Lowcountry Workforce Board – Meeting Minutes
WEDNESDAY, May 22, 2024 9:30am

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Guests:
Mark Williams (Ross) Andray Holmes (BJEOC) Joyceestan Pringle (SCVR) Stephanie Ferguson (Ross) Debra Young (Telamon) Andray Holmes (BJEOC) Stacy Bitondo (SCDEW)
Staff: Tony Pollen, Angela Jenkins, Shelly Campbell, Sabrena Graham and Michael Butler

1. **Call to Order:** Roy Dupont, Vice-Board Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Introduction of Guests. A quorum of board members was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

2. Introduction of guest was initiated by Vice-Board Chair Roy Dupont.

3. **Minutes:** ***A motion was made by Andy Thorson to accept the January 24, 2024 minutes as sent in the meeting pre-reads and seconded by Lynn Bowers. All voted in favor with none oppose.***

New Business:

4. **Ross Contract PY24 Extension Approval*** Shelly Campbell

Staff is requesting the Board to authorize staff to negotiate and execute a Modification to the existing Ross WIOA Contract for One Stop Operations, and Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services. The
Modification would extend the existing contract through 6/30/25 and include a corresponding Budget for the upcoming year.

Mr. Butler will provide the Board members information regarding the final Ross-LCOG modified contract amount after LCOG receives the WIOA Program Year Notice of Funds from the state and LCOG Board approval of the LCOG Budget. A motion was made by Andy Thorson to approve and was seconded by Chris Horvath. All voted in favor with non-oppose.

5. **Business Service Report:** Angela Jenkins

*Engagement with Businesses:* Within the last few months the Business Services Team have been actively out in the community building on relationships already established. These relationships have fostered the opportunity for several job seekers to retain employment and build sustainable careers, some in the field they have been certified in. We have provided On-the-Job Training reimbursements for businesses like Mayzo, Sunward Steel, Freedom Air, Gehl and Paknet, just to name a few. These businesses have retained many of the employees beyond the OJT Contract period. We have assisted employers with building up their pool of applicants by sending them qualified applicants that have been hand-picked and ready to work. Within the last few months, we have received several reverse referrals from employers which we attribute to the great relationships we have built with employers.

*Community Events.* We are actively attending community events throughout our surrounding counties. On March 28th we attended the SC Department of Employment and Workforce event at the Culinary Institute located at 1 venture Drive Bluffton SC 29910. There we were able to hear partner spotlights from Tony Cook with TCL of the LowCountry, Bob Elliot highlights his nursing retention initiative and Wyondria Jefferson. On April 10th we attended the Job Fair put on as a collaboration between TCL and Colleton County held at the local Colleton County board room located at 500 forest circle Walterboro SC 29488. At this event there were several businesses that participated, many job seekers were able to talk with employers submit applications and even interviews were held on that same day. On May 7th we attended the Education and Workforce panel discussion where we were enlightened with the accomplishments, needs, and plans from Frank Rodriguez representing Bluffton K-12, Richard Gough representing Technical Colleges and Dr. Al Panu representing the University (USCB). All the discussion was quite enriching.

**Current Industries**

*Gehl Food & Beverage* is a Walterboro Manufacturing company that we highlighted previously that they have made additional efforts to expand their operation into a new facility that sits right alongside their current facility. They have enlisted the business services team services to build their employee pool for a second and third shift. They have depended on our ability to provide skillful employee and utilized the reverse referral process to hire and place staff. We currently have or have had about six OJT placements with this company. All successful except one in which that individual left for a better paying job in a nearby county.

*Alpha Genesis* is a research company located in Yemassee SC. This company is a primate research company whose mission is to provide the finest nonhuman products and services to the world as they maintain uncompromising principles as they grow. This company has distributors worldwide and they support the scientific community. We have been able to place individuals there as animal care specialists but are partnering with them to place individuals that are interested in the medical field like PCT completers. The pay is good, and the company principles and safety procedures are remarkable.
6. **SC Work Operator Report:** Mark Williams

Services being provided: Unemployment Claims filing, WIOA Certifications and general questions concerning SC Works, Federal Bonding, Typing Test, Job Readiness Class, Adult Education and DSS. Job Corps – Orientations 1st Monday of every Month: Shontell Snoddy.

Old Business Activity:

February 2024 – Volvo Hiring Event Colleton

February 2024 – In His Name Colleton SC,

March 2024 – Job Fair Army National Guard Beaufort SC,

April 2024 – Job Fair Bull Durham -Estill SC,

The Beaufort Center.

New Business Activity: Melissa Blair DEW Workforce Specialist provides computer training to our access point library’s in Lobeco and St. Helena areas. Also, Benita Ferguson DEW Disable Veteran Outreach Program Specialist provides workshop such as interviewing skills, Dress for success in the Lobeco and Hardeeville Library as well.

Center foot traffic:

Beaufort: 1812

Colleton: 880

Hampton: 373

Total 3065

All of the above represent teamwork between SC Works and LCOG.

SC Works continues to hold Hiring Events weekly, job posting on DEW Website, Hardeeville television interviews, Facebook and office hiring Board.

7. **Ross Update:** Stephanie Ferguson

**Increased Enrollments in WIOA:**

Over the past few months, enrollments in the WIOA program have seen a remarkable surge. This reflects the effectiveness of our outreach efforts and the relevance of the services provided under WIOA in addressing the evolving needs of our workforce.

WEX Success Stories: Our Work Experience (WEX) program has witnessed several success stories from youth participants who have not only gained valuable skills and experience in Customer Service, HVAC,
and the Manufacturing sectors, but have also secured sustainable employment opportunities as a result. The impact of WEX has empowered our Youth to meaningful career pathways.

