

# 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, November 14, 2022  
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Taiese Kidd, John Calhoun, Scott Coleman, Theresa Stover, Keli Fewox, Debbie Walling, Ann Blanton, Shunna V. Jeter, Betty Carol Jones, Roberta Kinard, Roy Lowe, Chad Ulmer, and Matt Wiggins

**Members Absent:** Candi Lalonde, Julie Bagwell, Dale Callum, Mashanda Ashton, Stephen Taylor, Darron Wilson, and Kevin Crouch

**Staff Present:** Ann Skinner, Erin Nodine, Toni Belton, Linda Lagroon

**Guest:** Katie Craven, Ursula McFadden, Willie Forrest, Jr, and Trentsie Williams, GLEAMNS; Zach Nickerson, Melissa Rodgers, SC Department of Employment and Workforce; Lynn Slater for Keli Fewox, Piedmont Technical College; Sam Leaman, Upper Savannah Council of Governments; and Renee Alexander, Eckerd Connect

### **Welcome, Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Taiese Kidd welcomed members and guests.

The meeting roll call was conducted by Linda Lagroon.

**Approval of Minutes for September 12, 2022:** <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Chair Taiese Kidd reminded members that minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived on-line. There was a motion by John Calhoun, seconded by Scott Coleman, to approve the minutes. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

**Promising Practice: Regionalism in South Carolina, Zach Nickerson, SCDEW, Director of Workforce Services**

Zach Nickerson introduced himself as Director of Workforce Services at the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce and said that he would be speaking on the importance of regionalism and cost sharing. South Carolina has 12 workforce boards which are grouped in four regions. Upper Savannah is in the Link Upstate region. With year-over-year reductions in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, the state board has seen a total decrease in local area funding of roughly \$18 million since Program Year 2011. Upper Savannah has seen a decrease of funds in the amount of roughly \$1.4 million since Program Year 2011. To put that decrease in perspective:

- In Program Year 2011 Upper Savannah had a total allotment for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs in the amount of roughly \$2.8 million.
- Upper Savannah's Program Year 2022 total allotment is roughly \$1.3 million.
- Upper Savannah has had a larger decrease in funds than their current year total allotment.

With fewer funds and enhanced capabilities through technology, local areas must explore cost sharing opportunities to be able to serve both job seekers and employers effectively and efficiently in the local area. The SC DEW and the State Workforce Development Board strongly encourage cost sharing approaches through regionalism.

On March 2, 2022, a Regionalism Forum was held with support from the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Region 3 Office. During that forum, examples were discussed. Specifically highlighted was the sharing of administrative functions through the US DOL CAREER Dislocated Worker Grant where the Upper Savannah Council of Governments applied for the grant funding on behalf of a consortium of five Workforce Development Areas across the state. The main focus of the forum was Upstate and Greenville's best practice for having released a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) and having entered into a joint adult, dislocated worker, and operator contract with a service provider. Upstate and Greenville presented their model and has indicated that their combined savings are around a half million dollars. The two areas share a South Carolina Works Online System (SCWOS) Coordinator. Both boards have autonomy. They have their own contract with the service provider. What is shared are functions which can be done simultaneously for both areas. Since that forum, DEW has been requesting updates on regionalism and informing the State Workforce Development Board of local area efforts. The forum resulted in:

- The sharing of the SCWOS Coordinator between the Midlands and Lower Savannah,
- The sharing of a service provider accountant between Catawba and Midlands, and
- The sharing of a SC Works Operator and a Regional Manager between Trident and Low Country.

SCDEW encourages Upper Savannah Workforce Development Area to look at ways to cost share through regionalism but with many different practices in place it is vital that the local area look at what works best for the local area.

#### **Hiring Events and Dislocation Report – Erin Nodine**

EA Sween Company hosted their groundbreaking event in Hodges. Work is underway for their facility at North Greenwood Industrial Park with plans for the facility to open in Summer of 2023. They have hired a HR Manager and are in the process of hiring a Plant Manager. They will begin hiring additional associates in 2023. This facility will add 300 jobs to Greenwood County.

Announced last week, a new organization is opening/expanding in Laurens County with a \$26 million dollar investment and will bring 88 jobs. Motor City Racks is a supplier of automotive and industrial racking products.

Upper Savannah hosted the Regional Job Fair at Piedmont Technical College Greenwood Campus on October 6. In attendance were 55 employers and 200 job seekers.

On Monday, November 7, 2022 Upper Savannah co-hosted with Greenwood Chamber of Commerce a job fair for Fuji associates and the general public. In attendance were 10 employers and 127 job seekers.

A career and resource fair event called Laurens Cares will be held at the Laurens YMCA, November 22, 2022.

December 7, 2022 – Laurens County Job Fair will be held at the Center for Higher Education. Upper Savannah will partner with Piedmont Technical College, which will be offering instant admissions opportunities on site. The SC Department of Employment and Workforce will also have the Career Coach present where attendees can get on the bus and receive assistance creating a resume onsite.

