

Agenda
Workforce Citizen Committee
May 22, 2006

1. Welcome
2. Review and Comment on the 4/24/06 meeting summary
3. Review and finalize mission statement.
4. Review and finalize workgroup topics
5. Get into workgroups of interest
6. Selection and training of workgroup leaders and note takers
7. Workgroup discussion (30 to 45 minutes)
8. Workgroups report out to full group (20 to 30 minutes)
9. Wrap up and adjourn

Workforce Steering Committee
May 22, 2006
Work Plan

Workforce Mission Statement

“Create implementation strategies to develop the ACC workforce so workers can find and keep jobs with wages that exceed the federal poverty level.”

1. Workforce includes emerging workforce, existing workforce and non-workers (those that have dropped out of the system).

Workgroup Process

1. Identify populations: workers, employers, non-workers...etc.
2. Identify issues: in concert with those affected by the potential actions of the workforce committee.
3. Get educated about the issues and populations:
4. Create strategies to develop the workforce

Workgroup Topics (see next page for explanation)

1. Skills Development
2. Environment (external and workplace)
3. Special Populations
4. Resources

Partners for a Prosperous Athens Workforce Committee: Workgroups

Comments received during the meetings on March 27 and April 24 are categorized into four potential workgroups or subcommittees. Some of the comments did not seem to fit as workgroup items. They are explained at the end of this document.

Potential workgroups

Skills development workgroup

Rationale: Employers need a workforce with certain skills, and the workforce needs to have skills the employers want in order to be hired. A skills/training subcommittee made up of both employers and employees could talk about the needs of the employers and how best to make sure the employees can meet those needs. This would include issues related to preparing young people to enter the job market and upgrading skills of current workers.

Comments from the previous meetings

- Make work Cool! Work with youth to teach them the things they need to be successful employees and instill a belief that work is desirable. The younger the better in order to create a culture where work is seen as something they want to do. “What do you want to be when you grow up?”
- Job training for teens.
- Education seen as the key to attaining employment.
- Impact of illiteracy on workforce development.
- Identify small and big businesses with job training programs.
- Understanding the job market.
- Understanding needed job skills.
- Understanding the skill gap, current need and future expectation.
- Work ethic is lacking—identify the general requirements and expectations of employers and train potential employees in them.
- People must be made to understand at you have to go to work every day, show up on time, show up sober...etc.
- Developing work ethic, personal responsibility.
- Ask employers what qualifications/skills they need in their employees and what is currently lacking in the Athens-Clarke County workforce.
- Ask workers what they need to be competitive in the workforce and qualify for quality jobs.

Environment (external and workplace)

Rationale: The workforce and employers operate in a social/cultural external environment: a college town with a large pool of student workers and an increasing number of immigrants, with a history of discrimination that some people think is continuing and others think is over. The workplace is another environment, each one having in common the need for both employers and employees to contribute to making it productive.

Comments from the previous meetings

- Assess the impact of UGA students on the workforce. Does the availability of UGA students for employment hurt the chances of local young people getting area jobs?

- Assess the work environment in Athens-Clarke County including the adequacy of compensation, benefits and the quality of working conditions.
- Why are there not skilled employees and decent paying jobs?
- Examine the impact of immigration (illegal and legal) on the work force in Athens-Clarke County.
- Are day laborers taking jobs from others?
- What are the needs of the immigrant/day labor work force and are they being adequately being met?
- Provide professional learning opportunities for managers relative to discrimination so they can lead and support their staff in stopping job related discrimination.
- Need a workforce enforcement group to investigate when discrimination is happening.
- Assess the impact of discrimination on the workforce. Are good (qualified?) people not getting hired because of their race, sex...etc?
- Assess the impact of alcohol and drug use on the workforce.

Special populations

Rationale: There are segments of the workforce that need special consideration: ex-convicts, physically or mentally disabled people, senior citizens, etc. Non-English speakers could also be part of this group. What they have in common is that they require assistance to compete in the labor market beyond what most folks need; employers may have to make special accommodations, or incur more risk, to hire these employees.

Comments from the previous meetings

- Identify obstacles to the employment of the disabled in Athens-Clarke County.
- Impact of criminal history on the ability to find employment. How far in the past do employers look? What can be done to incorporate those with criminal histories back into the work force?
- Determine what resources exist in the criminal justice system to prepare and support those being released into the community to join the workforce. Are the existing resources adequate and if not what can be done to improve them?
- Understand the need to not lose those in the criminal justice system.
- Understanding barriers to employability.
- Identify barriers to the employment of senior citizens in Athens-Clarke County

Resources

Rationale: Resources specific to the subcommittees/workgroups should be dealt with there, but there are general issues related to resources that could be taken up by a separate subcommittee: how to advertise resources to the populations that most need them, how to coordinate them so that there are no gaps or overlaps, how to make sure nobody gets left out, etc.

Comments from the previous meetings

- Identify those whose needs are not being met by the current workforce support/training system and find a way to reach them.
- Identify existing resources and organizations that provide workforce assistance and support and determine how to better utilize them. Identify the existing holes in the net and plug them.
- Developing a way to market job opportunities, maybe a local monster.com to allow businesses to advertise their needs.

- Engage and develop a dialogue with the Athens-Clarke County Employers committee (an existing group)
- Develop a workforce intermediary. A collaborative between employers, job seekers and those that help job seekers. This effort would connect employers with potential employees.

Non-workgroup items

Wages

There is a Living Wage subcommittee of the Economic Development committee. The following issues seem to belong there:

- Need to address the fact that there are not enough decent paying jobs.
- Where are the good jobs and why are they not locating in Athens-Clarke County.
- Examine the minimum wage and its adequacy.
- Encourage businesses to pay a living wage and develop an accreditation process for businesses that pay a living wage.

Committee process suggestions

The following seemed to address how the committee should operate rather than what the workforce issues are:

- Develop a Workforce Committee mission statement. [This has been done.]
- Get information from other communities that have conducted projects similar to Partners for a Prosperous Athens. [in progress]
- Determine if there are roles for the citizen workforce committee in working with the legislature and in researching and writing grants to help advance and fund the workforce work program.
- When developing the committee's work program take into account the varying knowledge, skills and abilities of those in the workforce. One size won't fit all.
- Need to reach out the unemployed and underemployed for their input to make sure what the committee does is useful to them.
- Look at the workforce needs of people of all ages.
- Coordinate with the Education Citizen Committee to make sure there is not a duplication of efforts.
- Examine the core problems.
- To truly understand the issues we have to speak to the people living in poverty.
- Examine issues related to both the unemployed and the under employed and develop strategies that help both groups.