

**Governor’s State Workforce Development Board
State Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2020**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Don Tomlin	Mr. Pat Michaels	Senator Ross Turner
Dr. Tim Hardee	Mr. Warren Snead	Mr. James Holloway
Mr. Thomas Freeland	Ms. Felicia Johnson	Dr. Mike Mikota
Mr. Clifford Bourke, Jr.	Mr. Archie Maddox	Colonel Craig Currey
Mr. Charles Brave	Mr. Dan Ellzey	Mr. Mike King
Representative Mike Forrester	Mr. John Uprichard	Mr. Michael Sexton
Mr. Ed Sturken	Dr. Windsor Sherrill	

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Ms. Valerie Richardson	Dr. Joseph Patton, III
Mr. Gregory Tinnell	Mr. Nick Foong

GUESTS:

Lt. Governor Pamela Evette

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Don Tomlin, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present. He recognized the Honorable Pamela Evette, Lt. Governor of South Carolina, and asked Mr. Dan Ellzey, DEW Executive Director, to provide an update on the agency’s response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Mr. Ellzey stated that DEW, partners, and the local boards are doing everything possible, making all efforts to provide services that are a part of the workforce mission. He stated that DEW responded to the Coronavirus by:

- eliminating travel and curtailing visitors from out of state;
- providing extensive communication on hygiene;
- performing extra surface cleaning and sanitization;
- enforcing social distancing;
- holding virtual meetings where possible;
- requesting that employees exposed to the virus self-identify;
- following the Governor’s Executive Order requiring that non-essential workers be sent home;
 - 401 “essential” employees are working, 123 employees are working at home, virtually, and 90 employees are on leave (annual, sick, and etc.),
- issuing a new telecommute policy that explains the rules for working remotely and allowing casual dress to boost the morale of essential workers coming into the office; and
- updating the agency’s website with a Coronavirus section to include easy access for citizens to file unemployment claims, from which over 1.2 million people have been flagged for going to the website.

Mr. Ellzey stated that things are not all bad. He mentioned that the agency is working with the Department of Corrections to hire over 100 people and that there are 53,000 current open positions in South Carolina. He is hopeful that people will be looking for work.

He stated that Unemployment Insurance (UI) is bearing the brunt of the pandemic and that claims are rising astonishingly fast. The specific number of initial claims filed will be provided on the website after

the US Department of Labor (USDOL) releases its national numbers on March 26, 2020. For perspective, he stated that 1,700 claims were filled weekly prior to the pandemic.

He reported that the claims filing process is an online process and that payments can and will be made very quickly to claimants, especially if the employer files the claim, and no other information is required to approve the claimant's payments. The system experienced some capacity issues on Tuesday, March 17. In response, the agency added capacity and the system is functioning as normal. He stated that the only issue now is verifying Social Security Numbers (SSN) using the national location database, which is backed up due to the usage of other states. Claimants are being advised to continue the filing process even if their SSN is not accepted right away.

UI Hubs are being staffed to address claimant phone calls. The agency is talking to over 4,000 individuals per day. Efforts are being made to communicate with claimants through other means such as text messaging to reduce the number of phone calls to only those claimants that need to talk with a representative.

The agency has waived the 1-week waiting period and the work search requirement. Additionally, employers will not be charged for employees laid off as a result of the Coronavirus. The money used to pay claimant benefits still comes out of the UI Trust Fund, but it is not charged against the account of the employer and does not affect their tax rate for the following year. As of March 16, the UI Trust Fund had a balance of 1.1 billion dollars, which meets all statutory requirements provided by the USDOL. South Carolina is one of thirty-one states that meet the DOL requirement.

Mr. Ellzey explained that in 2007, before the Great Recession, the UI Trust Fund had a balance of 121 million dollars compared to 1.1 billion dollars today. The increase is a result of having more employees. He said that on a per-employee basis the state is about eight times stronger than it was in 2007. The trust fund is monitored daily and if an issue arises there will be communication with the Governor and legislative leadership to discuss the issue and provide solutions and recommendations. The agency's economist, Erica Von Nessen, is running models to anticipate what will happen with the claims. The agency is coordinating with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the National Association of Workforce Agencies (NASWA), which are also creating models that can help predict claim activity.

