

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, May 1, 2023
Meeting: 3:30 PM**

Members Present: John Calhoun, Theresa Stover, Julie Bagwell, Shunna V. Jeter, Betty Carol Jones, Roberta Kinard, Stephen Taylor, Darron Wilson, Catina Ross, and Chad Ulmer

Members Absent: Taiese Kidd, Scott Coleman, Candi Lalonde, Keli Fewox, Debbie Walling, Ann Blanton, Dale Callum, Mashanda Ashton, Roy Lowe, and Shelby Reed

Staff Present: Ann Skinner, Willie Matthews, and Linda Lagroon

Guests: Kathy Stanton, Leah Price, Melissa Rodgers, SC Department of Employment and Workforce; LaKeshia Adams, Office of Adult Education; and Kal Kunkel, JT Parnell, Eckerd Connect; Alan Davis; and Chuck Cook, McCormick County Council

Welcome, Call to Order and Roll Call

Ann Skinner started the meeting with information about the Your Next Steps Work and Learn Guide. Each year 3,000 high school graduates leave school heading directly to work, college, military, but some get lost. For the past three years, SC Works has put out a directory of employers that hire recent high school graduates. It includes tips, contact information for 80 local employers which offer apprenticeships, tuition reimbursement, or other opportunities for work and learn. It is important for recent high school graduates to know that they can do both college and work.

In the absence of Chair Taiese Kidd, Darron Wilson was asked to chair the meeting. Darron Wilson welcomed members and guests.

The meeting roll call was conducted by Linda Lagroon.

Approval of Minutes for February 6, 2023: <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived on-line. There was a motion by Stephen Taylor, seconded by John Calhoun, to approve the minutes. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

Guest Presentation: Where are the State’s Workers? Summary of Research and Tactics for Connecting; Leah Price, Workforce Insights Analyst; Kathy Stanton, Area Director, SCDEW

Ann Skinner introduced Leah Price, SCDEW Regional Labor Market Analyst. Ms. Price shared a PowerPoint presentation with information and statistics regarding the Upper Savannah Area. Upper Savannah is like the rest of the state. There are record low unemployment statistics meaning that nearly everyone who wants a job is working. Ms. Price said that what is puzzling is the increasing number of individuals who are working age who are not seeking work. Last year six thousand individuals who were not working were surveyed. Childcare, transportation, disabilities, and low wages were listed as reasons why some are not seeking work.

Ann Skinner added one valuable service DEW’s Labor Market Information division provides is information on wages. Board members can contact Leah Price. Statistics can be provided to industries by county, local area, or state.

Kathy Stanton said that SCDEW and the state board are looking at the data to come up with strategies to improve labor force participation. While the workforce shortage is a national problem, she said employers should focus on their messaging to job seekers and use tools such as SC Works and SC Works Online System (SCWOS) to find candidates.

Job Fair Updates – Willie Matthews

March 15, 2023 – The semi-annual area Job Fair was held at the Piedmont Technical College Greenwood Campus. Approximately 300 job seekers came which was the largest attendance since the pandemic. The employers were pleased with the quality and quantity of potential workers.

Upcoming Events:

June 14, 2023 – A job fair is scheduled at Piedmont Technical College Newberry Campus. The job fair will be catered to recent high school graduates from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM and open to Piedmont Technical College students and Veterans from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

Expenditure and Enrollment Report – Ann Skinner

Expenditure

Upper Savannah is committed to getting the greatest value for taxpayers. We want to serve as many job seekers as possible. Areas must balance using all available funding and saving money to ensure continuity. The goal is to spend 80 to 85% of available funds each year. (There is often a delay in getting funding at the start of the year and if there is no carryover, operations have to be suspended.)

She distributed a chart showing expenditures. Altogether by the end of March (75% of the year) the area had spent about 57% of funds, meaning we are on track. Expenditures are not even across the three programs: adult, dislocated workers and youth. We got the most funding for dislocated workers but have the greatest demand for services for adults. We transferred \$500,000 in January 2023 from dislocated worker to adult. A transfer was necessary because as of March, we had spent 98% of adult funding. In hindsight, we transferred too much money and need the flexibility to keep some funding in

dislocated worker. Staff recommends the board change the request to read transfer up to \$500,000 so staff can adjust prior to the August board meeting.

