

Developing Recommendations Worksheet: August 28 Breakout Meetings

Note: facilitators' comments are in brackets

1. *“Poverty in Athens: What We Have Learned”*

Have we made progress, are we on target?

Progress has been made. We do not know yet how on or off target we may be without further work

What needs further clarification?

- What assurances do we have that the families that are affected by this effort are engaged and actively participating in the PPA prioritization process?
- What about children who are sick: who don't/can't go to school and parents don't have daycare? [Dependent care topic—are they addressing this?]
- The reasons why A-CC has low unemployment rate vis-à-vis poverty levels/rate.
- How many underemployed workers recently moved here vs. those who have lived here for a long time? Have people moved to the area to take advantage of jobs that pay better than where they were (so they aren't quite as poor as they were)?
- What is “teen family planning?” [The concern is a misinterpretation of what this means]
- What are “service providers” doing? [Is this answered in docs from the service provider meetings?]
- What is the percentage of the population not seeking employment, and are they unemployed, or employed/underemployed in the “informal economy?”

What's missing?

- What we (A-CC) are doing right
- Two major needs came out of the community conversations that don't seem to be acknowledged: need for entrepreneurial training, not just how to be a good employee; and life skills training (e.g. credit management, finance, writing checks, getting out of debt, etc.).
- Best practices by other communities in workforce development
- Community conversations: some way to prepare the interviewed so they know what to expect; more representative populations as part of the community conversations; a more in-depth conversation. The sessions don't last long enough for people to have time to give thoughtful answers to questions or for the conversation to have much depth. The interviewed seem to be a sample of the population of convenience: those who know someone or happen to be around when volunteers were looking for participants.
- Where do the people fit who had to leave A-CC because they couldn't afford the cost of living but still work here?

- What are the goals of the people in the workforce living in poverty? Is what we think they need to be striving for really what they want to do?

2. Relative Priorities

Recurring theme

What is the motivation required/needed to bring people to the services which can be of use/support to them? In their own words, what prevents people from taking advantage of these services?

Discussion centered around the fact that there are many services available that aren't being used to their fullest. The topic has been mentioned many times during the meetings of the workforce committee. Is it a matter of lack of knowledge about the services, lack of transportation, lack of time, or not feeling the effort will pay off? Another way to think about it is in terms of vision: are these people who can't envision their lives being any better, so they don't try to make it so? Perhaps we should think in terms of bringing the services to the people who need them instead of making them come to us.

Learnings

[Workforce only had 2 published.]

3. Change Papers/Community Conversations

What information or research is needed to support the following?

Recommendations

- Training for one of the “soft skills,” attendance, could start in school by having the number of excused absences each year reduced. By the time a high school student is a senior, the number of excused absences would be 0, except for (major) illness.
- Coordinate a resource fair for service providers, similar to the volunteer fair held this evening, but for generating collaboration in acquiring and/or sharing funding and other resources.

[The following are questions/statements that don't fit the purpose of the worksheet.]

Further clarification. [These were addressed in earlier meetings, and the information is in meeting notes on the website.]

- What is currently in place (e.g. soft skills training)? [see meeting notes of June 26]
- Are soft skills being taught in school now?
- How do we drive training/opportunity to those who have dropped out of school? (and can't take advantage of what high school offers)

What's missing? [The answers to some of these are strategies that need to be developed, not part of the information gathering that was published in the learnings paper. The others have been answered in earlier meetings.]

- How to make collaboration among service providers not only possible, but desirable. Can the collaboration extend to addressing funding deficits and ways to work together to secure funding?
- Strategy for getting people to take advantage of services that exist (how to motivate them)?
- How to engage parents to be good examples to their children.
- Where are the jobs for the trained workforce? Jobs are here; they are taken by people who live outside the county. Employees commute from as far away as South Carolina.