



SC Department of Employment and Workforce

NEWS RELEASE

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2021: A Look Back at Unemployment and Reemployment

As I look back over the past 12 months, I am excited by the recovery our state has achieved. During the year, we experienced many successes involving reemployment, trust fund rebuild, job demand, novel training opportunities, etc. All in all, 2021 was a very good year.

Reemployment: While some states were still struggling with shutdowns and federal loan repayments, South Carolina was able to concentrate its efforts on reemployment in 2021. We started January of last year with a 5.3% unemployment rate which dropped to 3.5% by December. South Carolina's rate has remained below the national average every month.

The number of people working rose by 97,237 in 2021. In fact, by December, 2,320,717 individuals were employed which is 21,376 more than pre-pandemic and is the highest number in South Carolina's history.

There was also an increase in job postings in SC Works Online Services (SCWOS). In fact, 89,324 new jobs were added to SCWOS throughout 2021 as employers continue to hire and build their workforce.

This increase in job demand during 2021 is evidence of our strong economic recovery.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund: With a total payout of \$219.7 million in 2021, our Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund is thriving with a current balance of more than \$1.2 billion. This balance is a record high for the state and has allowed us to keep 2022 unemployment tax rates the same or lower than they were in 2021.

Job Matching: With more than 100,000 jobs available across the state, employment opportunities are abundant. Some of the top hiring industries include trucking, health care, childcare, and retail and hospitality. To directly help these and other industries, our agency implemented Weekly Job Matches. The skills, experience, and location of UI claimants are matched with businesses in their area looking for workers with those skills. The claimants are then sent messages in the form of emails and texts with information about those positions and where to apply. In 2021, the agency sent a total of 10,234,391 messages to help match jobs seekers to employers.

Enhanced Referral: The Enhanced Referral program was launched in 2021. In this program, we work with partner employers who want to participate. The program identifies claimants who have not found a job and matches them with partner employer relevant job openings in the claimant's area. We refer these claimants to the partner employers to apply and interview for jobs. To continue qualifying for the unemployment program, referred claimants must participate in an interview and accept employment if offered.

Virtual Job Fairs: No business was left untouched by the pandemic and a myriad of industries were left recuperating from layoffs, high quit rates, and long-term staff shortages. Our agency recognized the need for job fairs even at a time when gathering in public was not allowed or was not safe. Virtual job fairs were



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the answer. Our agency negotiated a plan to provide a virtual job fair platform for all local areas throughout the state. Each of the local areas has the ability to utilize this virtual job fair platform on an unlimited basis throughout the state of South Carolina.

Train in lieu of Layoffs: Our agency, SC Works, and Cooper Standard worked together to provide technical training to Cooper Standard employees who faced a temporary layoff due to a chip shortage that paused production. Our agency, Cooper Standard, the Upstate Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA), and Spartanburg Community College coordinated together to provide free training to Cooper Standard staff while they remained on payroll during temporary layoffs. This temporary layoff assistance program helped train and retain 62 employees last year, allowing the company to both prevent layoffs and receive an enhanced workforce when staff returned. This program became a successful model that our agency will continue to use to proactively prevent layoffs and assist companies in retaining their workforce.

Training: Our agency's partnership with the S.C. Technical System allowed us to refer claimants to participate in S.C. Technical System's short-term occupational training through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds. This training opportunity was launched in June 2021 and provided scholarships that covered the cost of retraining 3,100 South Carolinians. Our agency's partnership with CompTIA to provide an Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) scholarship program was launched in October 2021 and provides businesses the opportunity to train and certify employees to develop IT proficiency at no cost. The GED Program enables claimants without a high school degree to get trained to take the GED exam for free and receive a \$500 bonus once successfully passed.

Be Pro, Be Proud: Be Pro, Be Proud is a workforce development program designed to close the skills-gap in the state and promote the benefits (great wages and benefits) of skilled trade jobs. Be Pro, Be Proud mobile workshop (trailer) with hands-on simulators of a variety of skilled trades – including welding, truck driving, and heavy equipment operation – visited 60 cities in 31 counties last year. 8,172 students and 937 general visitors attended the 115 Be Pro, Be Proud events held at schools, fairs, career centers, and conventions in 2021, which means more South Carolinians now understand the importance of these jobs for our economy.

This program is a perfect example of a successful, public-private partnership. The private partners are the Associated Industries of South Carolina Foundation (AISCF), which includes members like the S.C. Trucking Association, S.C. Chamber of Commerce, Carolinas AGC, the Home Builders Association of South Carolina, and the Forestry Association of South Carolina. These private partners raised the money to build out the Be Pro, Be Proud mobile workshop. The South Carolina Legislature appropriated the money for our agency to operate the mobile workshop. Without the contributions of both parties, Be Pro, Be Proud would not exist in South Carolina today.

Timeline: The attached timeline shows our busy year of accomplishments, but, more importantly, helps create a context for the robust expansion of services and opportunities created by this agency. These are just a few of numerous programs and initiatives our agency continuously develops to meet the rising



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demand of industries across the state, and our efforts will only further increase and broaden in scope in 2022.

2022: Our plan for 2022 remains set on creating an even larger, more robust workforce. Our agency will strive for more engagement with jobseekers and employers, and to create a better future for all of those participating in or joining the workforce for years to come.

- We will be announcing a statewide Workforce Development Month.
- We are creating a Labor Force Participation Rate task force to study what can be done to encourage the people who can work to join the workforce.
- We plan on doing an analysis of future job needs and whether sufficient training is being done to prepare our workforce for those jobs.

And that is just the beginning. 2022 will be a very productive and positive year for our agency and the state of South Carolina.

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About the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce is putting South Carolinians to work. The agency has four missions: (1) workforce development; (2) free job match employment services; (3) unemployment insurance; and (4) labor market information. All four missions contribute to workforce development. The agency is dedicated to advancing South Carolina through services and programs that meet the needs of our businesses, jobseekers and those looking to advance their careers.