

Upper Savannah Workforce Area: Strategic Plan 2016-2020: Modification Executive Summary

Background

To survive in a global economy, businesses must become more efficient and maintain quality. A skilled workforce is necessary. The Upper Savannah area of Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry and Saluda is poised to grow. Collectively the economic development agencies in the area are focusing on attracting manufacturing businesses because they enhance the tax base and provide good paying jobs with benefits. The strategy to recruit manufacturing businesses is sound because the area has a well-established manufacturing sector. While the goods produced have changed over time, key skills are common across a range of industries.

At the same time, the workforce system has a responsibility to residents. People want to earn enough to support their families. Quality of life is important. Most workers want to find work close to home.

It is the goal of the Upper Savannah Workforce Board to help businesses meet the current and future hiring needs and to help job seekers find work.

Opportunities

Although unemployment rates are low, there are still subgroups of the population, which have been left behind. There are also jobs which are unfilled.

A survey of job orders which are reported as unfilled include two groups:

1. Jobs which are unattractive to job seekers because of wages, benefits, hours or working conditions or a combination of factors
2. Jobs that require specific skills. There is a shortage of skilled manufacturing technicians, welders, mechanics, truck drivers and emergency medical technicians.

Groups, which are underrepresented in the workforce, include:

1. Individuals without reliable transportation
2. Individuals who have poor basic skills or who do not have a high school credential
3. Individuals with disabilities
4. Individuals with criminal backgrounds
5. Individuals who cannot pass a drug test
6. Young people without prior work experience

Resources

As the region tries to get unemployed individuals into the workforce and undertakes to reduce key skills gaps, it has resources. Sixteen different agencies support the Upper Savannah SC Work System.

Currently six organizations staff SC Works Centers providing 37 workers. Budgets across the 16 partners vary (and not all budgets are earmarked exclusively for workforce activities.) The primary program responsible for workforce development is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has a yearly budget of about \$1.5 million.

The area's system has established infrastructure. There are SC Works Centers in each county. Piedmont Technical College has a campus in each county and offers hands on industrial training in three counties.

Upper Savannah, region has a few unique resources:

1. Four counties (Abbeville, Greenwood, Laurens and Saluda) offer free tuition at PTC to qualified high school graduates.
2. The area has a well-established system for promoting basic skills attainment. Upper Savannah was the first region in the state to have all counties designated as Work Ready community.

Needs

Upper Savannah has a workforce of 112,227. There are 4,258 businesses established. The population of the area is slightly older, less affluent and less educated as the state as a whole. Just under four thousand individuals were estimated to be unemployed at the last report. While there is good data on jobs that are difficult to fill, there is little on current skills gaps. Upper Savannah has gathered information from 50 manufacturing businesses on their hiring and training needs. A key concern for manufacturing (and other sectors) is how businesses will replace retiring workers.

Goals and Strategies

The current budget for the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act translates to about \$14 per worker in the region. Some training programs costs more than \$10,000 per person. To make a meaningful change in the region, the workforce board must set priorities. Below are goals and related strategies.

1. Reach at least 12% of the workforce each year by offering free basic services for all job seekers. Promoting job listings and providing information about training opportunities is inexpensive and can help potential workers make good career choices.
2. Reduce transportation barriers by having centers in all counties and by encouraging training vendors to offer courses in each county.
3. Promote careers in manufacturing by working with businesses, schools and relevant community groups and by participating in the Link Upstate sector strategy initiatives.
4. Invest in those with the greatest potential to change including individuals from groups underrepresented in the workforce. The board has selected to give priority to those who are low income or who have low basic skills. The board expects centers to make two thousands referrals to workforce services in 2019.

5. Increase the basic skills levels of potential workers by encouraging GED attainment and a SC Career Ready Credential (WorkKeys or WIN read to work certificate.)
6. Increase funding available for scholarships by seeking grants and additional funding. Reduce operating expenses where possible.
7. Invest in training that has the greatest potential for graduates to find employment paying a self-sufficiency wage. The Workforce Development Board has selected diversified manufacturing and healthcare as the sectors most likely to generate the best outcomes. (A chart of approved training is included as an attachment.) In particular, the area will promote short-term low cost manufacturing certifications such as the SC Manufacturing Certificate.
8. Help employers efficiently recruit and screen workers by utilizing the www.scworks.org job matching database and social media campaigns. A new website will be launched and content will be added weekly.
9. Offer training grants to businesses to help them maintain a competitive workforce by tapping into state grant funding.
10. Help workers advance the career ladder (and open the bottom rung for newcomers) by encouraging businesses to establish apprenticeship programs.
11. Communicate employer's expectations for soft skills to job seekers by communicating with schools and other organizations, which help job seekers. Piedmont Technical College is in the second phase of rolling out a work ethic certification process. The board will communicate the value of the certification and will encourage post-secondary schools to adopt the same standard.
12. Offer education and job training for youth who high school dropouts or who have completed high school but have not yet found a suitable job. Events will be planned to link high school students in each county with employment and training options.

Comment Process

Anyone who wishes comment on the strategic plan should contact the workforce division of Upper Savannah Council of Governments. Please contact Ann Skinner at 864.941.8050 or work@uppersavannah.com. Comments must be received by XXXX to be added to the official document, but comments are always welcome. Upper Savannah looks forward to speaking with as many stakeholders as possible.

A copy of the entire plan is at www.upperscworks.com with the plan documents located in the workforce system/partner services tab.

Upper Savannah WDB Approved Training Programs

- Accounting
- Auto Body Repair Certificate
- Automotive Technology
- Basic Machine Operations
- Business Analyst - CE
- Business - General
- Business Management
- Cardiovascular Technology
- Certified Production Technician (MSSC)
- Certification in Production & Inventory Management
- Civil Engineering Technology
- Clinical Medical Assistant Certificate Program with Clinical Externship
- CNC - Computerized Numerical Control
- CNC Programmer
- Computer Networking Technology
- Computer Programming
- Computer Technology
- CSRA Electrical JATC
- Diesel Engine Performance
- Diesel Equipment Technology
- Electrical Maintenance
- Electronics Engineering Technology
- Emergency Medical Technology
- Engineering Graphics Technology
- Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning
- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Industrial Electricity - Electronics
- Industrial Electronics Technology
- Industrial Maintenance Technician
- Lean Six Sigma Black Belt
- Lean Six Sigma Green Belt
- Machine Tool Technology
- Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Mechatronics Technology
- Microsoft Network Technician
- Nursing
- Paramedic
- PMP Certification Prep 1 and Prep 2
- Project Management
- Radiologic Technology
- Radiological Control Technician
- SC Certified Logistics Technician - CCE (SCCLT)
- SCMC Program SC Manufacturing Certification
- Surgical Technology
- Truck Driver Training
- Welding