Since we last met, there have been a few small layoffs throughout the seven counties:

- Laurens County - Carolina Gardens, nursing facility in Laurens, closed on October 31 resulting in 29 jobs lost. Staff participated in the Rapid Response event to help connect those affected to resources.
- Greenwood County - Velux had two lines shut down which was caused by too much inventory and recent low sales. Weekend shift of 23 was affected: 17 of those are transitioning to weekdays, 3 college students lost their jobs because of being unable to transition to weekdays, 2 temporary associates affected, and 1 person will retire.
- Edgefield County - National Wild Turkey Federation in Edgefield will close in 2023. They are outsourcing warehouse operations to their facility in Wisconsin. Six employees will be affected: two salaried employees and four hourly employees. The shooting range will be the only part of the organization that will remain in Edgefield.
- Laurens County – Upper Savannah staff has a meeting scheduled with an organization in Laurens County for December. This layoff has not been announced publicly but staff will update the Board when further information has been obtained.

### **Strategic Plan – Erin Nodine**

#### **Upstate Manufacturing Alliance**

The Upstate Manufacturing Alliance (Upstate Manufacturing Network) was formed so that industry leaders could come together and talk about opportunities and challenges that face the manufacturing industry. Four manufacturers in the Upper Savannah seven-county region attended the most recent meeting and working on determine strategies to improve employee retention. They have worked on

addressing the technical skills gap in manufacturing by creating a skills matrix for maintenance technicians.

### **Center Operation and Business Services Plan**

Upper Savannah staff member, Erin Nodine, is in the process of updating this document to summarize Center Operations and Business Services plan to match the updated Upper Savannah Strategic Plan. This document outlines the centers operated, how communication between all parties should be happening, plans for outreach, and how services to business are provided. The updated document should be complete next week and will be sent to board members for review and an opportunity to ask questions.

### **Plans for New Member Orientation and Committee Assignments**

By the next Board meeting in February 2023, Upper Savannah will have added three new Board members and wants to offer an orientation to give an overview of services provided, board priorities, and general operations information. This meeting will be held over lunch noon Wednesday, January 18, 2023, at the Greenwood SC Works Center at 12pm. Upper Savannah staff will be happy to include any other board members that would be interested in attending. Please let Upper Savannah staff know if you would like to attend.

### **Committee Assignments**

The Strategic Plan identifies that committee assignments are necessary for a fully functioning Board. Since the Board only meets a few times a year, committees are an opportunity to get more input. Information about the committees is also included in the Executive Summary in the Goals and Strategies section. The committee are: Operations, Non-Traditional Workers, Youth, and Executive. Upper Savannah staff and Chair Taiese Kidd will begin the process of gathering information to prepare Chair Kidd to make committee assignments. Upper Savannah staff will send out a survey, along with a brief description of each committee, and have each Board member rank their interest/preference.

### **Execution of Local and Regional Plan Modifications**

An Executive Summary of the local Strategic Plan was included in the handout packet. The regional plan covers a larger geographical area. The regional and local plans look at labor force and training needs. Upper Savannah staff went through an extensive planning process when the plans were completed last time. It is now time to update the plans. Since the last plan, wages have increased, and there is still need for manufacturing and healthcare workers. Upper Savannah staff are continuing work to edit the plans and will send once complete. Significant changes to the Strategic Plan were discussed at the last Board meeting. Moving forward, Upper Savannah believes the plan will be only as good as the execution and believes Board committees can help staff achieve the goals by working throughout the year on specific areas of the Strategic Plan.

The Regional Plan has not been discussed as often at Board meetings. Staff work with two other areas, WorkLink and Upstate, to develop the plan of needs in the greater areas such as the Upstate Manufacturing Network and retention. In essence the needs of the region are the same as the local area just on a larger scale. Working in a regional model allows areas to access many different resources

that different areas have or information that is gathered from larger organizations. Working together can help Upper Savannah achieve these goals most efficiently and effectively.

Statistics about the workforce are being updated, and there are no substantial policy change. Goals and strategies are now grouped by committee. There will be a public comment period. The plans will be published on the website for comments. If there are any substantial changes, staff will present to the Workforce Board Executive Committee.

Ann said she needed a motion to accept the Local and Regional Plans Modification pending revisions. There was discussion and the consensus was not to give final approval, but just approve what was listed in the executive summary.

Kidd called for the vote to accept changes identified in Executive Summary. Unanimously approved.

### **Designation of Business Services Lead – Ann Skinner**

It has been nearly a year since the previous Business Services Lead, Billy Morgan, left Upper Savannah. When he left, Ann Skinner was named Business Services Lead as a place holder. Ann would like to designate Erin Nodine, who has attended training and coordinated a major job fair, as the Business Services Lead. The Business Services Lead oversees strategies for serving employers, and getting word out to employers about job fair events. Motion to accept the recommendation was made by Shunna Jeter, seconded by John Calhoun, and approved unanimously.

### **Distribution of Year End Report – Ann Skinner**

This report was not sent out ahead of time but will be sent out to all Board members. Once a quarter each area receives a report from the State Administrative Unit that summarizes how the area is doing with enrollment, finances, and things of concern.

