

SC WORKS

UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board Meeting
via Conference Call
Monday, June 1, 2020
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

Members Present: Ann Blanton, Scott Coleman, Theresa Stover, Shunna V. Jeter, Kassie Burton, Doris Watson, Debbie Walling, Roy Lowe, Julie Bagwell, Jesse Sibert, Betty Carol Jones, and Camilla Haigler

Members Absent: James Tisdale, Glenn Herlong, Houston Matthews, Taiese Kidd, Dale Callum, Scott Cain, Zebbie Goudelock, Darron Wilson, and Kevin Crouch

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

Guest: Melissa A. Rodgers, SC DEW; Katie Craven and Ursula McFadden, GLEAMNS; Chad Ulmer and Raweewan Ross, 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.

Approval of Minutes for February 3, 2020: <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. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

Nominating Committee Report

A motion was submitted from the Nominating Committee recommending Ms. Taiese Kidd to be Vice Chair of the Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board. The motion was seconded by Julie Bagwell and approved by the members.

Regular Reports

The regular reports, which include the Usage, Contractor Enrollment, and 3rd Quarter Performance reports, were distributed as information and member review. There were no questions regarding the reports presented during the meeting.

Workforce Snapshot May 2020 – Billy Morgan

Billy briefly discussed several charts / handouts:

- South Carolina employment by industry of which all the industries are affected by the virus. The highest affected was in the leisure and hospitality industry.
- South Carolina unemployment benefits paid weekly which shows the amount of weekly benefits paid during March and April 2020.
- Upper Savannah Initial Claims shows that 20,913 people have filed initial claims in the Upper Savannah area since March 2020. A significant percentage of these claimants will not be returning to their jobs because employers haven't rebounded.

Resources for laid off workers and employers – Billy Morgan

Upper Savannah staff continue to deliver services to employers by email, telephone, conference calls, social media, etc. because most are working from home/office. Because many employers are not allowing visitors onsite, Upper Savannah staff have assisted with immediate recruiting needs by creating Facebook posts and adding hiring needs to Hot Jobs lists.

MEC in Greenwood County has announced it will close August 2020, which will affect 165 employees. The layoffs will occur in three waves: July 6, end of July, and August 15. Staff attended a rapid response meeting with the managers in early May 2020 to discuss services offered. A tentative rapid response has been scheduled for employees, which include group orientations, resume writing, and job fair. Any employers interested in participating in the job fair, please contact Billy Morgan.

Unemployment claimants earn regular UI benefits and an additional \$600 weekly until July 25, 2020. Individuals who have turned down offers of suitable work are not eligible to continue receiving UI benefits. If an employer has offered an individual a job and they refused, it is important for the employer to report the incident to the SC Department of Employment and Workforce through the Employer Self Service Portal.

Center Re-Opening Plans – Ursula McFadden

SC Works Centers in Greenwood, Laurens, and Newberry are scheduled to re-open to the public beginning June 3, 2020. Because of possible issues with upset Unemployment Insurance applicants and news reports of situations arising when people are asked to wear a mask, security staff is needed to provide a safe work environment. Security guards will be hired and asked to check visitors in, direct those without appointments to the scheduling options, provide disposable face mask, etc. Public access to SC Works Centers is available by appointment only and can be scheduled online or by calling the local SC Works Center.

Additional space in Greenwood and Laurens centers has been secured to allow for social distancing to be enforced while servicing as many customers as possible. Otherwise, the ability to serve the public would be greatly limited.

In addition to disposable masks being provided to customers entering the centers, washable/reusable face masks will be provided for all staff to wear when in common areas or in contact with visitors. Reusable gloves will be provided for staff conducting cleaning. Gloves will also be available for visitor use. Disposable keyboard and mouse covers will be utilized to aid in sanitization. Hand sanitizer and disinfecting cleaners have been secured. Centers will close from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM each day to allow for staff lunches and mid-day cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Software has been installed on customer computers to allow for staff to provide oversight and assistance while safety distanced from customers.

Ann Skinner added there are plans to open all seven centers by end of June. Openings will be phased in as staff work out any problems. Ann said that the board is responsible for certifying centers are meeting local needs and she asked that the board approve the re-opening plans as part of the certification process.

Camilla Haigler motioned to accept the center re-opening plans, which was seconded by Debbie Walling, and passed by Board members.

2020 Budget – Ann Skinner

There are three target groups for which the area receives funding: adults (low income), dislocated workers (laid off), youth (low income, at risk of not going to work). The Upper Savannah area receives funds each year to serve each fund stream. Unspent funds can be carried over into the next program year but must be spent within two years. Based on the cash flow projection distributed with the meeting agenda, funds are going to be tight but will work out; will carryover about half million dollars into the year starting July 1, 2020.

In July, Upper Savannah will receive about 15% of allotted funds and will receive remainder of funds by November. The proposed budget is based on operating expenses of a normal environment, but we are currently not operating in a normal environment. Staff have not received notice as to what the final fund allocation will be, so Upper Savannah may be facing a significant funding cut. Workforce Development did not receive additional funds from the CARES Act.

