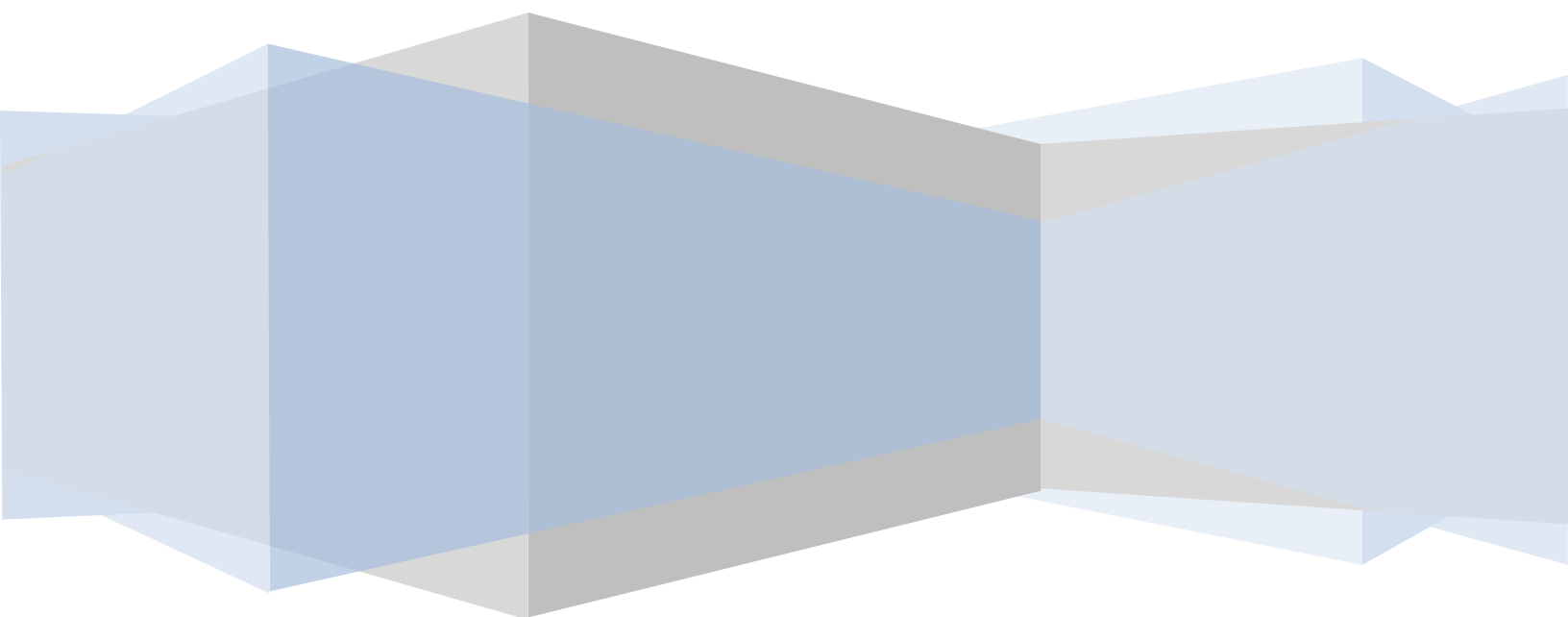


Closing the Gaps to Build the Future

Improving Workforce Development in the
National Capital Region

A report by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

January 2010



a call to action:

We are at a critical point in our economy, one where we can continue down the same path and expect the same outcomes, or we change course and realize a more sustainable, productive, and competitive workforce. This report marks the first time that the National Capital Region has addressed workforce development at the regional level. We have taken the first step to understand the needs and challenges of both our workforce and our employers and have identified best practices and potential models for replication. We have begun the dialogue. It is now up to you, leaders in the political, educational, business, and civic communities, to take this information and continue the discussion; to come up with better ways to integrate your different but inherently interrelated needs and goals.

Closing the Gaps to Build the Future

Improving Workforce Development in the National Capital Region

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The Region should build on its competitive assets to foster inclusive economic growth with a focus on growing our own workforce and promoting innovation.

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PREFACE

The nation's political, educational, business, and civic leaders are currently trying to determine the best policies for creating a robust economic recovery following the deepest recession in decades. Strengthening and enhancing our workforce is a critical factor for ensuring a swift and sustainable recovery.

Largely due to the federal government's presence and the myriad employment opportunities it supports, the National Capital Region (NCR) has been spared many of the most severe effects of the economic downturn that have befallen other areas across the country. The relative strength of the NCR, however, is not a justification for complacency.

The number of the region's competitors is growing – both domestically and internationally. At the same time, there is a shift among sectors experiencing high employment growth. Understanding how these areas of opportunity develop is critical. For the NCR to exceed its current standing as the fifth-largest metropolitan economy in the United States and the eleventh-largest in the world,¹ it is essential that the region possess an educated, skilled workforce.

At a time of immense economic pressure in both the private and public sectors, strengthening the ability to meet current and future employment needs must be a primary focus for the region's policy makers and leaders. The NCR must be well-positioned to emerge from the current economic downturn more resilient and competitive.

A Recommitment to Workforce Development

Recognizing that the economy is changing, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors took action to help the region prepare for and adapt to this transition. The COG Board included in its 2009 Policy Focus and Priorities a commitment to regional workforce preparation and approved the creation of a Task Force on Workforce Competitiveness.

The mission of the Task Force was to develop a better understanding of how the region's workforce preparation and related systems currently perform and to identify strategies that enable the NCR to better prepare, retain and retrain workers to meet the likely labor force needs in the next five to twenty years.

The 20-member Task Force was comprised of local and state government officials and regional organizations involved in economic development, K-12 education, public and private post-secondary educational institutions, and workforce investment and training. Over several months, the Task Force held meetings with local and national workforce experts to develop a greater comprehension of these issues, and to identify successful strategies for increased integration. This report, *Closing the Gaps to Build the Future*, summarizes the Task Force's findings and identifies opportunities for the NCR.

¹ <https://www.ukmediacentre.pwc.com/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=3421&NewsAreaID=2>

This report marks the first time that the NCR has addressed workforce development at the regional level. While rising unemployment and the current economic downturn provided a catalyst for action, the work of the Task Force is applicable in periods of economic growth and retraction. The Task Force strongly believes that if the region's political, educational, business, and civic leaders take advantage of the opportunities and recommendations set forth in this report, sustained progress in workforce development in the NCR will be realized.

COG is working to develop greater integration among policy areas and actors, as evidenced by *Region Forward*, the final report by the Greater Washington 2050 Coalition. *Region Forward* brought together a variety of issues from land-use and transportation, to education and health, demonstrating how they converge to build a stronger, more competitive, and more vibrant region. The Task Force's recommendations align with many of the goals and targets of *Region Forward*. COG is currently focusing on increasing its partnership with the federal government on many key issues. Workforce development will be one of them.

The jobs of the new economy are going to be filled; we want to make sure that they are filled by residents of the National Capital Region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, *Closing the Gaps to Build the Future*, was commissioned to develop a better understanding among stakeholders of how the National Capital Region's workforce preparation and related systems perform and to identify strategies that enable us to better prepare, retain and retrain workers to meet the labor force needs.

The report examines the continuum of education and workforce preparation, from pre-school to retirement and identifies opportunities for enhanced collaboration. It acknowledges that economic development strategies must work together with measures that enhance workforce capacity. Furthermore, it advocates the need for an integrated regional approach to workforce development, which is necessary to ensure the region's continued economic competitiveness. It also provides examples of best practices with promising opportunities for replication in the NCR.