There are expenditure guidelines that areas must meet. At the last meeting, it did not look like Upper Savannah would meet the 70% expenditure goal for dislocated workers, but the report shows that Upper Savannah did meet that goal. Upper Savannah did not meet the participant cost goal. The participant cost goal requires that at least 30% of all program costs for adult and dislocated workers must go to direct client costs. As Zach Nickerson mentioned in his presentation funding has been reduced over the last decade and it has been harder to maintain the participant cost rate. Upper Savannah's participant cost rate was 29.05%. Upper Savannah was one of three other areas that did not meet their participant cost rate goal. This is a reminder of the need to prioritize spending funds on clients and doing what can be done to reduce administrative and oversight costs so a greater percentage can go towards clients. Upper Savannah met all performance goals.

### **Summary of Procurement Options – Ann Skinner**

#### **Contract Extensions and Transition Planning**

Areas are required to competitively bid services. Funds are received from the Federal government and must follow federal guidelines. There are several hallmarks of procurement:

1. Has to be competitive, cannot have a sole source where can pick one vendor,
2. Has to have a limited duration, generally bound by 3 to 4 years as the length of contracts,
3. Has to meet the criteria of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Upper Savannah issued Requests for Proposals and received no offers. This is something that has not happened before but is not totally unexpected. There is a lot of work that goes into responding to a Request for Proposal. We are facing a time when it is hard for businesses to staff up, and particularly if they are looking at a short-term contract, some people are less eager to commit. Therefore, Zack Nickerson was invited to talk about joint procurement and how areas could work together.

### **Joint Procurement with Worklink**

When Upper Savannah received no bids, we talked to the State office, and asked for ideas. The primary suggestion was to consider joining another area's procurement. Worklink (Anderson, Oconee, Pickens) was preparing to go out for bid and thought if our two areas jointly released Request for Proposals, we both might have a better chance of receiving competitive bids. Their Executive Committee is willing to do a joint Request for Proposal. Upper Savannah has reviewed their solicitation. It is different, more flexible. Applicants propose a report card format which they will use if they get a contract.

It looks like it is in Upper Savannah's best interest to pursue joint procurement with the Worklink Area. Upper Savannah would not lose control as a Board. We would still have contracts, conduct monitoring and issue reports to the Board. The Worklink Request for Proposal has a one-year contract with an option to extend. It is not something Upper Savannah would be locked into for a long period of time. There would be two contracts. One for career services for adults and dislocated workers and one for center operations and business services. Worklink is not going out for bid for youth services therefore would not fall under the joint venture. Upper Savannah will have to seek a Request for Proposal for youth career services separately.

A new contractor could be identified as soon as March and have staff in place by April 1. Worklink plans to start contracts July 1. Upper Savannah would have a choice to start April or July or something in between. Upper Savannah has the option to continue contracting with the current provider, GLEAMNS, if they agree to continue through March or June or some point in between. This would give a longer time for transition planning and would provide continuity for clients. Upper Savannah staff would discuss this with the current provider as part of the contract extension process. If they choose not to, Upper Savannah has an option of providing services temporarily in-house, not a first choice but would do to prevent gaps in service.

If Upper Savannah goes forward with contract extensions and transition planning, the CAREER Dislocated Worker Grant would not be extended. This is a grant to serve dislocated workers that is with the Department of Labor. Upper Savannah is under considerable pressure to enroll clients and spend funds. If goals are not met, Upper Savannah would be at risk of losing that funding. Upper Savannah would look at continuing the grant in house so can increase participation. Currently have 8 or 9 participants. The goal is to enroll 60 participants to participate in on-the-job training. We are eleven months into a nineteen-month contract, more than halfway into the contract period but not halfway to meeting the goal.

There were questions if joining Worklink was the best option. Ann said that if we do not make a decision in two weeks, we would lose the opportunity and it might be four years before we could work with them. Ann said she thought other organizations did not put in an offer because Upper Savannah has a small budget. After discussion it was determined that Upper Savannah needed to identify and address bidder's concerns. Staff were tasked with developing a survey to be sent to those who attended the Upper Savannah's Offeror's Conference. These results, and more information about joint procurement will be sent out to Board members via an electronic poll for members to vote on having a joint Request for Proposals. The poll will be sent to Board members on Friday, November 18, with a response deadline will be Tuesday, November 22 so an email vote can be taken prior to the next board meeting.

Ann said that one of the primary reasons for not extending current contracts in September was that the area was thought not to have met the state's 70% dislocated worker expenditure requirement. A report from SCDEW showed that the area did meet that measure. Ann said we could extend contracts again for up to six months. A motion to give Upper Savannah the authority to extend current contracts through June 30, 2023 was made by Scott Coleman, seconded by Ann Blanton, and passed unanimously. Shunna Jeter abstained from the vote.

### **Adjourn**

Chair Taiese Kidd called the meeting to conclusion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is set for February 6, 2023.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner  
Workforce Development Director