

SC WORKS

UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board Meeting
Via In Person, Virtual and Conference Call
Upper Savannah Council of Governments, 430 Helix Road, Greenwood
Monday, June 6, 2022
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

Members Present: Roy Lowe, John Calhoun, Kassie Burton, Roberta Kinard, Taiese Kidd, Ann Blanton, Candi Lalonde, Darron Wilson, Stephen Taylor, Mashanda Ashton, Matt Wiggins, Scott Coleman, Chad Ulmer, Theresa Stover, Shunna V. Jeter, Dale Callum, Debbie Walling, and Julie Bagwell

Members Absent: Betty Carol Jones and Kevin Crouch

Staff Present: Ann Skinner, Erin Nodine, Linda Lagroon

Guest: Rick Green, Cason Wright, Upper Savannah Council of Governments; Ursula McFadden, GLEAMNS; and Melissa Rodgers, Caitlin Brazell, SC Department of Employment and Workforce

Welcome, Call to Order and Roll Call

Ann Skinner welcomed members and guests at 4 pm. Ms. Skinner suggested the meeting start with a briefing of the Economic Development Plan, which was an item on the agenda that did not require action or a Board member vote. She informed the group that Upper Savannah was founded as an economic development organization. She introduced Rick Green.

Upper Savannah Economic Development Plan – Rick Green, Upper Savannah COG

Rick Green, Upper Savannah Government Services Director, introduced Cason Wright who will be working with him updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Members received a copy of the goals and objectives from the current plan. Items that are covered include industrial development, industrial recruitment, workforce development, and transportation. The main purpose of this plan is to make the Upper Savannah six county region (Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, and Saluda) eligible for economic development administration funds for things such as industrial water and sewer connections and project funding matches for local governments. Newberry is included in the Central Midlands Council of Governments Plan. The Plan will be presented to the Upper Savannah Council of Governments Board at the August 2022 meeting. Board members were

asked to review the document and to let Government Services staff know of any comments and/or suggestions. The plan in its entirety is located on the Upper Savannah COG website:

- 2017-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
https://www.uppersavannah.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CEDS_2017.pdf
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2021 Annual Update
<https://www.uppersavannah.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CEDS-2021-Annual-Update.pdf>

During the presentation, late comers joined. At the conclusion, Chair Taiese Kidd called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes for March 7, 2022: <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Ms. Kidd reminded members that minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived on-line. There was a motion by Stephen Taylor, seconded by Mashanda Ashton, to approve the minutes. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

The meeting roll call was conducted by Linda Lagroon.

Reports

Caseload Report – Linda Lagroon

The board tracks capacity utilization quarterly. Contractor Enrollment report showed an average of 51 participant enrollments for 5.5 case managers. The expected active caseload per case manager is 55. The contractor is continuing to recruit and enroll clients.

Performance – Linda Lagroon

Upper Savannah is exceeding all performance measure goals for the third quarter of Program Year 2021. The performance measures for all programs include:

- Employment Rate second quarter after exit
- Employment Rate fourth quarter after exit
- Median Earnings
- Credential Rate
- Measurable Skill Gains

Expenditures – Ann Skinner

Generally, areas have two (2) years to use funding. Some grants are shorter. The goal is to spend between 70 and 85% of available funding each year. Below is the annualized expenditure rates.

Expenditures rates through April:

- 91% for Adult Program
- 58% for Dislocated Worker Program
- 75% for Youth Program
- 52% Resiliency Adult/Dislocated Worker Grant
- 6% Resiliency Youth

Ann said the area is spending adult funds faster than planned, but spending dislocated worker funds slower. Workforce Areas are allowed to transfer some funds from dislocated worker funds to the adult funds, which will help to have some adult carryover funds. Upper Savannah has already begun the transfer process. Youth expenditures are exactly where they should be. Upper Savannah received some funds in December to serve some special goals, Resiliency Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. Youth Resiliency funds are earmarked to service participants that are aging out of foster care system, homeless and offenders. Expenditure rate is below the planned goal, but there is still more than a year to spend the funds. Roberta Kinard inquired about expanding the target groups for the Resiliency Youth funds. Ann said she wanted to work on the focused approach until the August board meeting to see if it can be improved.

SC Works Center Certification Process – Erin Nodine

Upper Savannah SC Works Centers are currently certified by the board and are due to be recertified. Erin said that the process is involved and looks at three major areas: management standards, center standards and business services standards. Erin said that staff and partners have focused on changes and new additions. At the last meeting, the board reviewed center standards. She passed out a summary of where the area is for all three standards.

Erin said that the best test of area systems is to review customer survey results and use secret shoppers. Since February the areas has used a mixture of shoppers including interns, COG staff and board members. It was determined that the quality and accuracy of responses to standard questions posed on the phone yielded different results. A team created a guide for all staff to use. The document will be updated as different questions arise that are not currently included. A copy of the drafted document was distributed. She said with a few modifications the area will be meeting all standards.

In the Upper Savannah area clients make appointments to use centers and the logs are used to generate emails for post visit surveys. It was felt the business survey was underused, however. Erin said she reviewed documents used by other areas and modified the best one. She distributed the survey for the board's review.

Erin asked the board to consider adopting two policies to establish benchmarks for good service. All SC Works partners encourage businesses to list jobs through the SCWOS database. Referrals to open jobs is managed by the Department of Employment and Workforce but partners can help. Erin suggested that the board have a policy that job orders are reviewed two weeks after publication and if sufficient referrals have not been made, DEW will work with the employer and business services team to offer alternatives and then unfilled job orders be reviewed monthly thereafter.

Erin also proposed a customer service standard that under normal circumstances, that calls made to SC Works Centers (main line not individual phone) be returned within four business hours. For example if someone leaves a message in Laurens at noon, the call should be returned before the end of the day.