Ann Skinner authorized the Operating Manager to spend funds on security through July. Upper Savannah has not had any issues so far. Security staff costs about \$30/hour, which will be expensive. With the proposed budget, staff think security can be funded for August as well, which would equal about \$6,000 for Upper Savannah's share. The extra \$600 weekly unemployment compensation ends in July. The first week in August, claimants would receive lower unemployment checks. Staff are letting people know that the extra weekly unemployment income will not last forever.

Staff will plan to review the annual budget at the August Board meeting. If additional funding is not received, may have to freeze training, and cut staff.

Recommendation: Staff requested that the board authorize funds to continue funding security for the month of August, rent additional space in SC Works Centers, and to continue contract with GLEAMNS.

Julie Bagwell made a motion to accept the recommendation. Jessie Sibert seconded the motion. The members approved the motion. Shunna Jeter abstained from the vote.

Area Reemployment Strategy – Ann Skinner

Ann said that the strategy is to connect employers and job seekers to communicate opportunities. The system is trying to get people to be proactive. Ann said that small businesses have been hardest hit and need assistance the most.

People are encouraged to work on their GED now because during a recession, employers can be selective when hiring. Arrangements have been made with adult education to allow people to study for GED online. About a month ago, board members responded to an emergency email vote request. The Board approved lending laptops and providing funding for temporary internet access for clients to continue their studies over the summer. So far six people have requested this assistance.

A key strategy will be offering employers funding to train new workers. With On-the-Job training, employers can be reimbursed for providing the training listed in a pre-approved training plan. At this time, the cap is 50% of wages during the first 12 weeks. During the last recession, we offered up to 90% reimbursement based on company size. Since small businesses have been affected by the pandemic, increasing the reimbursement would help them survive. Ann proposed the following scale (as long as it is allowable under state guidelines):

Under 50 employees – 90%
51 to 250 employees – 75%
Greater than 250 – 50%

Ann said that the area received a \$100,000 grant for additional On-the-Job Training slots and a board vote to adopt the reimbursement scale would help Upper Savannah reach its goals. Scott Coleman made a motion to accept the recommendation, which was seconded by Jessie Sibert. The motion was approved by the members.

Adjourn

Chair Blanton acknowledged and welcomed Jessie Sibert back. She also congratulated Doris Watson on her upcoming retirement and announced that this would be Ms. Watson's last Workforce Board meeting attendance.

Chair Blanton called the meeting to conclusion and reminded members that the next scheduled meeting will be Monday, August 3, 2020 at 4:00 pm, at Upper Savannah, 430 Helix Road.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director

Upper Savannah Workforce Area: Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Executive Summary

Background

To compete in the global economy, companies must become more efficient and maintain quality. A skilled workforce is necessary. Collectively the economic development agencies in Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, and Saluda counties are focusing on attracting manufacturing businesses because they enhance the tax base and provide good paying jobs with benefits.

At the same time, the workforce system has a responsibility to residents. People want to earn enough to support their families. Quality of life is important. Most workers want to avoid long commutes.

It is the goal of the Upper Savannah Workforce Board to help businesses meet the current and future hiring needs and to help job seekers find work.

Opportunities

Just prior to the start of the pandemic, there was record demand for workers. Nearly everyone who wanted a job was working except for:

1. Individuals without reliable transportation
2. Individuals who have poor basic skills or who do not have a high school credential
3. Individuals with disabilities
4. Individuals with criminal backgrounds
5. Individuals who cannot pass a drug test
6. Young people without prior work experience

Since March, thousands have lost their jobs due to COVID-related closures, market disruptions and uncertainty. Many of those displaced have skills.

Resources

As the region tries to get unemployed individuals into the workforce and tries to reduce key skills gaps, it has resources. Sixteen different agencies have united to support the Upper Savannah SC Work System. Currently five organizations staff SC Works Centers providing a total of 35 workers. Budgets across the 16 partners vary (and not all budgets are earmarked exclusively for workforce activities.) The primary program responsible for workforce development is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which has a yearly budget of about \$1.5 million.

The area's system has established infrastructure. There are SC Works Centers in each county. Piedmont Technical College has a campus in each county and offers hands-on industrial training in three counties.

Needs

Upper Savannah has a workforce of 116,973. There are 4,258 businesses established. The population of the area is slightly less affluent and less educated as the state as a whole.

Goals and Strategies

The current budget for the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act translates to about \$14 per worker in the region. Some training programs cost more than \$10,000 per person. To make a meaningful change in the region, the workforce board must set priorities. Below are goals and related strategies.

