



Upstate Workforce Board Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026 8:30 a.m. – Spartanburg YMCA

Members Present

Mr. Wade Ballard
Ms. Erin Black
Ms. Hunter Blake
Ms. Anne Brock-Trail
Mr. Troy Caldwell
Mr. Josh Cleapor
Ms. Johnnie-Lynn Crosby

Mr. Justin Gist
Mr. Eric Holland
Mr. Jerome Kirkland
Mr. Ken Moon
MS. Barbara Rhodes
Mr. Drake Scott
Dr. Kristi Woodall

Members Absent

Mr. Bill Brasington
Mr. Jay Coffey
Mr. Robbie Faucett
Ms. Stephanie Morrow
Mr. Christian Rice

Staff Present

Ms. Dana Hudgins
Ms. CJ Jackson
Ms. Pam Morris
Ms. Kelly Tillinghast

Guest Present

Mr. Kevin Allen
Ms. Melanie Hughes
Ms. Stacy Kicidis
Ms. Carly Lineberry

Welcome

Mr. Jerome Kirkland, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. Due to time restraints he bypassed the usual format and introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Joey Haney from Union Uplifted.

Special Presentation

Dr. Joey Haney, Executive Director of Union Uplifted and former Union County Superintendent, gave a half hour presentation highlighting the educational needs and resources available in Union County. He started his presentation emphasizing that only 25% of Union County children enter kindergarten ready to learn. Union Uplifted is a shared plan to ensure that every child in Union County has the support and resources they need to thrive from early childhood through career. Guided by the national StriveTogether framework, this partnership is anchored by Union County School District, United Way of the Piedmont, and Spartanburg Academic Movement, with support from partners in healthcare, business, higher education, government, faith communities, and the nonprofit sector. Copies of his presentation will be emailed to members.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Kirkland asked members to refer to the minutes in their packet from June 15, 2026. The minutes were corrected to insert Ms. Katherine Reedy's name where it had been omitted in the introduction section. ***Mr. Josh Cleapor made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Dr. Kristi Woodall seconded the motion. With no abstentions, the motion carried.***

Introductions

Mr. Kirkland continued the meeting by having new members tell a little bit about themselves. Ms. Barbara Rhodes stated that she was a former educator from New Jersey. She is now Area Administrator for SC Vocational Rehabilitation.

Next, Mr. Drake Scott shared that he was originally from Greenville, but is now a Gaffney resident and is an Industrial Real Estate Broker. Lastly, Mr. Troy Caldwell stated that he was a Spartanburg native working as a mechanical Engineer for Toray.

Ms. Dana Hudgins, UWB Executive Director, stated that there is one vacancy on the board. Ms. Stephanie Morrow has left Goodwill, leaving a Cherokee County community-based organization slot open. Staff will look to fill this role with a resident of Cherokee County.

Manufacturing Symposium

Ms. Johnnie-Lynn Crosby, Board Vice Chair, spoke about the symposium she attended recently with other board members. Over 400 people attended the event. The theme was centered around manufacturing being a critical based area in terms of recruiting and retaining employees. The only new message was "We need to be working with employers a lot sooner and in a more strategic fashion...". She recommended the event to other board members next year.

Committee Reports

Mr. Kirkland explained that a new meeting format will be implemented, with members expected to review the committee summaries included in their meeting packets prior to discussion. Committee chairs will no longer be asked to share the summaries aloud during the meeting. The majority of the meeting will now focus on speakers and increasing knowledge on workforce development in our local area. The floor was then opened for questions. As no questions were raised, the meeting proceeded to the next agenda item.

Executive Committee Report

Mr. Jerome Kirkland, Executive Committee Chair, turned the meeting over to Ms. Hudgins to talk about fund transfer requests. Ms. Hudgins stated that every year, staff ask for permission to be able to transfer funds from Dislocated Worker to Adult when necessary. The law gives the board 100% transfer authority between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding. For many years the board has given a blanket approval for staff to move funds as needed. Ms. Hudgins clarified that boards also have the ability to move funds back if necessary. ***Mr. Kirkland presented the request for staff to have approval to request transfers during PY26. This recommendation came in the form of a motion from the committee. Mr. Ken Moon seconded the motion, the motion carried with no abstentions.***

Ms. Hudgins then explained that sometimes our local area experiences layoffs. This can increase the number of Dislocated Workers needing training. Local areas have the opportunity to request rapid response funds from the state to ensure we can serve those impacted. Rapid Response requests require board approval. Staff are requesting permission to request funds as needed during PY26. Staff would inform the board if a request is made. ***Mr. Kirkland presented that staff be allowed to request Rapid Response funding during PY26 as needed. This recommendation comes in the form of a motion from the committee. Ms. Johnnie-Lynn Crosby seconded the motion, the motion carried with no abstentions.***

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Dana Hudgins, Executive Director, presented the Executive Director's Report and thanked staff for managing and getting through the end-of-the-year processes. She stated that we met all of our financial goals for PY25 with the help of Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants. She shared that our local area is evaluated on 15 federal performance measures. According to the rolling four-quarter report, we did not meet one of those measures. This marks the first time we have ever failed to meet any performance standard. The outcome was anticipated and supports the rationale for changing the OneStop service provider. Ms. Hudgins anticipates that performance will continue to decline due to lagging

data. It can take 12 to 18 months before the board will see measurable improvements and the positive impact of the new provider. As a result of the current performance outcomes, the State may require our area to submit a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Our CAP will show that we recognized the problem and have already made the change by switching providers in efforts to improve outcomes.

Ms. Hudgins reported that SC Works is still looking for a Facilitator. USC ACHIEVE is fully staffed and is hitting the ground running with Work-Based Learning. SC Works is focusing on On-the-Job Training (OJT) grants. Board members were reminded that SC Works can pay 50% to 75% of employees' wages for up to 6 months (for eligible WIOA customers). The goal is to fill 20 OJT slots this program year.

Other Business and Adjournment

Ms. Hudgins stated that Mary Ann Lawrence will be in Spartanburg in October to provide staff training. She will also work with the board for a few hours to help hash out some goals and action items for the multi-year strategic plan. Staff will send out a meeting invite for those board members who can attend the planning session.

With no further business or discussion from the floor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 a.m.

Next meeting date: November 9, 2026