Mr. Ellzey reported that all SC Works Centers are continuing to serve customers:

- Ten of the LWDA's have closed centers to the public and two of the LWDA's have centers that are still open to the public, WorkLink, and Midlands.
- Of the ten areas with centers closed to the public, nine of them have DEW and WIOA staff reporting to the centers to provide services virtually. One area has WIOA staff working from home but is working with the provider to bring WIOA staff back to the centers.

He shared that DEW is training Employment Services staff to handle UI calls and WIOA staff from different areas are pitching in as well. Frontline staff are equipped to serve customers virtually. Some WIOA programs are expressing an interest in virtual service delivery such as virtual job fairs. The agency has issued a memo to the LWDA's and DEW staff on the provision of virtual services. Mr. Ellzey acknowledged core partners that helped craft the virtual service delivery memo and even changed their process to align more closely.

Members of the Board asked for clarification on when an employer will be charged for layoffs related to the virus. Mr. Ellzey responded and offered to put these members in touch with UI staff that can provide more information.

Lt. Governor Pamela Evette shared that the Governor's Office is working with Commerce to build a repository of information related to the Coronavirus to make it easy for small and medium-sized businesses to get information from one place. The Department of Commerce is hosting the online repository, which links to other agencies and resources. She also shared that the Governor has a call every single day with SCMED (SC Emergency Management Department) and is communicating with all departments around the state, discussing the impact and how to keep moving forward. The Governor is in communication with the White House and other Governors around the country.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES*

A motion to approve the December 18, 2019 meeting minutes was made by Mr. Charles Brave, Jr., seconded by Mr. Cliff Bourke, and unanimously approved by the Board.

SC WIOA COMBINED STATE PLAN*

Mr. Tomlin explained to the Board that he asked for a disclaimer to be added to the state plan, which reads, **“The state plan was developed prior to the current state of emergency. We will evaluate the state’s post-emergency workforce needs immediately and may revise the plan as needed to ensure that the priorities are focused.”**

Ms. Jackie Taylor stated that members of the Board received three (3) documents in preparation for the meeting: WIOA Combined Plan Executive Summary, the WIOA State Plan Priorities document, and the WIOA State Plan Comments document. The WIOA State Plan is due by April 1, 2020. Ms. Taylor provided an overview of the planning process, including the development of the priorities and engagement of partners and the State Workforce Development Board. Ms. Taylor stated that an intentional engagement strategy was deployed to ensure that the state plan reflected objectives and priorities co-created by the partner programs covered in the plan as well as the Board and key external partners. The strategy included collaboration with state plan partners to develop the priorities and action items and the final plan document, presentations to SWDB committees, focus group sessions to engage external stakeholders, collaboration with Chairman Tomlin, and a public comment period from February 28, 2020 – March 11, 2020.

Ms. Taylor highlighted that the priorities outlined in the state plan support the mission, vision, and objectives of the SWDB and directly align with the priorities outlined in the SC Department of Education's Perkins V Act plan. The Perkins Plan adopts the vision of the Board and there are commonalities throughout both plans, especially concerning work-based learning, special populations, and career pathways.

Four organizations submitted comments following their review of the state plan: Protection and Advocacy, Catawba Regional Council of Governments, Transitions Homeless Shelter, and Apprenticeship Carolina™. Referencing the WIOA State Plan Comments document, Ms. Taylor provided a summary of the comments received and the proposed resulting action. She also mentioned that Priority 3.2, development of career pathway tools and templates, was added to reflect national and state-level conversations on career pathways.

Mr. Tomlin explained that the purpose the green document, South Carolina WIOA State Plan Priorities PYs 2020-2023, is to distill the plan onto a “placemat” that can be in front of board members at each of the meetings (whether in the boardroom or at home), to keep the Board focused on the key elements of the overall plan.

Ms. Taylor explained that the development and implementation of the state plan is a key function of the Board; therefore, the Board must approve the plan before it is submitted. A motion to approve the WIOA State Plan for PY 2020-2023 was made by Mr. Charles Brave, Jr., seconded by Col. Currey, and unanimously approved by the Board.

OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURN

Chairman Tomlin thanked the Lt. Governor and her staff for participating in the meeting. He suggested that the Board look at using its funds to support back to work, jobs finding efforts. He stated that staff is working on this and there will be a meeting called to discuss the redirection of allocated or unallocated funds to support communications, outreach, teleconferencing and telecommunications, and remote working for the local boards.

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.