What is clear is the need for an integrated and coordinated approach to the region's workforce development and economic development needs. We are challenged with simultaneously meeting the demands of a middle- to high-skill knowledge economy, while also providing an environment in which low-skill workers can achieve self sufficiency. Sustained dialogue and collaboration amongst the region's leaders in career development and preparation is essential to providing a well-prepared workforce and maintaining the economic competitiveness of the NCR.

This report calls on regional leaders to take *Closing the Gaps to Build the Future* and use it as a springboard for further dialogue and information sharing in order to come up with ways to better integrate often different but inherently interrelated goals and needs. The Task Force has identified strategies to assist in this effort, and COG is committed to facilitating such discussions.

Priorities for Workforce Development

The Task Force identified strategies that seek to close the opportunity gap that exists among different socioeconomic levels, while also ensuring that the NCR's workforce possesses the knowledge and skills that the new economy demands. These goals are not incompatible.

Youth Education and Career Preparation (page 18) In order to ensure that young people are connected to education and/or the labor market by age 24 a regional strategy must be implemented that enhances career preparation, aligns and coordinates educational requirements among institutions and ensures the success of all students, including those with special needs.

Adult Career Development and Re-Development (page 27) Providing career pathways and entry points for residents along the skills continuum will require strong partnerships and continued collaboration amongst regional employers and education/training providers. Strategies must be implemented that offer multiple opportunities to engage and re-engage workers, focus on improving literacy and provide the supportive services necessary for workers to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Integrating Workforce Development with Economic Development (page 39) Fostering inclusive economic growth, with a focus on growing the region's workforce and promoting innovation, will require that this region build on its competitive assets and focus economic development strategies on businesses that will generate good jobs and opportunity for advancement and mobility.

The Workforce Development Continuum



Youth



Young Adult



Adult



Lifelong Learning

INTRODUCTION TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

An effective workforce development program has a dual-customer approach, focusing both on the needs of employers and workers. It enhances regional economic competitiveness by ensuring that employers have a dependable supply of skilled workers and helps families achieve economic self-sufficiency by helping workers to obtain, retain, and advance in employment.

Workforce development programs include a multitude of services designed to help people improve their basic or technical skills, get a job, or get a better job. Workforce programs serve a variety of older youth and adults, including new entrants to the labor force, those returning to the labor force and incumbent workers. For example, a person already working in the health care field as a medical assistant may want to upgrade his or her skills to advance on the job. A recent high school graduate may enroll in a carpentry apprenticeship program. An adult who has been out of the labor force may plan to get an associate's degree in computer science and ultimately earn a bachelor's degree or higher.



Workforce programs sometimes also serve as second-chance programs for those who did not succeed in or complete their course of study in the traditional K-12 education system or postsecondary institutions. In those cases, occupational skills training is usually paired with adult literacy and English for speakers of other languages. Programs can offer job search and placement assistance, general work readiness and soft skills training for those who need orientation to the world of work, and links to other supportive services such as child care and transportation.

Public, non-profit and private-sector organizations are all involved in workforce development. Multiple federal programs and funding streams provide the framework, making coordination among local agencies challenging, but necessary. Public entities run some programs directly and in other cases contract or grant their funding to nonprofit or private organizations which then provide direct services. Nonprofit and private organizations also support their work based on other funding sources, such as foundations, corporate donors, and fees for service.

Sample Workforce Development Activities

For Workers	For Employers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult literacy / Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) • Work-readiness training • Skills training • Career coaching / advising • Job placement assistance • Supportive services (transportation, child care) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting / screening assistance • Retention strategies • Coordinating industry response to current / projected skill shortages

Sources of Workforce Development Funding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers • Business and Industry Associations • Workforce Investment Act • Wagner-Peyser Employment Services • Food Stamp Employment & Training • Temporary Assistance to Needy Families • Trade Adjustment Act • Pell Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Work Study • Federal Financial Aid • Unemployment Insurance Surplus • State and Local Funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discretionary Funds ◦ Economic Development Funds ◦ General Revenue • Philanthropy
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REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

The National Capital Region is the fifth-largest regional market in the country. It is a leader in the knowledge economy and we take pride in our high levels of educational attainment, competitive wages and strong employment base. Nearly half of all adult residents hold a bachelor's degree, compared to the national average of 28 percent. Of the 100 highest-performing high schools in the country, 16 are located here.

We continue to grow and become more economically and socially diverse. In 2007, more than a million foreign-born residents lived here, representing 21 percent of the total population. The foreign-born population in the region is characterized by fairly rapid growth since the 1980s, global origins (with no one dominant country of origin), and suburban settlement. The populations of Arlington, Fairfax and Montgomery Counties are all more than one-quarter foreign-born, compared to 13 percent in the District of Columbia. The outer suburbs such as Prince William and Loudoun Counties have experienced rapid and recent increases in the foreign population since 2000.² Over 1.5 million residents speak more than one language fluently.³

Despite the recent decline in the rate of annual job growth, the long-term projections for future growth are strong. The region has a solid employment base in the federal government and associated business and professional services, all of which offer relatively high wages. Figure 1 shows employment growth projections for the period 2005 – 2030, with projections of 15 – 123% growth for each jurisdiction.⁴ Despite the tremendous growth in suburban employment shown in the forecasts, the District of Columbia will continue to have the largest number of jobs of any single jurisdiction and will account for a fifth of the region's employment in 2030.

COG estimates that by 2030 the region will create 1.2 million new jobs and be home to 1.6 million new residents. Additionally, two-thirds of all new jobs in the region are projected to be in service industries such as engineering, computer and data processing, business services, and medical research, which are generally middle- to high-skill jobs that come with family-sustaining wages and benefits.