Erin asked for motion to certify the centers, adopt the business services survey, and the standards for job order follow up and telephone response. A motion was made by Darron Wilson to accept the SC Works Center Certification recommendations, seconded by Debbie Walling. The motion was approved.

Incumbent Worker Training Update – Erin Nodine

The Board was updated on the status of the Incumbent Worker Training Program. The current grant is open until November 30, 2022. Currently, there are two businesses that have completed incumbent worker training and the necessary paperwork has been submitted to the state office. There is still \$32,370 available. Businesses can receive a maximum of \$20,000 and a minimum of \$5,000. Because the next meeting is in August, Erin suggested that an ad hoc committee be authorized to review and make funding recommendations. The ad hoc committee would include Matt Wiggins, Roy Lowe, and Stephen Taylor.

A motion was made by Darron Wilson to accept the Incumbent Worker Training ad hoc committee recommendation, seconded by Mashanda Ashton. The motion was approved.

Public Transportation Announcement and Supportive Services Recommendation – Ann Skinner

One of the biggest challenges the Upper Savannah Workforce System has had is transportation. People need to be able to get to the SC Works Centers for assistance with resumes and job search, and ability to get to work. Greenwood has a transportation system for a four-mile zone centered around the courthouse. Duke Energy has funds to spend on workforce transportation. After communicating with Greenwood County and Duke Energy, a plan was created for any person who lives anywhere in Greenwood County and needs transportation to the SC Works Center, they can call the Center, make an appointment, be picked up, and transported there. There will be a limit per person of two trips a year that will be paid for by Duke Energy. This was announced in a press release by Greenwood County and Duke Energy. Upper Savannah will look for similar opportunities for all counties.

Once a person is enrolled, the WIOA program can assist with the cost of transportation. The current transportation reimbursement policy pays \$12 a day for participants commuting 25 miles or more. Program staff have recommended that it be increased to \$16 a day to help with fuel costs.

For participants who don't have transportation or a driver's license and need to be able to get to training or a job, WIOA can contract with McCormick Area Transportation (MAT). Currently the policy pays direct transportation assistance of \$20 or less one way. Because of increased costs, it needs to be increased to \$30 or less one way. This assistance is limited to three (3) weeks.

Some companies are now investigating van pooling because of the cost of gasoline. The companies identifies the employees, Enterprise provides the routes and figures out splitting of the costs. Generally, the company provides a subsidy and workers pay a small amount. Upper Savannah would like to consider trying this with employers that are participating with On-the-Job Training. With On-the-Job-Training, employers are paid a portion of the training costs to train workers and these workings may need transportation assistance. WIOA would pay the employer its share of the van pool costs each month trainee's participating in on-the-job training, not to exceed \$500 a month for three months. Providing this type of supportive service may be an incentive to increase the number of employers participating in on-the-job training and will help with retention.

Funding Recommendations – Ann Skinner

Ann passed referred to the expenditure report and discussed the following:

- Funding will be about the same next year, Upper Savannah will receive an extra \$6,000 but, expenses will increase. The goal will be to keep the same level of service with about the same amount of funds. Historically, the Board reviews the budget in August. At that time, we will need to determine if need to incorporate a cost-of-living increase for the staff included with the GLEAMNS contract. This will be based on if the state includes a cost-of-living increase in their budget for their staff.
- Would like to continue contracting with GLEAMNS for workforce development services with the same number of staff through June 30, 2023.
- Would like to continue with the same SC Works Centers
- Would like to continue the same staffing level at Upper Savannah
- Because adult funds are being spent faster than dislocated worker funds, would like the Board to approve a \$100,000 transfer from dislocated worker to adult, otherwise the area may deplete adult funds in the fall prior to receiving next year's allotted funds
- Need to develop a plan to spend the Youth Resiliency Grant funds, the board may be asked for a modification of scope in August.
- Make supportive service changes to increase the amount of transportation assistance for participants in training

A motion was made by Matt Wiggins to accept the funding recommendations, seconded by Darron Wilson. The motion was approved. Shunna Jeter abstained from the vote because she had a conflict of interest.

Workforce Development Month – Ann Skinner

The State Workforce Board would like for the areas to join them in highlighting the WIOA program during the month of September 2022. Upper Savannah has a job fair planned for October 6, 2022. We want to host events in each county to publicize the big job fair to encourage residents to prepare their resumes. We want to use an event already being planned for September 15 as the regional signature event. It will connect 500 middle and high school students to high demand jobs. Piedmont Technical College is taking the lead. It will feature the Be Pro Be Proud bus, industry showcases and mini job fair with the Lakelands Home Builders Association. The goal is to get people to see hands on skill training.

Also, as part of the Workforce Development Month, areas are asked to submit a local frontline staff of the year award winner of which the Board will review. Erin asked for two members to act as an ad hoc committee to review the recommendations and select a winner. Roberta Kinard and Mashanda Ashton volunteered.

A motion was made by Darron Wilson, seconded by Matt Wiggins, that the two Board member volunteers will have the ability to act for the Upper Savannah Workforce Board and Upper Savannah staff will submit on behalf of the Board the resulting Upper Savannah Frontline Staff of the Year Award Winner information to the State. The motion was approved.

Nominations Committee – Taiese Kidd

The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board is in need of a Vice Chair that is not from Greenwood. Chair Taiese Kidd and the past Chair Ann Blanton has been selected as the nominating

committee for the Vice Chair. A motion was made by Mashanda Ashton, seconded by Dale Callum, to accept the recommendation for the nominating committee for Vice Chair. The motion was approved. The Vice Chair will be named by August 2022.

Adjourn

Chair Taiese Kidd called the meeting to conclusion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is set for August 2, 2022.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Skinner".

Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director