**Staffing Stability:**

We are currently fully staffed in our three offices of the Lowcountry. By being fully staffed, this ensures continuity in service delivery and developing a supportive work environment. We have bolstered morale and enhanced operational efficiency, ultimately advancing our mission to serve our customers with excellence.

**NAWDP Youth Conference:**

We attended the NAWDP Youth Conference last November in Las Vegas which served as a platform for collaboration among youth participants, industry leaders, educators, and workforce development professionals. We were able to engage in workshops, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities. We also had the opportunity to exchange ideas, share best practices, and forge valuable connections at empowering youth to thrive in today’s evolving workforce.

**New Best Practices and Community Partnerships:**

We’re always looking for new ways to improve how we help people. So, we’ve found some great ideas and put them into action to make our program even better. We’re using technology to offer services online, such as our WIOA Orientation, meetings with the local businesses and schools, and making sure we consider everyone’s needs. These changes are helping us make a bigger difference and connect with more people in our communities. We also have the SC Works Lowcountry Facebook page to inform the community of Career Fairs, Hiring Events, and information about WIOA.

**8. Budget Report: Mike Butler**

Mike reviewed with the board the budget report as of April 30, 2024. Mike pointed out that 83.33% of the year has expired and 91% of the overall budget has been expended. Mike shared with the board that, all three funding streams Adult, DW and Youth are all trending to meet the 70% Fund Utilization Rate requirement for PY 23.

Mike reviewed the budget pages that listed all former and current decresionary grants that have either expired or still active for PY23. There were no questions asked concerning the budget report.

**9. Director Report- Mike Butler**

The PY24 MOU/IFA agreements have been completed and forwarded to all participating core and non-core partners for their signatory’s signature.

EO Monitoring is scheduled for the week of June 3-7, 2024. This is the first full EO monitoring for workforce area. A sixteen-page questionnaire has to be completed and submitted to SCDEW EO by the 28th of May.
We are in the process of applying for the State Workforce Board Innovation Discretionary Grant. The deadline for this grant is July 1, 2024. This grant encourages LWDA's to pilot new innovative strategies for delivering innovative workforce services in their area or region. We have identified Virtual Reality Headsets for Career Exploration all access bundle which includes Aviation, Automotive Career, Construction, Diesel, Electrical Construction, Healthcare, Hospitality and Manufacturing.

The second innovative strategy will be the use of Jobs EQ Workforce Intelligence Software. This will allow our Business Service team to better serve and connect clients to regional opportunities with development software. It will help bridge the gap between potential workers and high-value, high demand careers by combining traditional labor market data with real-time job posting data.

On the Job Training and Occupational Skills training dollars will be the foundation for this grant application.

We have not decided on what our application budget will be.

I recently attended the Education/Workforce Summit sponsored by the Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. This event was held at the TCL Culinary Institute of the South. Guest panelist were, Dr. Richard Gough TCL, Dr. Frank Rodriguez, Superintendent of Beaufort County Schools an Dr. Al Panu, Chancellor of USCB.

Ross is on par to pass all performance requirements for PY23 with six weeks remaining and opportunities to improve further in select performance areas, namely measurable skills gains and credential attainments. Great job to Ross for providing outstanding career services and guidance to those that enter our program.

Thank you to the five board members whose terms expire on 06/30/2024, and decided to continue to serve for another three years.

I will be sending out the PY24 Conflict of Interest statements for each of you to sign and return.


On behalf of the Core SC Works Partners, I would like to recommend Dr. Tony Pollen for re-appointment as the PY24 Business Services Lead for the Lowcountry Workforce area. Dr. Pollen has consistently demonstrated exceptional professionalism, innovation, and a deep commitment to the community.

Dr. Pollen's proficiency with cutting-edge technology has been instrumental in advancing our business services initiatives, ensuring that our workforce remains competitive in an ever-evolving landscape. His recent attainment of a PhD underscores his dedication to continuous learning and academic excellence.

One of Dr. Pollen's most remarkable qualities is his ability to seamlessly connect with individuals from all walks of life. His down-to-earth approach fosters meaningful relationships and engenders trust within the community, a quality that is invaluable in workforce development.

Beyond his official duties, Dr. Pollen has consistently gone above and beyond, investing his time and energy in community outreach efforts and initiatives aimed at enhancing economic opportunities for
all. His unwavering dedication to the betterment of our workforce has made him an indispensable leader in business services and workforce development.

In summary, Dr. Tony Pollen’s professional acumen, innovative spirit, community investment, and exceptional leadership make him the ideal candidate for reappointment as the PY24 Business Services Lead. I wholeheartedly endorse his continued tenure in this crucial role.

11. Workforce Board Chair PY24: Mike Butler

Mike Butler shared with the board that current Workforce Board Chair Kevin Pak has ask to be relived of his role as Workforce Board Chair as of June 30, 2024. Mike stated that Kevin has served in the role of Board Chair for three years and has done a great in the role.

Mr. Roy Dupont the current Vice-Chair has accepted the opportunity to assume the position of Lowcountry Workforce Board Chair effective July 1, 2024.

Andy Thorson made a motion to approve Mr. Roy Dupont as the next Workforce Board Chair effective 07/01/2024. Chris Horvath seconded the motion. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Mike stated that there will be a need to refill the Vice-Chair sit from the business members of the board. Andy Thorson stated that he would give the position consideration, but would not commit to the position at the meeting.

12. The meeting was adjourned by Chairman-Elect Roy Dupont at 10:30am