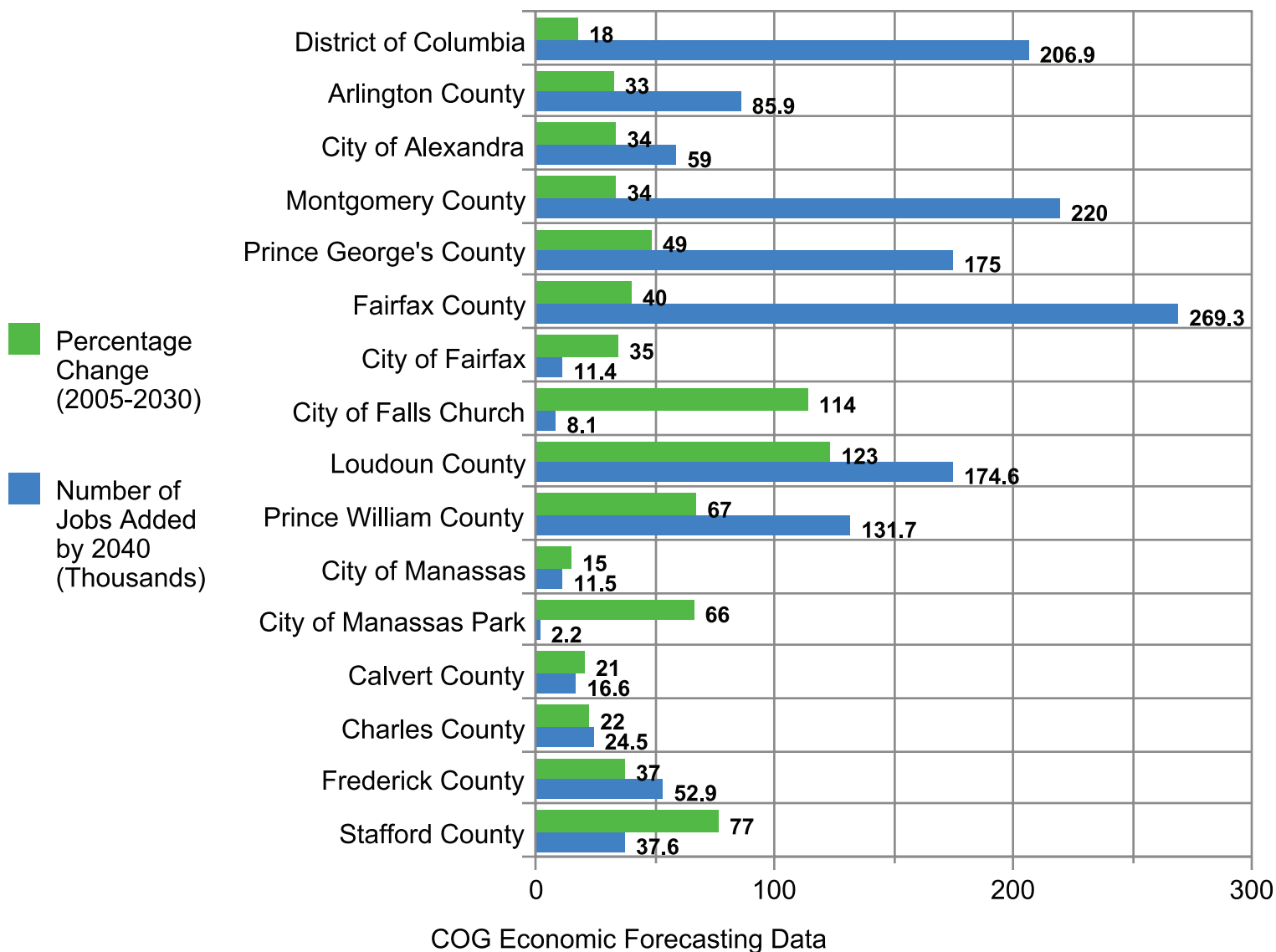
However, prosperity and advancement opportunities are not realized by all residents and many families are facing significant economic hardships. Some residents do not have the education or English-language skills to advance beyond low-wage employment and face limited opportunities to upgrade their skills. Entry-level jobs don't always offer clear career paths for advancement and in this highly-educated region, employers may require a bachelor's degree when one may not be strictly required given the job description. Jobs may be located in locations not accessible by public transportation. Residents growing up in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty may have few role models that work regularly or succeed in school.

² Demographic and Economic Trends in the National Capital Region and Their Effects on Children, Youth and Families; Greater Washington Research at Brookings; January, 2009

³ Greater Washington 2009 Regional Report; Greater Washington Initiative

⁴ Growth Trends to 2030: Cooperative Forecasting in the Washington Region (Round 7.1); MWCOG; Fall, 2007

Figure 1: Employment Growth by Jurisdiction



NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED, REGIONAL APPROACH

Currently, there are two very disparate needs in the region; we must meet the demands of a middle- to high-skill knowledge economy while providing pathways for low-skill, low-wage workers to reach economic self-sufficiency. A competitive, inclusive regional economy is the solution, although a complex one; with training all along the skills continuum and lifelong learning at its core.

During periods of economic downturn, there is a temptation to focus on maintaining core activities. History shows us, however, that even the most severe economic downturns are eventually followed by periods of substantial growth. Now is the time to refocus our attention and resources on a systemic change in workforce development.

While many systems are in place to address individual elements of workforce and economic development needs, the NCR is finding, as are regions around the country, that in order to maximize effectiveness and value, these efforts need to be fully integrated and focused with common goals. Youth education, workforce development, adult education/developmental education and economic development are each governed and funded by disparate entities that tend not to collaborate on goals or planning, and may have conflicting policies and practices.

The need for regional collaboration, in the NCR particularly, is driven by the fact that we have essentially one housing and one labor market, and a transient population that does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries when going to work, shop or dine.

Addressing workforce development needs regionally will be a challenge but one that should not be ignored. Yes, we are comprised of two states, the District of Columbia, and 21 jurisdictions with varying rules and regulations, specifically in terms of funding, but that means we must be strategic in our approach. Instead of looking to the individual governments for a solution, nonprofits and private employers may have to take the lead in regional coordination.

The region must simultaneously meet the demands of a middle- to high-skill knowledge economy, while also providing an environment in which low-skill workers can achieve self sufficiency.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL ACTION

How to plant the seed for regional actors to work together to increase economic opportunity for residents and employers.

Overview

Collaboration, alignment and integration of workforce and economic development systems are essential to building and sustaining a workforce that is nationally and internationally competitive. Regional leadership and action acknowledge the reality that we have both a regional economy and labor market and would elevate local strengths to provide greater efficiencies and results.

There are obvious challenges to regional cooperation due to our unique tri-state structure and the resulting differences in laws and regulations; much of the challenge, however, is geographical and can be resolved with increased collaboration. This region, and COG specifically, has been successful in achieving such communication, particularly in the areas of regional transportation planning and homeland security.

A cross-jurisdictional effort on workforce development issues is admittedly less familiar. Thankfully, we are able to seek guidance from our success as well as best practices from other regions with similar experiences; many of which are detailed in this report.

When looking to other regions where implementation of cross-systems or cross-jurisdictional workforce development-related initiatives has been successful, several factors are consistently found:

- A clear vision of what will be achieved
- Full engagement of key stakeholders as partners
- Stakeholders willing to compromise for the benefits of the larger effort (including cost-sharing)
- Stakeholders willing to be flexible and creative in managing rules prescribed by specific funding sources
- Ongoing leadership by one or more committed partners
- Development of a functional strategic plan
- Development of cross-agency and/or cross-jurisdictional teams to lead and manage critical aspects of the initiative
- Agency staff training by all partners to ensure that vision, focus and plan are embraced and effectively carried out
- Seek federal and state waivers to rules that discourage focus on customers and desired outcomes
- Partners acknowledge that they are operating in an environment in which different agencies and funding sources have different rules, and they strive to make the navigation process seamless for the customer

Challenge for the Region's Leaders: Multi-Jurisdictional Collaboration

One of the greatest challenges cited throughout this report is that of achieving cross-jurisdictional collaboration in a region with two states, the federal district, and numerous counties and cities, all operating their own education, workforce development and economic development agencies and agendas. The Cincinnati Region Model is one which could be replicated to meet the need in the National Capital Region and should be strongly considered in future discussions.

A Model for Multi-State, Multi-Jurisdiction Action – Cincinnati Region

Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network -- www.cincinnatiworkforce.org

The Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network is a multi-state/city regional partnership of philanthropy, government, employers, education, and community organizations, dedicated to creating a regional workforce development system that meets the dual needs of employers and workers to foster economic growth and opportunity in the region, which includes the City of Cincinnati in Ohio, as well as surrounding communities in Kentucky and Indiana.

When they first convened, leaders identified key challenges that mirror many of those in the NCR:

- Over half of the region's labor market is comprised of middle-skill jobs
- Employers are struggling to meet their need for a skilled workforce
- Many residents have insufficient skills and preparation to enter, advance and succeed in the labor market
- The existing workforce strategy was inadequate in meeting this challenge
- The region's workforce policies, resources and strategies were mostly contained in jurisdictional, sectoral, and organizational silos with historically weak collaboration
- While some individual workforce programs and providers were achieving impressive results, the system as a whole lacked the capacity to supply the skilled workforce that employers demand

Leaders then set out to “improve and align the region's workforce policies, strategies and resources into a coherent, sustainable system that effectively meets the dual needs of employers and employees for the long-term.” They launched the regional Workforce Network to pursue four priorities:

Bringing together all of the key stakeholders in the workforce system to better align resources and strategies;

Closing skills gaps in three priority industries by developing career pathways that provide education and training programs to help workers advance in their careers and fill occupational shortages;

Improving and coordinating support services that help disadvantaged workers succeed in the labor market; and

Advancing critical policy interventions that reduce barriers to employment and advancement.