Ann said youth expenditures are slightly behind where we needed to be. By the end of March, we were on track to spend 64% of funds.

The State Workforce Development Board also tracks client expenditures. One measure that is closely watched is the participant cost rate which includes tuition, childcare, transportation, books, and other direct services. The state goal is that areas spend 30% of adult and dislocated worker funds towards direct participant costs. Last year we were at 29% and did not quite make it. Currently we are at 39.8%.

Enrollment Report - Update on enrollments since February 2023

The last Board meeting was a time of transition. The area pivoted from fully utilizing GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission to doing things in house temporarily. We have a new provider, Eckerd, who we will hear from later. Without a permanent provider this spring, we had limited capacity. Last February, there were twelve people who were providing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services. In 2023 we had six mostly part-time people filling in. Willie Matthews was hired as Deputy Workforce Director. He previously worked for Waccamaw COG, was a case manager at GLEAMNS, and a student support counselor at Piedmont Tech. Willie has been our backbone serving new clients. We also have a temporary full-time staff person, Pat Crawford, who came from GLEAMNS. There were additional part-time people that filled in. Our priority has been continuing services to existing clients because we made a commitment to clients and did not want anyone to stop training. We have enrolled 13 new adult clients since the beginning of February 2023, mostly into GED or Adult Education, truck driver training and welding. We enrolled six youth clients who should help us meet expenditure goals.

Approval of Transfer Request – Ann Skinner

Ann concluded the presentation by asking the Board for approval to modify the transfer request. Chad Ulmer made a motion to give Upper Savannah Workforce Development staff the flexibility to transfer up to \$500,000 rather than transfer the full \$500,000, which was seconded by John Calhoun. The motion was unanimously approved.

Start up Plans for Eckerd Connects – Kal Kunkle, JT Parnell, Eckerd

Eckerd Workforce Solutions was selected as the adult, dislocated worker career services provider and the SC Works Operator at the February meeting. Kal Kunkel introduced himself as the Vice President of Operations with Eckerd Connects and John 'JT' Parnell as the Area Manager who will be heading up this project on the local level. Mr. Parnell will be working between the WorkLink and Upper Savannah regions.

Mr. Kunkel gave updates on the contracts, financial setup, performance and quality, and staffing. Eckerd staff have started evaluating current caseloads, reviewing case files online, and will start reviewing hard case files in the coming week. He said that he expects five of the seven new hires to start next week.

Ann Skinner added that there will be less staffing because funding that Upper Savannah receives has been decreasing each year. Upper Savannah receives about \$1.2 million whereas five years ago we

were receiving about \$2 million. This is a significant decrease and means that we must prioritize where we place our efforts and have to do some things differently.

Mr. Parnell added that Eckerd Connect staff will be highly trained and will plan to refer clients for partner services to help clients overcome barriers that maybe holding them back from gaining full-time employment. Eckerd plans to align with partner agencies, making referrals when needed, and keeping open lines of communication. There may be less staff, but Eckerd is known for making referrals, clear communication with partner agencies, and working together.

Announcements – Ann Skinner

Youth Procurement

The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Division issued a Request for Proposal to identify a youth provider. Youth was not included in the first round of Request for Proposals because Upper Savannah needed more time to develop specifications. It is planned to serve 90 youth in the next two years with \$300,000 - \$400,000 in funding. Ann distributed the Request for Proposal rating sheet which considers experience, recruitment, and the ability to offer all the elements of the WIOA Youth program. Applicants must show innovation, describe what deliverables they will provide, and provide a budget for review. Chairman Kidd has named a review panel. Proposals will have to receive a score of at least 70 to be considered. The highest rated proposal will be awarded based on negotiations. The plan is to have the new youth provider in place before July 1.

Adjourn

Darron Wilson called the meeting to conclusion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is set for August 7, 2023.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director