

**Minutes of the South Carolina Coordinating Council for Workforce Development (CCWD)
Veterans Committee Meeting**

8/5/26, 2 PM, MS Teams

ATTENDEES:

Brent Mora Delgado	Erika Jones	Marlin Bodison	Stephen Astemborski	Thomas Mayer
Carol Hayman	Jade Berekley	Mckenzie Stone	Steven Farrell	Timothy Rees
Curtis McCray	Jason Jackson	Michael D’Ancona	Susan Mcpherson	Tina Smith
David Rozelle	Jelani Edwards	Pamela Jones	Susie Shannon	Tom Henz
David Williams	Kaye Brewer	Peter Ulengchong	Taylor Hendrix	
Dr. Rebecca Battle-	Kevin Shwedo	Rachel Wilson	T.C. Milton	
Bryant	Malinda Johnston	Rita Rhett	Theresa Brown	

AGENDA ITEMS

- Committee Initiative Updates
- Committee Cadence
- Focus Area Group Insights and Inputs

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- *Purpose:* Coordinate with federal, state and local partners so transitioning service members, veterans, spouses and families connect to employment, education, and entrepreneurship across South Carolina.
 - The committee emphasized that transitioning service members transition to our communities and their local resources (employers, colleges, county veteran offices) - local partnerships are therefore critical.
 - Coordination across federal and state agencies, nonprofits, employers and educators is needed; no single organization can do this alone.
 - The committee is positioned as a statewide coordinator to ensure veterans and military-connected people know where to turn and are supported across needs.
- *Objectives:* Increase veteran placement in the South Carolina workforce, grow veteran enrollment in academic/technical schools, and improve veteran entrepreneurship outcomes.
- *Key Initiatives:* Statewide outreach (marketing + internal outreach), veteran resource fair, entrepreneur workshops, and military-connected student data effort. Several initiatives run July 2026–June 2027.
- Briefed upcoming events and committee cadence.
- Each Focus Area Group leader provided insights and input from their meetings held during the month.
- Leadership stressed structured deliverables, sustained working-group engagement between meetings, and open transparency to maximize statewide impact.

COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES

- *Objective 1 — Increase Veteran Placement in South Carolina's Workforce*
 - Lead: Midlands RIO Jelani Edwards. Focus: Veterans employed, veteran unemployment claims, hires via STAYS and PAYS, and hires nonprofits who remain in-state.
 - Initiatives: Marketing campaign for South Carolina Smart Start, promotion of STAYS and PAYS programs to transitioning members and employers, and nonprofit partnerships to retain veterans in SC.
- *Objective 2 — Increase Veteran Placement in State Academic and Technical Schools*
 - Lead: Upstate RIO Paulette Dunn. Focus: Number of transitioning members and military-connected students enrolled, usage of Chapter 33 and Chapter 35 VA educational benefits, student veterans' chapters, and technical college enrollment.
 - Initiatives: collaborate with CHE, CCWD portal steering committee and higher-education partners to translate military resumes to civilian skills and run career service workshops for transitions.
- *Objective 3 — Improve Veteran Entrepreneurship Outcomes*
 - Lead: Senior workforce development coordinator Ericka Jones. Focus: Veterans registered with the Small Business Administration (SBA), veterans using Veteran Business Outreach Center services, and self-identified veteran business owners.
 - Initiatives: Run four veteran entrepreneur workshops this fiscal year, build an ecosystem supporting veteran business owners, host regional entrepreneur forums and leverage a federal grant for entrepreneurship workshops.

MILESTONES

- South Carolina Smart Start marketing campaign: Promotional run from July–December 2026 (external). An internal outreach wave from August 2026–March 2027 will target transitioning service members, veterans and families to promote employment, education and entrepreneurship.
- Veteran resource fair planned for November 2026 to connect veterans with federal, state and community resources.
- Entrepreneurship events: PD-region entrepreneur workshop in October 2026 (dates TBD), Midlands forum in February 2027, and regional workshops in the Upstate and Midlands from March–June 2027.
- Military-connected student survey administration began in June 2026 and will run through May 2027; surveys and campus interviews are ongoing to build a military-student toolkit.
- Veterans needs survey: Participation extended and remains open through August 14, 2026, to collect more data.

FOCUS AREA GROUP UPDATES

- *Midlands (4.1) Increase Veteran Placement in the South Carolina Workforce (Jelani Edwards)*
 - Conducted brainstorming with group to identify what is working, the barriers that exist, recommendations to overcome barriers, and any emerging trends.
 - Highlighted strong partnerships for employer connections and hiring support, including: SCDEW partnership, STAYS program, Statewide TAP, Skillbridge, and the SC Veterans Coalition. STAYS/PAYS program (reported by Marlon Bodison): 1,100 participants served through July; 86 spouses included; 430 employers engaged; 431 hires achieved — considered very successful program.
 - Reported barriers. Emphasis on spouse employment, limited awareness of available resources, and translating military skills into civilian resumes.
 - Recommended next steps: Quantify hires from specific programs over time, deepen employer outreach, and increase awareness of SC Smart Start.

- Emerging Trends: Skills based hiring, increased use of virtual hiring and recruiting, and growth in apprenticeships and work-based learning.
 - Outlook: Continue marketing and STAYS/PAYS promotion; provide updates at next Full Committee meeting.
- *Upstate (4.2) Increase Veteran Placement in the State Academic & Technical College School System (Jelani on behalf of Paulette Dunn)*
 - Reached out to higher-ed institutions across the state and held campus conversations focused on student veteran organizations and resource needs. Survey responses were responsive; ongoing interviews and toolkit development aims to improve student tracking and support.
 - Barriers: Connecting with transitioning service members earlier and tracking when service members first get onto campus.
 - Recommendations: Expand campus outreach, encourage colleges to share issues and solutions, and translate military credentials to civilian skills.
 - Outlook: Continued campus engagement and reporting; Rachel Wilson will present data at the Dec 2nd meeting.
 - *Entrepreneurship (4.3) Improve Veteran Entrepreneur Outcomes (Erika Jones)*
 - Highlighted SCDVA partnership with VBOC and Dept. of Agriculture
 - Barriers: Access to startup capital and limited awareness of existing business programs/contacts.
 - Recommendations: Create a quarterly Veteran Entrepreneurship Coalition (members: many state agencies and associations, chambers, lenders, industry leaders, local veteran service orgs) and develop a Veteran Business Mentor Program.
 - Emerging trends: AI, government contracting, online/home-based businesses, robotics, regenerative/sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly agricultural ventures.
 - Outlook: Implement coalition and mentor program. Roll out entrepreneur workshops and forums.

MEETING CADENCE

- September's meeting is canceled due to the Governor's Summit.
- October 4, 2026 - next Full Committee meeting
- December 2, 2026 - Follow-up meeting
- January 6, 2027 - Mid-year update meeting

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

- Meetings are public and will be posted on the Find Your Future website public notices section.
- Minutes are taken and will be circulated.
- Chat monitoring and Q&A: Lowcountry RIO Tina Smith monitored the chat during virtual meetings.