Short-term goals (for 2008-2011) are to prepare at least 1,500 low-skilled adults for better jobs and long-term careers in priority industries, and to improve at least 30 employers' abilities to recruit, train, retain and advance employees to mid-level skilled jobs to fill critical occupational shortages in priority industries.

The Workforce Network developed and is in the process of implementing a comprehensive strategic plan (the four main points of which are featured below):

Align workforce resources and strategies across the system

Strategies

- Create a public/private Funders' Collaborative to expand, pool and align resources for workforce development.
- Create and sustain a Workforce Network and Leadership Council to serve as a regional workforce development intermediary that aligns strategies and programs among key players.
- Connect the adult workforce pipelines with the student education pipelines.

Desired Outcomes

- A durable coordinating mechanism for the Tristate region that will expand, pool and align public and private resources for workforce development.
- A coherent, coordinated, sustainable workforce system for the Tristate region.
- A seamless education-to-workforce pipeline for the region.

Build the capacity of the regional workforce system

Strategies

- Organize Adult Workforce Success Networks to improve and coordinate support services that help unemployed, low-skill, and hard-to-employ workers prepare for, enter, advance, and succeed in the labor market.
- Develop a common data collection and management system for use by workforce organizations in the system to track results and evaluate our strategies.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased collaboration among providers; improved and coordinated service delivery; increase effectiveness and capacity of providers.
- Use of common performance metrics to track, analyze, and report outcomes across the system.

Close skill gaps in priority industries

Strategies

- Make targeted investments and provide technical assistance to support the expansion of the Health Careers Collaborative to other employers in the Tristate region.
- Make targeted investments and provide technical assistance to launch two new Career Pathways in priority industries in the Tristate region.

Desired Outcomes

- Prepare at least 1,500 low-skilled adults for better work and careers.
- Improve at least 30 employers' abilities to recruit, train, retain and advance employees to mid-level skilled jobs.
- Sustained pathways, processes and funding.

Advance a policy agenda to improve our workforce system and outcomes

Strategy

- Coordinate advocacy efforts addressing system alignment and barrier reduction for low-skilled workers at three levels of systems change: (1) policies at the regional and state level; (2) local infrastructure to support workforce development; and (3) industry practices.

Desired Outcome

- Reformed policies and practices that support system alignment and reduce barriers for low-skilled workers.

COG's Commitment & Next Steps

While COG recognizes the importance and need to integrate workforce and economic development systems, which is why it commissioned this report, it does not have the current capacity to incorporate much of the necessary actions into its work plan. What COG can and will do is commit to facilitating continued regional conversations of stakeholders in hopes that many of the issues raised in this report will provide a springboard for further exploration and action. We see this report as the first step in engaging our colleagues across sectors in a long overdue discussion on better preparing, retaining, and retraining the region's workforce. The work has just begun. The following is how COG plans to assist the task force in continuing the dialogue and turning learning into action.

Short Term

Convening a large forum of employers, education, workforce development and economic development stakeholders. This would provide key stakeholder groups the opportunity to delve into the issues and ideas raised in this report and to identify areas where there is interest and energy to pursue regional action. The goal would be to identify particular industries or occupations with the key ingredients for further action: engaged employers, unmet labor force needs, and education/training providers with the ability to provide (or develop) skills training to meet employers' needs. Depending on the population of workers involved, community-based organizations that provide supportive and wrap-around services are key participants.

Leveraging the resources in the region, including the federal government. Integrating workforce development priorities into COG's new focus on partnership with the federal government and the integrative approach to planning as indicated in *Region Forward*.

Long Term

Implementing Industry Skill Panels (ISPs) to provide a forum for stakeholder groups, specifically workforce investment boards, to share models and exchange ideas across jurisdictions concerning some of the challenges they face, specifically workforce investment boards. These might be a natural next step coming out of the initial multi-sector forum.

Developing a regional map or centralized collection of information detailing available workforce development services, for both jobseekers and employers. This could be similar to the Web site developed for COG's National Capital Farms initiative and it will require a commitment from regional leaders to continually provide updated information for the collection.

Developing a single regional standard for "college readiness" to ensure that students from across the region are prepared for the demands of college, potentially using models from the American Diploma Project as a basis.

Determining why certain businesses engage in workforce development initiatives/programs. What is its strategic value to them, and what do they see as their return on investment? Do they have something to teach other employers about the value of workforce development programs?

Funding for any new initiative is always a paramount concern. The region has an opportunity, through COG, to build a stronger relationship with the US Department of Labor (USDOL), particularly at the regional office level. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative which recently obtained significant funding to develop a regional green jobs strategy (see description on page 38), evolved in part as a result of the USDOL's regional office taking an interest in the NCR. If a plan for a strong, innovative regional workforce development initiative is developed and supported by a robust group of stakeholders, there is likely to be a positive reception at USDOL.

Best Practices in Workforce Development

The following is an illustrative collection of best practices. We recognize that there are many additional high-performing programs within and outside of the region that are not included. The selection of these programs is not an endorsement, but rather a spotlight on several programs with promising opportunities for replication in the NCR.

**Youth Education &
Career Preparation 15**

**Adult Development &
Re-development 25**

**Integrating Economic
Development 37**

YOUTH EDUCATION AND CAREER PREPARATION

The Region should ensure young people are connected to education and/or the labor market by age 24. Young people who do not successfully complete at least a high school education plus some postsecondary education and training are at risk for a host of bad outcomes, including low-wage employment with little possibility of advancement. Employment is key to achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Overview

Task Force members were unanimous in their call for strengthening of the K-12/college/employment continuum. Specifically, there must be more meaningful and realistic outcome measures, and better alignment of graduation/completion requirements with the skills needed for the next step in employment or education. “College ready” must equal “career ready,” and every student should leave school both college- and career-ready.

This region has placed a priority on education and recognized its value to the individual, community and economy. On average, our residents are highly educated; we are home to many excellent public school systems; and are pleased to offer several models of effective solutions to today’s difficult educational challenges. Of the 100 highest-performing high schools in the country, 16 are located in the NCR.⁵ Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County, Virginia was recently named the number one high school in the country for 2009 by US News and World Report.⁶

Our regional statistics on school performance are impressive and for that we are justly proud. Statistics show, however, that attainment of this success varies significantly by race and often location. While 62% of Asians and 58% of whites hold bachelor’s degrees, only 29% of African-Americans and 23% of Hispanics do. Fifty-nine percent of Hispanics have a high school degree or less, as do 43 percent of African-Americans.⁷ A multifaceted approach to engaging the region’s youth and providing the access to quality and affordable education must be developed to reduce these disparities.

Challenges

The reality is that each local school system has socioeconomic, racial and educational disparities within it. All school systems in the region, whether system-wide or in small pockets, face similar challenges: poverty, varying literacy rates, an influx of non-English-speaking students, among others. Some jurisdictions struggle with large numbers of low-income students who face multiple barriers to learning, including hunger, unstable housing and unsafe neighborhoods, and often lack the resources to address these added burdens.

