

Section II: Strategic Vision and Goals

A description of the local board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency, including:

- ***Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and***
- ***A description of how the local board will work with core and required partners to align local resources to achieve the strategic-vision and goals referenced above.***

Mission: To build and maintain a workforce development system that meets the needs of employers

Vision: To create and oversee a continuously improving workforce development system that:

- Encompasses all necessary resources for the citizens of our region to obtain employment at a livable wage
- Ensures employers have a work ready pool of applicants and a point of contact to obtain other employer related services
- Promotes youth development in education, training and employment

Core Values:

- Uncompromising integrity in all situations
- Honestly and justly holding each other accountable in ethical challenges
- Embracing different perspectives, experiences, cultures, backgrounds, talents, and contributions of others
- Striving for excellence in workforce and community development

Tagline: Advancing the Future of Business and Community

The Upstate Workforce Board is the champion for regional workforce development and economic growth. We fully support economic development regionally through our involvement with regional organizations. Through our work with Ten at the Top, Upstate Alliance and the 14-county Manufacturing Sector Strategy work, we will work to address barriers that keep our economy from moving forward. Transportation and upskilling are two primary efforts on which we are focused regionally.

Update: During COVID-19, the Manufacturing Sector Strategy work continued virtually. The businesses have now named their group "The Upstate Manufacturing Network" and will have a reignite event this year. We are focusing our attention on enhanced supportive services of all

types. We think this will help with retention for those upskilling. With gas prices so high, this will definitely help those traveling regionally for training. For those with significant barriers to employment, our supportive services might be the difference in a decision on whether to go to training or not. The Upstate and Greenville Workforce Boards are close partners and cost share many resources such as several staff. We have quarterly regional meetings and also bring in the One Stop Operator staff from Equus for a portion of these meetings to plan and look at regional activities. We issue regional instruction letters in most cases so that the staff being cost shared are not having to following two sets of instructions. We have held joint trainings for staff. This cost sharing has saved us a lot in federal funding in a time when funding cuts have occurred over the years. The 12 local Workforce Boards in South Carolina held a retreat in Charleston in 2022 in an effort to share best practices and discuss regional sharing. This meeting was well attended. Since a past director of SCDEW encouraged the dismantling of the Workforce Board Directors Association a few years ago, we have not had a retreat. It is very important to have these retreats to hold longer discussions and share concerns and promising practices. Also at the retreat, a Boeing spokesperson informed the group about their efforts to recruit employees across the entire state. The spokesperson also encouraged the Workforce Board staff to reach out to him when there was an opportunity to speak to students at events. Bringing the group together statewide for a full day or two with an invited speaker is money well spent and also motivates us to try doing things differently.

Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment:

Barriers to employment exist for residents who are low-income, disabled, veterans, ex-offenders, and/or have a drug abuse history, lack of basic and/or occupational skills, and lack of transportation/childcare. To address these barriers, we offer the following:

- Funding a quality WIOA youth program with staff experienced in serving youth with barriers;
- Identifying current programs in place that are addressing employment barriers in order to make referrals. Staying on top of changes in programs that address barriers to employment as grants come and go within these organizations. This is done through partner meetings, safety net meetings and getting out in the community to do outreach and meeting with agency/non-profit/education staff from other organizations;
- Identifying gaps in services and working with communities to fill the gaps. The WIOA Youth Program, USC Upstate ACHIEVE, noticed that students were often not eating breakfast or did not have food at their homes. They also noticed basic hygiene issues. To remedy this, the ACHIEVE Director asked in our grantee meeting if she could start a food pantry. Everyone rallied around this. The non-profit serving the board raised funds from board members and others and seeded the pantry with \$200.00. ACHIEVE staff purchased snacks, pop top cans of mac and cheese, soups, etc. They also purchased deodorant and other hygiene items. They were able to secure condoms from another agency for the back

of the pantry. Some students do not wear clean clothing so we are now doing a t-shirt drive so that they can issue clean t-shirts when needed. We realize we must address these types of issues as they arise and not ignore them. Often, staff must address the basic needs before learning can occur;

- Encouraging citizens to use the 211 number for services. 211 is a free and confidential service that helps citizens identify local resources. This is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week;
- Explore fee-for-service opportunities that other Workforce Boards in the U.S. are doing in an effort to increase funding due to cuts. COVID-19 put a hold on this for the Upstate Workforce Board. We are planning to take another look at this in future grantee meetings. The Upstate Manufacturing Network had four sponsors donate \$583.00 each to have a kickoff reignite event this year. Having the non-profit helps us secure sponsorships for events for which we might not have funding budgeted. We have also secured several grants for the ACHIEVE program through the non-profit. On example is a \$27,400 grant from Women Giving for Spartanburg to purchase a Ford Explorer so that we could replace a 2006 Dodge van for student transportation to and from their homes to classes;
- Funding a one stop system that serves as the go to place for employment in each county;
- Providing training dollars and supportive services to individuals in need of skill building in order to earn self-sufficiency wage in an in-demand occupation;
- Continue to perform targeted recruitment to individuals with barriers to employment and training;
- Ensure that soft skills training is a priority for our customers ~~that is employer led and employer validated~~. This was discussed in more detail earlier in the document. We moved forward without employer involvement due to COVID-19; and
- Promoting career pathways as a route to self-sufficiency. With the shutdown of schools during COVID-19 and then the reluctance to have visitors in the schools last year, we were unable to speak much in the schools. We are hoping to get back in the schools more frequently to talk about career pathways.

A description of how the local board will work with core and required partners to align local resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals referenced above.

- Hold regular partnership meetings with all partner programs on a monthly basis so that alignment of resources is maximized. This should include discussion on difficult cases;
- Hold Business Services Team meetings on a ~~monthly~~ quarterly basis to ensure that we do not duplicate contacts with businesses. Coordinate efforts with all partners in the hiring and screening process;
- Continually seek new partners that can help us meet the needs of our businesses and job seekers;
- Partnering with others for grants to enhance our services due to funding cuts;
- Build and utilize relationships to improve our services to customers;
- Continue training staff on racial equity and using our knowledge to make changes in our communities. Update: Unfortunately, we stopped this training due to COVID-19. We do

review demographics of our customers often. We also discuss equity in our grantee meetings;

- Present cases to the Safety Net Council as needed to address the barriers that our customers have;
- In partnership with the Upstate Workforce Board's Disabilities Committee and the Spartanburg Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, we will continue to educate businesses and community members about the importance of inclusion in the workplace for individuals with a disability. Update: We asked for funding from Spartanburg County from the ARPA funds for a driving simulator that may be used by the high schools to assess individuals with disabilities to determine if they are able to drive a vehicle safely prior to providing driver's education. This simulator may also be used in the evening to assess disabled veterans prior to offering driver's education specifically around their disability. We are awaiting to hear on this funding. There is a big need for this simulator in the area. The local school districts have committed to staff the project if funding is secured;
- Hold outreach and recruitment sessions in the low-income and rural areas in our three counties; and
- Continue to convene groups to address issues in the communities. Ensure proper follow through on suggestions by setting goal dates and assigning individuals to these tasks.