1. Reach at least 12% of the workforce each year by offering free basic services for all job seekers. Promoting job listings and providing information about training opportunities is inexpensive and can help potential workers make good career choices.
2. Reduce transportation barriers by having centers in all counties and by encouraging training vendors to offer courses in each county.
3. Promote careers in manufacturing by working with businesses, schools and relevant community groups.
4. Invest in those with the greatest potential to change including individuals from groups underrepresented in the workforce. This will be done by having policies that target the most in need. The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board can set criteria for serving Adults through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The board has selected to give priority to residents with poor work history.
5. Increase the basic skills levels of potential workers by encouraging GED attainment.
6. Invest in training that has the greatest potential for graduates to find work which pays a self-sufficiency wage. The Workforce Development Board has selected diversified manufacturing and healthcare as the sectors most likely to generate the best outcomes. (A chart showing the area's training policies is attached.)
7. Help employers efficiently recruit and screen workers by utilizing the www.scworks.com job matching database and social media campaigns.
8. Offer training grants to businesses to help them maintain a competitive workforce by tapping into state grant funding.
9. Help workers advance the career ladder (and open the bottom rung for newcomers) by encouraging businesses to establish apprenticeship programs and participate in work-based learning.
10. Communicate employer's expectations for soft skills to job seekers by communicating with schools and other organizations which help job seekers.
11. Offer education and job training for youth who are high school dropouts or who have completed high school but have not yet found a suitable job.

12. Encourage communication between partners to serve clients holistically, not just with services from one agency. The board expects to track 1,200 referrals per year.

Pandemic Response

All workforce centers are open. An appointment system is being used to ensure customers have enough space. The workforce board amended the supportive services policy so that computers can be furnished to trainees who are learning remotely.

If the economy does not quickly rebound when everything re-opens, more resources will be needed. Originally funding was to be cut by \$233,000. Upper Savannah has access to discretionary grants from the state workforce board which will re-coup the difference. Upper Savannah has applied for and received \$100,000 for On-the-Job Training expansion and \$126,011 for recovery work experience. Upper Savannah is applying for FEMA funding for COVID-related costs.

Measurement and Use of Data in Program Design

The Workforce Development Board is responsible for meeting key performance indicators for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to enhance the system as a whole. The performance indicators look at the percentage of program completers who go to work, stay at their jobs and get an educational credential. Post program wages are gathered.

Because WIOA accounts for a fragment of the workforce, the Workforce Board will also gather information on participation in Wagner Peyser (job seeker services provided by the SC Department of Employment and Workforce), the Vocational Rehabilitation Department and the seven adult education programs.

Comment Process

Individuals or organizations that wish to comment on the strategic plan are asked to contact the workforce division of Upper Savannah Council of Governments. Please contact Ann Skinner at 864.941.8050 or work@uppersavannah.com.

The complete plan will be at www.uppersavannah.com no later than September 1, 2020. Upper Savannah staff are available to talk with county councils and other groups.

Who Can Be Served with WIOA Adult Funding?

Original	April Addition	Proposed
<p>By law, Individuals who are low income (below the 70% poverty guideline) or public assistance recipient, and/or basic skills deficient (such as high school dropout). For example, the income limit would be \$21,720 for a family of three.</p> <p>SC allows for a window of 30% to be allowed in who do not meet the above definition.</p> <p>Upper Savannah said that 10% could be served if they met the 100% income guideline. For example, the income limit would be \$30,580 for a family of three.</p> <p>The problem is family income can include workers other than the applicant and a spouse, parent or child could knock someone out, especially with the extra \$600 a week UI.</p>	<p>Upper Savannah changed the window to 30% like the state rule and defined "seeking training for an in-demand medical field" as a criteria. One person was enrolled as result of the policy change.</p>	<p>Keep the window at 30% to allow more people to be served, but change the local criteria to poor work history which is defined as <u>"Is not currently working full time and has not worked consecutively for one employer 18 months during the last 36 months."</u></p> <p>Reason for the change: We encounter individuals who need training, but their family income is above limits. This would allow us to serve workers based on their circumstances. We feel that the new criteria is easier to understand and possibility less stigmatizing.</p>

TRAINING PRIORITY HANDOUT

TIER ONE: PRIMARY INVESTMENT	OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund classroom training that support manufacturing or healthcare • Advocate for training resources • Promote career opportunities • Consider as strategic sector 	Production Occupations
	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
	Architecture and Engineering Occupations
	Management Occupations
	Office and Administrative Support Occupations
TIER TWO: SECONDARY INVESTMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund classroom training for occupations that support manufacturing or healthcare • Advocate for training resources • Promote select career opportunities • Develop relationships with key employers 	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations
	Education, Training, and Library Occupations
	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations
	Business and Financial Operations Occupations
	Computer and Mathematical Occupations
TIER THREE: LIMITED INVESTMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit training investment to On-the-Job Training or apprenticeship where company pays part of costs. • Promote jobs through SC Works system 	Construction and Extraction Occupations
	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
	Sales and Related Occupations
	Legal Occupations
TIER FOUR: LIMITED INVESTMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit training investment to On-the-Job Training or apprenticeship where company pays part of costs. • Promote jobs through SC Works system. 	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
	Protective Service Occupations
	Personal Care and Service Occupations
	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations

WIOA FUNDING POLICY

Limit training to occupations in tier one and two which support manufacturing or healthcare.

Any training which costs more than \$2,000 must lead to an industry- recognized credential.

Require 50/50 agreement for training which costs more than \$4,500 after federal/state grants are applied.

Limit training to \$7,500 per client with a maximum training length of one year.

Cost will be a factor in accepting training programs. Options that cost more than twice other alternatives will not be included on list.