⁵ Greater Washington 2009 Regional Report; Greater Washington Initiative; p. 11

⁶ <http://www.usnews.com/articles/education/high-schools/2009/12/09/americas-best-high-schools-gold-medal-list.html>

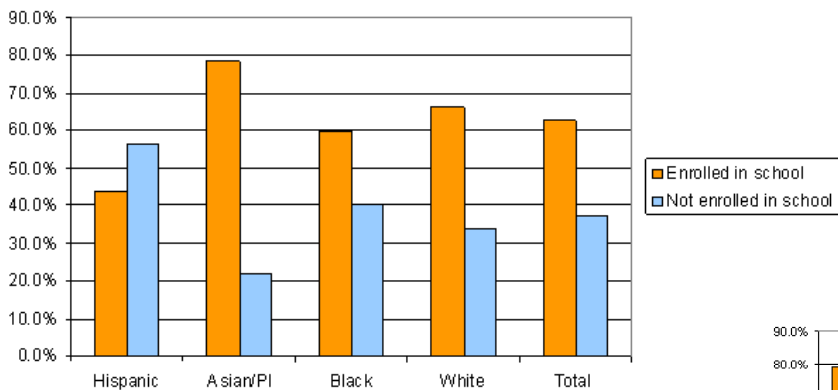
⁷ Demographic and Economic Trends in the National Capital Region and Their Effects on Children, Youth and Families; Greater Washington Research at Brookings; January, 2009; p. 9

Currently, we are finding that a significant percentage of students are not succeeding in standard educational settings and do not graduate. With increased national and global competition, we cannot afford to write off these students. The investment required to assist in their success is minimal compared to the long-term costs of allowing failure (in lost economic contributions of the individual, plus the probable public expenditure costs associated with subsidizing the individual throughout their adult life).

Young African-Americans and Hispanics aged 16-24 are less likely to be enrolled in school than their White and Asian peers. Asians have the highest enrollment in school (including high school, college, and graduate school) at 78%, followed by Whites (66%), Blacks (60%) and Hispanics (44%). Since higher levels of education are correlated with higher earnings and employment rates, the lower rates among African-Americans and Hispanics are a cause for a concern.

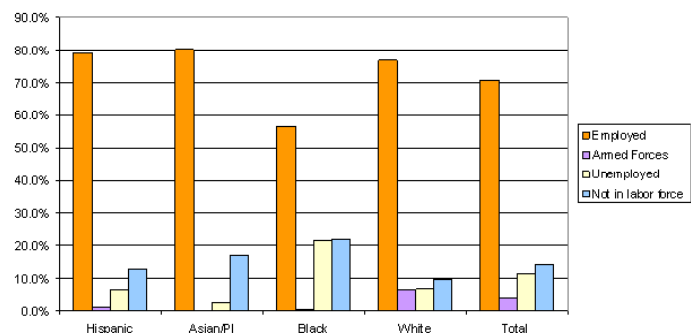
Among young people not enrolled in school, most are employed (71%) or in the Armed Forces (4%). However, about 10% of all 16-24 year olds in the region are not enrolled in school, not in the labor force (meaning they are not looking for a job), or unemployed. People can be in the “not in labor force” category for a variety of reasons: they may be busy with family responsibilities or they may have gotten discouraged and given up looking for a job. Among African-Americans, about 40% of those not enrolled in school and 17% of all African-American 16-24 year-olds are either unemployed or not in the labor force, indicating a serious disconnection from both employment and education, both of which are troubling. More Hispanics not enrolled in school are working and fewer are unemployed or not in the labor force, suggesting that they cut schooling short in order to work. Without sufficient education, however, they may be stuck in low-wage jobs.

Chart A: Young people aged 16-24 by school enrollment status by race/ethnicity in the Washington region, 2007



Charts' source: 2007 American Community Survey

Chart B: Labor force status of young people aged 16-24 who are not enrolled in school by race/ethnicity in the Washington region, 2007



Fortunately, there are a number of models for assisting these students to not only complete their high school education, but to go on to succeed in further education or training and employment.

Funding for critical programs is required. In the face of shrinking budgets, it is especially important to remain focused on continuing to support programs that increase students' ability to succeed in both school and eventual employment.

There must be a more effective focus on workforce/career preparation throughout a student's academic life. In order to do that, educational institutions and systems must clearly articulate and coordinate those functions and objectives, so that they build progressively and lead to positive results. There are a number of successful approaches that have been used to achieve this objective. One is the adoption of models which create a system of education that begins with pre-school and ends after college (known as P-16 or P-20). Another successful approach is the Career training/internship combinations for low-income students and career and technical education (CTE) programs in high schools. These are both examples of system-wide approaches that include all students.

CTE-focused alternative high schools offer significant promise for non-graduates and others who have been unable to succeed in a conventional public high school setting. Additionally, "early college" programs offered at alternative schools offer a unique opportunity to prepare its students for the demands of college. The challenge we are faced with is one of perception.

A trend at some private sector companies today has been to move away from the traditional assumption that a bachelor's degree is a requirement for professional-level jobs, including technical jobs. Instead they are moving toward a preference for two years of post-secondary education and the opportunity for additional on-site training. However, the belief that a bachelor's degree is a necessity continues to prevail among students and their parents. CTE – whether in a secondary or post-secondary institution – is often seen as inferior.

There has traditionally been an unfortunate stigma attached to vocational type programs. It is mostly due to a lack of understanding and appreciation among students and their parents that college readiness and career readiness are equally important, non-exclusive, objectives. Changing attitudes will involve a multi-prong effort, including shifting guidance approaches toward planning around career goals, instead of degree goals, and increasing marketing and communications around high-demand, high-wage careers and the skills and education needed for them.

In the face of shrinking budgets, it is especially important to remain focused on continuing to support programs that increase students' ability to succeed in both school and eventual employment.

Task Force Priority

A Regional Youth Education and Career Preparation Strategy

Align and Coordinate

- Align standards between institutions and organizations:
 - Ensure that high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements are aligned
 - Credential transferability between institutions and organizations
- Seamless K12-to-college and school-to-career transitions
- Dual enrollment in high school and college

Enhance Career Preparation

- Focus on college-ready = career-ready
- Stronger Career and Technical Educational (CTE) programs in high schools; fully engage employers in design and planning
- Use CTE advisory boards to ensure that students are trained for in-demand, current skills
- Challenge/change the idea that CTE is for non-college-bound students

Ensure success of all students

- Students with additional barriers may require additional services and/or specialized approaches

Finally, measures of success in youth education – particularly those driven by federal policy (No-Child-Left-Behind or NCLB) are focused on knowledge, but not on skills that are equally important to students' long-term success. Problem-solving and critical thinking skills have been de-emphasized, even as employers consistently identify these as some of the most important elements of preparation for success in the workplace.

Opportunities

The American Diploma Project (ADP) has developed a set of college- and career-ready benchmarks in English and mathematics. The benchmarks were developed by a research process that included substantial input from employers and post-secondary institutions. It focused on the knowledge and skills high school graduates must have in English and mathematics in order to be successful in first-year, credit-bearing college courses and/or qualify graduates for the postsecondary education or training needed for entry-level jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and offer opportunities for advancement. A key finding of the ADP research was that high school graduates, whether they are heading to college or embarking on a meaningful career, need essentially the same level of knowledge in English and mathematics.

The ADP Network is comprised of 34 states (including Maryland and Virginia) that are committed to four basic principles of college- and career- readiness:

- Aligning high school academic content standards in English and mathematics with the demands of college and careers;
- Requiring students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma ensures that a student is ready for postsecondary opportunities;
- Administering statewide high school assessments anchored to college- and career-ready expectations; and
- Creating comprehensive accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Chart C shows the progress of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia in implementation of these approaches.

