee and case managers. The \$600 extra weekly unemployment compensation has kept many people from visiting the centers but that ended as of July 25. The current average caseload is about 31 per case manager.

Adjourn

Chair Blanton called the meeting to conclusion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director