

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS ONE-STOP PARTNERS MEETING

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains One-Stop Partners met on Tuesday January 26, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. via a Zoom conference call. Participants in the call were:

Shelby Ward, North Georgia Technical College
Shannon Cole, Lanier Technical College
Jim Watson, Lanier Technical College
Mark Winters, Georgia Department of Labor
Stephanie Ponce, Georgia Department of Labor
Whitney Williams, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Danielle Avelar, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Ebony Tucker, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Jessica Williams, Goodwill Industries
Beth Williams, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
Corin Morgan, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
Greg Vitek, Workforce Strategies Group
Tonya White, Ga. Dept. of Community Supervision
Cindy Bryant, Gateway Domestic Violence Center
Wakethia Cunningham, Compass Center, United Way of Hall County
Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates

Welcome

Benjie Hopkins welcomed everyone, and he reminded the group of the purposes of this bi-monthly meeting – to make collaborations and referrals between agencies. The more we can learn about each of the partners and what services are provided, the more referrals we can make, and the better we all can serve our clients.

Minutes

Minutes from the October 27, 2020 meeting were emailed previously, and these are posted at: www.onestopworkgamtns.org

Focus Topic: WorkSource Georgia Mountains Programs and Services

Whitney Williams, WorkSource Director, offered details concerning the National Dislocated Worker Grant, now available in this region. She stated that these funds are also available from other workforce areas, and she can offer contact information for these if needed. She would appreciate the opportunity to make more people aware of the details about this grant.

Danielle Avelar, Outreach and New Program Coordinator for WorkSource Georgia Mountains gave an informative presentation about programs currently available. A copy of her PowerPoint is included as an attachment to the email for these minutes.

The National Dislocated Worker Grant follows many of the same guidelines as the WIOA (Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act). Specifically, the new grant is available only to those who meet the definition of a Dislocated Worker. To be eligible for this grant, individuals must live in this thirteen county area, and fit one of the four definitions. Those are: temporarily or permanently laid off due to the Covid-19 disaster; currently receive or have exhausted unemployment; was self-employed and lost income due to Covid-19, and/or has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks. These funds may be used for OJT (On-the-Job

Training) for eligible individuals. An agreement must be in place with an employer prior to an individual beginning employment under OJT. Individuals who are not currently working are encouraged to contact WorkSource directly to have their eligibility determined.

Assistance for occupational skills training is now available. This training must be in a high-growth field, and completion of the training must be completed in two years or less. Most funding was frozen in May 2020, so individuals who had been on a waiting list are now being contacted and applications are being processed. Information about this training is available on the WorkSource Georgia Mountains web

page <https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/wsgm>

and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WorkSource.GM/>

Please share this information to anyone who may be interested. Since paid advertising is not allowed, there is a need for everyone to assist in getting the word out about services and training.

Short term training such as CMA is available through the Medical Institute of North Georgia or through any of the technical colleges. Short-term training to obtain certificates is also available through the technical colleges. Temporary work experiences are currently available for Dislocated Workers at non-profit organizations in these counties: Lumpkin, Hall, Forsyth, and Stephens. These jobs may also be offered in other counties. It has been challenging to find individuals who meet the requirements and who are interested in taking these temporary positions. Please contact Danielle Avelar for more information about becoming a worksite or about working in these positions. **Danielle Avelar** davelar@gmrc.ga.gov 770-531-4043

WorkSource continues to offer services through Virtual Career Coaches. This includes virtual resume writing and virtual job search assistance. A Virtual Job Board is available online for employers to post job openings.

Partner Updates: Partners were asked to offer updates for their respective organizations.

Georgia Department of Labor <https://dol.georgia.gov/> Mark Winters, manager of Gainesville GDOL office reported: GDOL Career Centers are still closed to the public, but staff members are making significant headway on unemployment claims. Career Center employees continue to work remotely. The volume of claims has been a challenge for the staff. Also, there are five different levels of Unemployment, so it is a complex process. Employers list positions daily on Employ Georgia. Approximately 170,000 jobs are currently posted statewide. It is likely that unemployment benefits will be extended for at least an additional thirteen weeks. The GDOL website indicates a federal unemployment rate of 6.7%; State of Georgia rate of 5.6%; and Georgia Mountains area has a rate of 3.5%.

Stephanie Ponce, Regional Coordinator of GDOL reported: The GDOL Business Services Unit continues to work with employers to help with their recruitment activities. She mentioned she will be glad to share local program information fliers through GDOL's statewide sites. Stephanie also noted that, when appropriate, GDOL provides bonding for felons at no charge. This is an incentive for employers to consider hiring these individuals. Since December, jobs have more than doubled. Approximately 82% of jobs have been regained.

WorkSource Georgia Mountains <https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/wsgm> Ebony Tucker, Youth Program Supervisor reported that in-house GED programs will resume soon. Offering virtual workshops to schools has been a challenge. The staff is looking forward to having the Route 180 Youth Center operating at full capacity again when possible. The Youth Committee of the Georgia Mountains Workforce Board meets quarterly to provide guidance for the WorkSource staff in planning and implementing programs.