Chart C: Regional progress on alignment and coordination of standards

Jurisdiction	Align high school standards with college and workplace expectations	Align high school graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations	Administer college readiness test to all high school students	Develop a P-16 longitudinal data system
District of Columbia	In process or planning	In place		In process or planning
Maryland	In place	In process or planning	In process or planning	In process or planning
Virginia	To be in place by 2010			In process or planning

Source: Closing the Expectation Gap 2009: Fourth Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers; Achieve American Diploma Project Network; 2009

Best Practice: K-16, P-16, P-20

K-16, P-16 and P-20 systems share a common goal: to create a system of education which begins in early childhood and ends after college that promotes access, standards, accountability and life-long learning. Other common goals include smoothing the transition from high school to college, improving teaching quality, reducing the need for developmental education and raising student achievement across all educational levels.

While there is a great deal of interest in P-16 in the states, funding remains an issue. Though some P-16 councils (Georgia, Maryland and Wisconsin) have sustained funding and dedicated staff, most do not. This lack of funding can limit the impact of a P-16 council and impede policy change.⁸

A Model for P-20, Maryland⁹

The P-20 Leadership Council of Maryland was established in October 2007, having evolved from an earlier P-16 initiative. The Council is a partnership between the state, educators, and the business community to better prepare Maryland students for the jobs of the 21st Century while simultaneously enhancing the state's economic competitiveness. It includes the Governor or his designee and representatives of the education (both K-12 and higher education), workforce creation, and business communities and has been nationally recognized for its voluntary, inclusive organizational structure and for being one of the more active partnerships in the nation.

The state-wide goals of the P-20 Leadership Council include:

- Enhance student access to post-secondary education, especially for disadvantaged and minority students, by aligning high school expectations with college admission requirements.
- Improve the quantity and quality of teacher candidates (and current teachers) so that every classroom has a highly qualified teacher.
- Strengthen communication and collaborative decision-making among the three organizations.

Additional initiatives of the P-20 Leadership Council have included:

- English Composition Task Force: The task force, consisting of a statewide stakeholder group from the PreK-16 community, provides recommendations that will assist in aligning the teaching of English composition so that students who exit high school are prepared for the rigor of the first credit-bearing composition course in college.
- Ad Hoc Committee on the Education of African-American Males: In response to the 2006 Task Force on the Education of African-American Males Report, the Committee was formed

⁸ P-16 Collaboration in the States, by Carl Krueger, updated June 2006, Education Commission of the States

⁹ University System of Maryland: <http://www.usmd.edu/usm/academicaffairs/p20/>

during the 2007-2008 academic year, and developed an action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations from the report, including indicators of success, identifying the resources needed, and identifying obstacles that need to be surmounted or additional parties that need to be engaged. The Action Plan was presented to the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council in June 2008.

- **Early College Access (2006):** During 2007, the Early College Access Committee submitted the Early College Access Report to the PreK-16 Leadership Council with recommendations for enhancing and increasing students' opportunities to be able to earn college credits while these students are attending high school.
- **Mathematics Bridge Goals:** The PreK-16/P-20 Partnership collaborated with PreK-12 and higher education mathematics representatives to develop the Mathematics Bridge Goals, which defined the mathematics needed by students to be prepared for the first credit-bearing college mathematics course. These goals were used to align with the ADP and the National Algebra II Test, and they are now included in the Maryland Voluntary State Algebra II Curriculum.

Best Practice: CTE-Focused Programs in High Schools

1. Governor's Career and Technical Academy: Arlington, VA¹⁰

Launched in 2008, the Governor's Career and Technical Academy in Arlington is a jointly administered CTE Center, offering area students an optional five-year high school diploma/two-year college degree program. Students participate in featured dual enrollment CTE courses and supporting workplace activities, along with continued study at their respective schools. As the program matures, an increasing number of CTE and academic subjects will be offered until the Academy offers full-day programs as a comprehensive school.

The Academy's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-infused curriculum has programs in five pathways:

- Audio and Video Technology and Film
- Engineering and Technology
- Facility and Mobile Equipment Maintenance
- Health Science Support Services
- Information Support and Services

Additional programs in other pathways will be added as the Academy develops, providing broader academic and employment opportunities for more students.

¹⁰ http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/ct_academies/background/index.html; Arlington Public Schools Web site

Key features of the program include:

- Joint secondary/postsecondary institution
- Dual enrollment opportunities for grades 11, 12, and beyond
- Cross-disciplinary instructional methods (informed by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's I-STEM Education program) are a major focus of staff development for teachers
- Flexible academy model will incorporate several additional pathways over time
- Student job shadowing and internships available across a variety of disciplines
- Optional Stretch projects introduce students to real-work-related projects
- Involved business partners assist in keeping curriculum relevant
- Summer college coursework available

Expected student outcomes include improved high school graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary education, as well as the reduced need for remediation and an increase in college student retention, transfer, and graduation. Data collection for continuous program improvement is a key feature of the system.

2. Thomas Edison High School of Technology, Montgomery County, MD¹¹

Thomas Edison High School of Technology is unique among Montgomery County public high schools. Students enrolled in all MCPS comprehensive high schools may apply for enrollment in one of Edison's nineteen highly acclaimed career and technology education programs. Students attend Edison every day for three class periods (2.5 hours), earn 1.5 credits per semester, and transportation is provided. In addition to offering valuable professional certifications and licenses, many programs are articulated with colleges and universities for college credit. More than seventy percent of Edison students plan to attend colleges, universities, and technical schools. Many Edison graduates continue on their same career pathways and/or use their skills to help pay for college expenses. Students who attend Edison receive all the benefits offered at their comprehensive high schools as well as the added value of the career and technical education they receive at Edison.

The nineteen programs offered at Edison are categorized under six Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) career clusters:

- Arts, Humanities, Media, & Communication
- Biosciences, Health Sciences, & Medicine
- Human & Consumer Services, Hospitality & Tourism
- Information Technologies
- Construction & Development
- Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics

¹¹ <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/Edison/programs.htm>

Best Practice: Alternative Pathways

1. YouthBuild Charter School, Washington, DC¹²

The YouthBuild Public Charter School serves young people (ages 16-24) who have dropped out of traditional high schools. At YouthBuild, students build housing for homeless or low-income families as they learn the construction trade and prepare to earn their high school diploma or GED.

At YouthBuild, students

- Complete their high school education by attaining a diploma or GED;
- Develop marketable skills in construction;
- Learn critical life skills, leadership development, and job readiness;
- Benefit from personalized support – mentoring, counseling, child care and housing assistance, and other services as needed;
- Serve the community by building or renovating housing for low-income residents;
- Earn a stipend to help meet family commitments and defray transportation costs;
- Secure employment or pursue a college degree (with support) upon completion.

The YouthBuild Public Charter School opened in 2005 as an outgrowth of a program begun in 1995 by the Latin American Youth Center in the Columbia Heights neighborhood.

2. Year Up, Washington DC and Northern Virginia¹³

Year Up is a national organization that provides career training to low-income young adults and helps them secure internships with employer partners. In the first half of the twelve month program, Year Up provides intensive training that focuses on developing important job specific technical skills as well as critical workforce skills including professionalism, teamwork, and communication. In addition to training, Year Up provides mentoring and ongoing support throughout the year and beyond.

Students spend the second half of the year in an apprenticeship with a corporate partner, where they learn and practice new skills, acclimate to a professional environment and make important workplace connections. The students arrived with solid workforce readiness skills and enough job specific knowledge to begin to do the job.

