

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WORKSHEET
Additional Institutions To Be Addressed

I. List the Learning(s) that this recommendation is addressing

a) A wide range of occupations in Clarke County are listed with extremely low wage levels, including:

1) nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, 2) pharmacy aides, 3) surgical technologists, 4) medical records technicians, 5) food preparation and serving workers, 6) security guards, 7) office support workers, 8) human service assistants, 9) rehabilitation counselors, 10) janitors and cleaners, 11) landscaping and groundskeeping workers, 12) dishwashers, and 13) bus drivers.

b) Many of these institutions (hospitals, schools, churches, and social agencies) serve as models to the people who are suffering for various reasons. They provide medical, educational, spiritual, and social services, yet they put many of their own workers in dire straits because of low wages and the lack of respectful benefits.

- **WRITE THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION** (limit focus to one subject or action item, more than one recommendation may be needed to address a particular learning):**

We propose that Athens Regional Medical Center, St. Mary's Hospital, the Clarke County Board of Education, the Athens Regional Library, and the numerous churches and social agencies serving the community give serious consideration to paying all of their employees a living wage (\$11.54 per hour plus health care benefits).

Serious consideration would involve a) identifying employees who currently receive less than the living wage and who do not receive a health care benefit and b) calculating the additional expense (including the financial effect on the organization's existing pay plan/salary schedule) to be incurred in bringing their compensation up to the community's living wage standard.

We would hope that this information could be shared with the community so that the Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission could assist these organizations (e.g., by marshaling community support and enlisting the programmatic and financial assistance of appropriate federal and state agencies) in their efforts to improve the compensation packages of their low-wage employees.

- **Identify any research, or other kinds of information that was used to craft this recommendation.** (add additional sheets as necessary)

Department of Labor statistics for the Clarke County area have been reviewed. Occupations are listed for the MSA (metropolitan statistical area) and for the county. Interviews with workers and managers have also been used.

- **Identify additional research or information that could help clarify this committee recommendation. List potential sources if possible.**

Research on all of these institutions could be done on the managerial decisions that have been made to expand services while maintaining low levels of wages and benefits. The impact that raising wages and benefits would have on the level of services and expansion of buildings could be factored in.

At the same time, an economics perspective could be used in calculating the extent to which raising wages will enhance tax revenues and reduce the rates of indigent care. It is predicted here that the level of services needed will decline as the general levels of income rise.

- **Indicate people or groups that we need to talk to help clarify this committee recommendation. List any recommended locations.**

The state government, the Clarke County government, the hospital boards, the Board of Education, and the churches' boards of trustees will need to be involved.

- **What kind of action or resources would be necessary to implement the recommendation?**

Multiple forms of action will be needed, given that many different institutions are listed here. Each institution needs to be reminded that they are servants of the public interest. They have a responsibility to play a role in generating a healthier community. Many scriptural and faith based institutions can be commended for having developing policies in line with this recommendation. They must make their own decisions, but should do so in the light of public scrutiny. In the case of the Athens Regional Library, negotiations with state officials will be necessary.

- **Indicate what forces and influences are likely to occur that will support or oppose implementation.**

Forces that support (please list):

Each institution will complain that they do not have the resources. They must be reminded that the resources that they do have should be used wisely and in the public interest. Balanced decisions must be made.

Overall, we seriously believe that the "disrespected" sectors of the Athens-Clarke County population can be positively impacted by raising wages and by the increased availability of jobs with respectful wages and benefits. Parenting, family cohesion, health status, rates of neighborhood chaos and incarceration rates could all be improved, thus making it more possible for workforce development activities to be fruitful. Under current conditions, these activities will continue to be difficult, if not impossible. There is a cycle there, and the cycle needs to be broken.

We also believe that economic development activity, bringing in new businesses, may simply result in: a) more good jobs going to people outside the county, and b) no impact on workers whose wages are currently devastatingly low, unless there are specific changes in the wages and benefits at that level.