Lanier Technical College <https://www.laniertech.edu/> Shannon Cole, Dean of Adult Education for LTC reported: The college continues to observe the Covid-19 situation carefully. Most classes are now being offered as hybrid. Some in person testing has resumed. Short term training of three to four weeks in Manufacturing Ergonomics, as requested by employers, is being developed.

Jim Watson reported: Manufacturing skills classes are being offered. Thirty GED students were recently accepted into College programs. A goal is to have that many or more additional students enrolled by May 2021. There is an effort to change the mindset for GED to be the beginning for additional education. GED graduates are being encouraged to continue into training for short term training, for various certificates, or for degree programs.

North Georgia Technical College <https://northgatech.edu/> Shelby Ward reported: Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) Commissioner Greg Dozier has appointed former Georgia State Senator and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) specialist John Wilkinson as the new President of North Georgia Technical College as of February 1st. NGT's pilot program for the HiSET exam, an equivalency for high school graduation, continues to run smoothly. This model is planned for statewide release soon. The college has been using Blackboard technology to deliver online and hybrid classes along with face to face classes. IETs will be provided again when WIOA funds are available.

GVRA- Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency <https://gvs.georgia.gov> Beth Williams reported: Corin Morgan will be replacing Beth as Supervisor for the Gainesville and the Cumming offices. Benjie thanked Beth for her all she has done for the people of this region and for her participation with this partnership. We all wish her well with her new responsibilities as Supervisor for the Athens office. Corin announced that the new VR structure includes Gainesville, Cumming, and Athens in this district. To conserve resources, VR made the decision to close two priority categories. Now, individuals who are most significantly disabled are the top priority for services. More referrals are being made to organizations with additional resources. A new resource is being used for high school students. This is a website offering virtual job shadowing with information about jobs and videos. Periodic sessions for audiology testing are being conducted for GVRA clients at the One-Stop Center.

Georgia Dept. of Community Supervision (DCS) <https://dcs.georgia.gov/locations/gainesville> Tonya White, Senior Lead Coordinator with DCS reported: She has seen a need to develop a one-on-one relationship with area employers who are willing to consider working with individuals with felony backgrounds. She also assists offenders in realizing the value of skills training some of them receive while they are incarcerated. Many of them need more self confidence in their ability to get a job, because many are discouraged in thinking their background will always prevent them from getting a job that pays well. She is working closely with GDOL and with Goodwill, and she looks forward to continuing to collaborate with WorkSource in preparing her clients for jobs. DCS is working with the Georgia Justice Project to offer a resources program for their clients. The next one is scheduled for February 22nd. Contact Tonya for more information about this program and about additional webinar resources.

Workforce Strategies Group - Greg Vitek reported: Marketing materials are being developed for Career Paths for entry level and for manufacturing as part of the Sector Strategy in the region. The Sector Strategy process continues to focus on determining and addressing employer needs. Meetings are held to obtain input from regional employers. Short term training programs in the form of bootcamps are being planned.

Goodwill Industries <https://goodwillng.org/> Jessica Williams, Regional Manager for Workforce Development for Goodwill reported: Skills training in welding and in forklift operations are being offered. Virtual job fairs are being held on a regular basis. This could be a good opportunity for disseminating information about training opportunities available through WorkSource.

Gateway Domestic Violence Center <https://www.gatewaydvcenter.org/> Cindy Bryant, Transitional Housing Program Coordinator reported: Gateway serves Hall County, and their staff works with all shelters in the surrounding area. Gateway is still in the planning phase for their new facility, and they are hoping to break ground sometime in 2021. Gateway's 24/7 CRISIS HOTLINE: (770) 536-5860.

Compass Center, United Way of Hall County and UNG

<https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/thecompasscenter> and Multicultural Student Affairs at the University of North Georgia <https://ung.edu/multicultural-student-affairs/>

Wakethia Cunningham, Interim Director of the Compass Center, and Office Administrator for Multicultural Student Affairs at UNG reported: There may be interest in having United Way of Hall County as a worksite. A worksite agreement will need to be completed. There was a question regarding additional training funded through WorkSource. This may be allowable, but it would be decided on an individual basis.

Announcements

Benjie reported that Pat Freeman, longtime CEO of Legacy Link, Inc. will be retiring at the end of January. We appreciate her participation and her many valuable contributions to this One-Stop Partnership, and we all wish her well. Her successor as director of Legacy Link will be Melissa Armstrong.

<https://www.legacylink.org/>

Also, the One-Stop Center is currently open and operating from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Customers may call ahead to schedule an appointment. Persons arriving at the front door call to be admitted. Everyone must wear a mask inside. For One-Stop Center appointments, intake, and information, call: **770 538-2727**

Date for Next Meeting

The next One-Stop Partners Meeting is scheduled for **11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 30, 2021**. Details will be issued when available.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:55 a.m.