One of the unique aspects of the Year Up program is the degree of employer support it has engaged. Nationally, Bank of America and more than 90 other corporations have partnered

¹² YouthBuild Public Charter School website (ybpcs.org)

¹³ <http://yearup.org/locations/washingtondc>

with Year Up. Employers pay 60 percent of the cost of Year Up's services. The companies make a financial investment of approximately \$20,000 per apprentice, as well as a considerable investment of time to manage and mentor the apprentice.

In the District of Columbia, the Year Up program has been in operation since 2006. To date, 87% of graduates have been placed into positions within four months of graduation, earning an average of \$35,000 per year.¹⁴

Year Up is currently refining a pilot partnership program with Northern Virginia Community College to create a viable pathway for low-income youth to enter college. All students successfully completing the Year Up program will earn 18 transferable credits from the community college, providing a more direct path into higher education. This arrangement is a revenue-sharing model tapping public funding, enabling both organizations to serve more young adults.

¹⁴ The Ill-Prepared US Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer-Provided Workforce Readiness Training; Jill Casner-Lotto, Elyse Rosenblum, and Mary Wright; The Conference Board; July, 2009

ADULT CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND RE-DEVELOPMENT

The Region should develop career pathways and entry points for residents along the skills continuum in stable and growing industries, through partnerships with business, education, community-based organizations and labor.

Overview

The NCR has a strong employment base. Between the federal government and the high number of federal contracting firms located in the region, the unemployment rate has remained less volatile than in other parts of the country. However, some parts of the region experience persistently high areas of unemployment.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that nationally more than half of all job openings between 2008 and 2018 will be in middle-skill occupations, compared with one-third in high-skill occupational categories.¹⁵ The BLS also projects a near doubling of job openings as a result of retirees, a group that currently represents roughly 35% of the federal workforce. “Middle-skill” jobs are defined as those that generally require some significant education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor’s degree, such as associate’s degrees, vocational certificates, on-the-job training, previous work experience, or generally “some college” but not necessarily a bachelor’s degree.¹⁶

Some employers are beginning to reconsider their education requirements for professional positions. Rather than requiring bachelor’s degrees, they are focusing on hiring talented, dedicated, hard-working people who have some post-secondary education, and then training them and/or financially supporting their effort to get further education. For example, Geo Concepts -- an area engineering firm -- has adopted this approach and is working with Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) to develop a two-year training program.

One of the region’s significant strengths is its robust community college network. With the recent launch of the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC), every jurisdiction now has at least one community college serving it. Most area community colleges view their workforce development role as primary, and are focused on preparing workers for middle-skill jobs. This focus on workforce development allows them to be responsive to emerging education and training needs identified by employers. In recognition of the workforce development strengths of community colleges, Virginia has transferred responsibility for many of its workforce development programs, including oversight of the Federal Workforce Investment Act, to the community college system.

Workforce development must meet the needs of two key constituencies: employers and members of the workforce. These two groups have common interests which can and should converge.

¹⁵ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.nr0.htm>

¹⁶ America’s Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond; Harry J. Holzer and Robert I. Lerman; November 2007

Supplementing the role of community college and other education and training institutions is a robust network of non-profits that provide workforce readiness services. Some non-profits also provide substantial occupational skills training; however, collaboration between education institutions and non-profits has often been inconsistent.

Adult workforce development is key to the NCR's overall economic health. Sixty-five percent of our 2020 workforce is already beyond the reach of our elementary and secondary schools, making adult workforce development critical.¹⁷

Adults in the region have a wide range of training needs. There are those who are just entering the workforce, those who are in the process of advancing their careers, and those who have been dislocated from their job or industry and may need to partially or completely retool their skills. To be successful, workforce development needs to address entry, advancement, retraining, and retention in employment.

For some workers to succeed in education or training, additional services are needed, particularly child care and access to transportation. These services can be costly, but without them the success rate of education and training is greatly reduced. This results in a population cut off from the opportunity to gain the education and training they need to support themselves and their families.

Today's workers are more mobile and transient across career clusters, as will be workers in the coming decades. People move in and out of various fields and we need to examine the re-development challenges for such a mobile workforce. These differ from the challenges of re-training driven by displaced workers. Workforce development must meet the needs of two key constituencies: employers and members of the workforce. These two groups have common interests which can and should converge.

Challenges

The NCR's workforce is generally well-educated, but a substantial portion of the adult workforce lacks the education or skills to compete beyond the entry-level. This results in a shortage of workers who are well-prepared for the middle-skill jobs that make up between 30 to 50 percent of all current and projected job opportunities in the region.¹⁸

Some of the greatest difficulties for adult workforce development in the region result from rules governing federal funding. Major federal funding sources include the Workforce Investment Act, TANF Welfare-to-Work, and financial aid programs for education such as Pell Grants. Each of these programs has complex rules and limitations that reinforce a non-integrated, "silo" approach and discourage collaboration and efficient use of resources toward broader strategies. For example, the federal Workforce Investment Act has a nominal focus on a dual-customer approach (workers and employers), but its focus on short-term training limits its utility for both. Financial aid limitations for developmental education and part-time students impede the access and success of a wide range of workers. Moreover, differing definitions of success and attendant reporting requirements of the various programs make it difficult to track education and training outcomes across the NCR.

¹⁷ Aspen Institute 2007

¹⁸ Envisioning Opportunity: Three Options for a Community College in Washington, D.C.; Brooke DeRenzis, Martha Ross, and Alice M. Rivlin; Brookings Institution; May, 2008; Maryland's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs & Virginia's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs; The Workforce Alliance, Washington, 2007

Task Force Priority

A Regional Adult Career Development and Re-development Strategy

Coordinate and collaborate for effective use of resources and excellent outcomes

- Integrate/align access to the continuum of education and training services provided through multiple funding sources and types of sponsors (make funding silos invisible to the worker and the employer)
- Active, strong partnerships between employers and education/training providers that continuously collaborate on the development of training and in setting learning objectives

Align standards and goals

- Between education/training programs and employer needs
- Among the various levels of education/training programs (high school to college, high school to apprenticeship, GED program to college, GED program to apprenticeship)

Transferability

- Education and training credentials from one setting are recognized and valued in other education and employment settings; i.e., community college, high school CTE program, GED program, on-the-job-training internships, etc.

Train for strong industries/occupations in the region

Ensure access to adult education and training

- Offer multiple opportunities to engage/re-engage in education and training for continuous skill development
- Design education and training structure and scheduling to fit the needs of adult workers – outside of traditional hours and semester timeframes or classroom settings

Reduce barriers to success in education and training

- Address support service needs such as transportation and child care to make it possible for many adults to participate in education or training
- Address developmental education needs, taking the student/trainee from wherever they are in their development and proceeding from there
 - Literacy must be a primary focus for assessing developmental education needs

Ensure accurate, meaningful and transparent data on use of funds, outcomes and labor market demand information

Best Practice: Career Pathways

Career pathway systems can provide a comprehensive policy and practice framework to address many workforce development priorities. Career pathways target regional labor markets, focus on employment sectors, and seek to meet the interdependent needs of both businesses and individuals. The ultimate goal is for pathways to provide a seamless system of career exploration, preparation, and skill upgrades linked to academic credits and credentials, available with multiple entry and exit points, including middle school, secondary school, postsecondary institutions, adult education, and workplace education.¹⁹

A Model for a Career Pathways System, Commonwealth of Virginia²⁰

Among other strategies, the Commonwealth has elected to create a statewide career pathways system as a means for linking its education, workforce and economic development systems at all education and training levels. The comprehensive career pathways system is intended to facilitate the alignment of policies and resources at all levels of government. A systemic approach to the alignment process is expected to expand and connect education and workforce development initiatives, enabling the use all available resources and programs to their greatest effect and eradicate duplication of effort.

