

Workforce Recommendation 3

(See Career Pathways Attachment and Organization Change Paper.)

Overarching theme: There are no simple answers to the many issues related to workforce development. The many issues are related and interconnected—and should be addressed together. This would include developing marketing, coordination, and implementation strategies among all service providers to assure that existing resources are used most effectively and located conveniently for consumers. This would include the development of a database of all available workforce resources and comprehensive service centers.

RECOMMENDATION 3 Develop a comprehensive career education policy to support current and future workforce needs. This policy has to be jointly developed and owned by the following institutions: Athens-Clarke County School System, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, Athens Clarke County Unified Government, University of Georgia, Athens Technical College, and local Service Providers.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK CHANGE PAPER To Encourage a Comprehensive Career Development Strategy

The purpose of this change paper is to introduce the first step to a potential new organizational model to deliver a comprehensive career development strategy and to encourage ongoing discussion on this issue. After introducing the common beliefs that partners would have to agree to, there is a potential recommendation that is presented for consideration. This recommendation and the supporting common beliefs are very much in draft form. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged.

“With few exceptions, publicly supported education systems are not well aligned with workforce, economic development and social service systems at any level of government, and none of these systems is adequately responsive to the labor market. In other words, our public systems—and our investments in those systems, as taxpayers and customers—are not paying off; they are producing too few workers with the skills our communities need to thrive in the emerging knowledge economy.”¹

This quote emphasizes our need to develop new organizational paradigms in order to achieve new community results. In particular, it will take a new organizational design to develop a truly comprehensive career development strategy.

A comprehensive, career development strategy is a recurring theme in our Partners For A Prosperous Athens discussions. The need for a comprehensive career development strategy in Athens has been expressed by those who are concerned about our high drop-out rate, while at the same time being seen as an opportunity to challenge students who are on a college bound track. It has also been a major focus of workforce discussions as we seek to address our current and emerging workforce needs. The Dependent Care and Economy Committees have also focused on this issue. The focus of this comprehensive

¹ Building a Career Pathways System: Promising Practices in Community College-Centered Workforce Development, http://www.workforcestrategy.org/publications/WSC_howto_10.16.06.pdf, p.7.

career development strategy would include our secondary school population, as well as developing new strategies to retrain displaced workers, target workforce needs, provide adult education, and encourage economic development.

The contributions of the following partners are necessary in order for this strategy to work:

- The Athens-Clarke County School System would need to be open to a new paradigm in community ownership and involvement—allowing students to expand their classrooms to include our entire community.
- Employers would need to provide capital, instruction, and apprenticeships to train students and workers. They would also need to be at the center of developing curricula, as they are the experts in current and future workforce needs in our community.
- The Athens Chamber of Commerce would have to take a proactive role in retaining existing industry and recruiting new businesses, using this comprehensive workforce development program as a recruitment tool.
- Athens Technical College would need to be at the center of providing a seamless education—combining academics with career and technical classes...high school with college...and education with business.
- The Department of Labor would need to use its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) support and other career programs in total collaboration with the overall career development strategy.
- Athens Clarke County Government would need to provide support funding, workplace sites, and coordinated services.
- The University of Georgia would have to step forward and assume its place as the state's flagship university, offering on-site education through such programs as Early College.
- A variety of service providers would have to provide ancillary resources such as childcare, transportation, etc. to allow students and workers to take advantage of these educational and workforce opportunities.

In order for a truly comprehensive strategy to occur, a new level of collaboration would have to be developed in Athens-Clarke County. I am suggesting that before any specific implementation strategies could be developed there would have to be some common beliefs among the various partners. These beliefs would include:

- No single institution has the answers for educating our students/workers as it relates to career development and workforce needs;
- Institutions need to work together to support the development of a comprehensive career education model;
- Our notions of institutional boundaries, delivery of career education services, and shared funding need to change;
- The goal of our work is that all high school students will complete school prepared for post-secondary education and/or the workforce.

- Educating our students and adult workers, and training them to meet the current and future workforce needs of our community, is one of the most important elements in addressing poverty and economic growth in Athens-Clarke County;
- A comprehensive career education model can reduce the high drop-out rate in Athens-Clarke County, as well as enhance the academic outcomes of college-bound students;
- A strong foundation for a comprehensive career education model has been laid and some effective programs are in place, such as Adopt A School, Career Academy, Dept. of Labor programs, Athens Tech, etc.;
- Meaningful on the job training is essential in implementing a meaningful career development program;
- Our concept of “school” must change as it relates to workforce and career development issues; and
- Each participating group has a vested interest in assuring a successful workforce/career development program and should use its resources to build the highest quality program to meet the needs of our community.

If these initial beliefs (there may be others that are suggested) are agreed upon, then the following recommendation could be pursued:

Develop a comprehensive career education policy to support current and future workforce needs. This policy has to be jointly developed and owned by the following institutions: Athens-Clarke County School System, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, Department of Labor, Athens Clarke County Unified Government, University of Georgia, Athens Technical College, and local Service Providers.

Strategies for accomplishing this recommendation include:

- Expanding the role of the Chamber’s Education and Workforce Committee (or a new organization) to develop the new organizational structure to support the development of the comprehensive career education model. All institutions participating in the collaborative would have representation on this committee.
- Expanding successful program components (Adopt A School, Career Academy, Athens Tech programs, Dept. of Labor programs, etc.) under the new organizational structure.
- Creating new relationships between institutions, new methods to deliver career education services to our students, and sharing funding to achieve our goals.
- Encouraging employers to play an active role in developing curriculum and delivering that curriculum to the students. Employers could teach some classes, hold classes at business locations, where students and workers could learn on the job. Provide apprenticeship programs and/or internships throughout the community.
- Provide college and university staff and facilities to develop seamless education. In this case, the entire community would become our school.