The move to a career pathways system follows other major actions the Commonwealth has taken in pursuit of a more effective workforce development system. In 2006, the Governor released strategic plans for both Virginia's economic and workforce development systems. In 2008, the cross-agency Workforce Sub Cabinet was created to coordinate all workforce development efforts across the state. Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs were transferred to the Virginia Community College System.

The Governor's Task Force for Career Pathways System Development was created to develop a strategic plan for the system's implementation. With assistance from Workforce Strategy Center, a nationally recognized authority on career pathways, the Task Force assessed Virginia's current workforce development and education systems. The Task Force concluded that:

- Education and training systems need to be better aligned.
- Connections to the business community and the labor market need to be expanded and strengthened.
- Support services at all levels of education, particularly in community colleges and adult education, need to be bolstered.

¹⁹ Career Pathways as a Systemic Framework: Rethinking Education for Student Success in College and Careers; League for Innovation in the Community College, Phoenix, AZ, 2007

²⁰ Bridging Business and Education for the 21st Century Workforce: A Strategic Plan for Virginia's Career Pathway System; Governor's Task Force on Career Pathways System Development & Workforce Strategy Center; December, 2008

- Enrollment in and access to postsecondary education need to be increased.
- Education and training need to become more rigorous to meet the skill demands for 21st century careers.

Major elements of the strategic plan include:

State leadership and operational framework to support regional action

- Virginia Workforce Council responsible for leading the state's career pathways system initiative
- Create an operational plan for the career pathways system
- Identify opportunities for resource alignment to support the career pathways system

Encourage and facilitate the use of data to strengthen connections to businesses, inform program development and measure success

- Create a labor market information advisory group to keep key partners apprised of current labor market data trends, research and analysis
- Track career pathways system progress and success

Encourage transitions among education and employment systems, programs and services that allow for flexibility at the regional and/or institutional level

- Set policy goal for improving student transitions at all levels and develop indicators of success for meeting this goal
- Create guidelines for strengthening transitions for adult learners
- Establish guidelines to enable the one-stop system to serve as an integral component of the career pathways system.
- Strengthen the roles that registered apprenticeship and lifelong learning can play in advancing transitions

Expand the provision of supportive services, including advising and coaching, to increase retention and completion rates among Virginians enrolled in workforce training and education programs

- Set policy goal for improving access to coaching and advising services to help improve program retention and completion rates
- Establish indicators of success for meeting the goal

Best Practice: Sectoral Employment Initiatives

Sectoral employment initiatives are regional, industry-focused approaches to workforce and economic development.²¹ They improve access to good jobs and/or increase job quality to strengthen an industry's workforce and competitiveness.

Sector initiatives share four elements that distinguish them from conventional workforce programs:

- Intense focus on a specific industry over a sustained time period, customizing solutions for multiple employers within a regional labor market.
- Strengthen economic growth and industry competitiveness by creating new pathways into targeted industries, and toward good jobs and careers. This approach benefits low-income individuals and sustains and creates middle-class jobs.
- Offer the presence of a strategic partner with knowledge of the targeted industry and its companies, linking them with organizations that may include community-based nonprofits, employer organizations, organized labor, community colleges and others.
- Promote systemic change that achieves benefits for the industry, workers, and the community.

A Sectoral Employment Model, Baltimore, MD²²

The BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI) was created to help low-income Baltimore residents access jobs in the city's emerging biotechnology sector. The core element of the initiative is the Laboratory Associates Program, which introduces participants to bio-sciences and trains them in the skills needed to work in a lab environment. The training represents a redevelopment of the career path, creating a streamlined program to prepare workers for these technical jobs for which employers used to require a bachelor's degree.

To ensure participants' success, BTI operates a pre-training program designed to help individuals improve basic academic skills and professionalism before starting the Lab Associates program. In addition, BTI provides career counseling services and partners with other agencies to provide supportive services for its clients. Employers work with BTI staff, providing internships and serving as guest lecturers. Johns Hopkins University is an important partner, hiring about 25 percent of the program's graduates and encouraging other area employers to consider hiring graduates. BTI is a fairly small-scale program, placing approximately 40 graduates per year in jobs.

BTI is located at Baltimore City Community College. BTI has negotiated an agreement with the college to allow program graduates to receive six credits toward a degree in

²¹ National Network of Sector Partners, Oakland CA, 2009

²² Sector Strategies for Low-Income Workers: Lessons from the Field; Maureen Conway, Amy Blair, Steven L. Dawson and Linda Dworak-Muñoz; Aspen Institute; Washington DC; 2007

biotechnology. BTI has also created a customized workshop service to train employers' incumbent lab workers in more advanced skills. These strategies give program graduates a basis from which to advance in the biotechnology field and creates a pipeline of skilled workers for the industry.

Best Practice: Employer/Community College Partnerships

Employers across the country have been very vocal in their need to improve workforce readiness for incoming employees. Many implement in-house programs to deliver that training which can be instrumental in the success of an employee. What we are finding though, is that this training alone may not always result in the level of desired preparedness. However, when an employer engages in full collaboration with an education/training partner, the efficacy of the training greatly improves. In general, the more comprehensive the employer's approach to worker development, the greater the results.

A Model for Employer Engagement in Comprehensive Training Strategies²³

Harper Industries is a construction-focused holding company based in Kentucky. It is committed to training throughout the organization, including both skills-based and workforce readiness training. Harper's basic philosophy for entry-level workers is to hire employees who have a strong work ethic and good interpersonal skills, and then train them in the trade.

Harper Industries prepares students before they become prospective employees through summer internship programs created in partnership with local colleges. Interns learn about the business, and enhance their work ethic and sense of professionalism. Companies benefit by having access to several interns upon their graduation who are ready for work, and students benefit by getting an education with greater work-related context, making them better prepared for the future.

Harper uses a pre-employment assessment tool, called the Predictive Index, which enables the company to hire individuals who are a good fit for the company, as well as for the specific job they are applying for. The company also uses "behavioral-based interviews" which focus on an employee's real-life experiences in problem-solving, conflict resolution, and other important aspects of an employee's readiness for work.

²³ Harper Industries and West Kentucky Community and Technical College; The Ill-Prepared US Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer-Provided Workforce Readiness Training; Jill Casner-Lotto, Elyse Rosenblum, and Mary Wright; The Conference Board; July, 2009; Harper Industries Harper University Course Descriptions and Schedule 2009

Upon joining the company, employees take basic safety training and job-specific technical training. After the first 90 days, they go through their first performance review, which allows supervisors or department heads to spot any skills gaps and, if necessary, recommend remedial training. Employees also participate in career development training to help employees advance in their current job and grow throughout their tenure with the company.

These training plans are adjusted as needed during subsequent annual performance reviews. Many of these training modules are web-based and can be completed from work or home, and cover computer skills, as well as applied skills, such as communications, teamwork, interpersonal skills, and goal setting.

The company was able to provide orientation and safety skills training using in-house experts and its web-based performance management system. However, it lacked the internal staff resources and experience to create a more thorough training and development curriculum in the applied skills. In response, Harper formed strategic partnerships with four local community colleges and an area university to create Harper University, which offers state-of-the-art certification and customized training programs to hundreds of employees. In addition to applied skills, the program offers a broad range of classes, including finance, computer skills, management training, and presentation skills. Courses are taught onsite by faculty of West Kentucky Community and Technical College. Classes are held mostly during work hours and are financed by the company.

Best Practice:

Fully Engaging Work Supports to Ensure Worker Success

The cost of living varies significantly within and across states, but it consistently takes more than full-time earnings from a low-wage job for families to make ends meet.

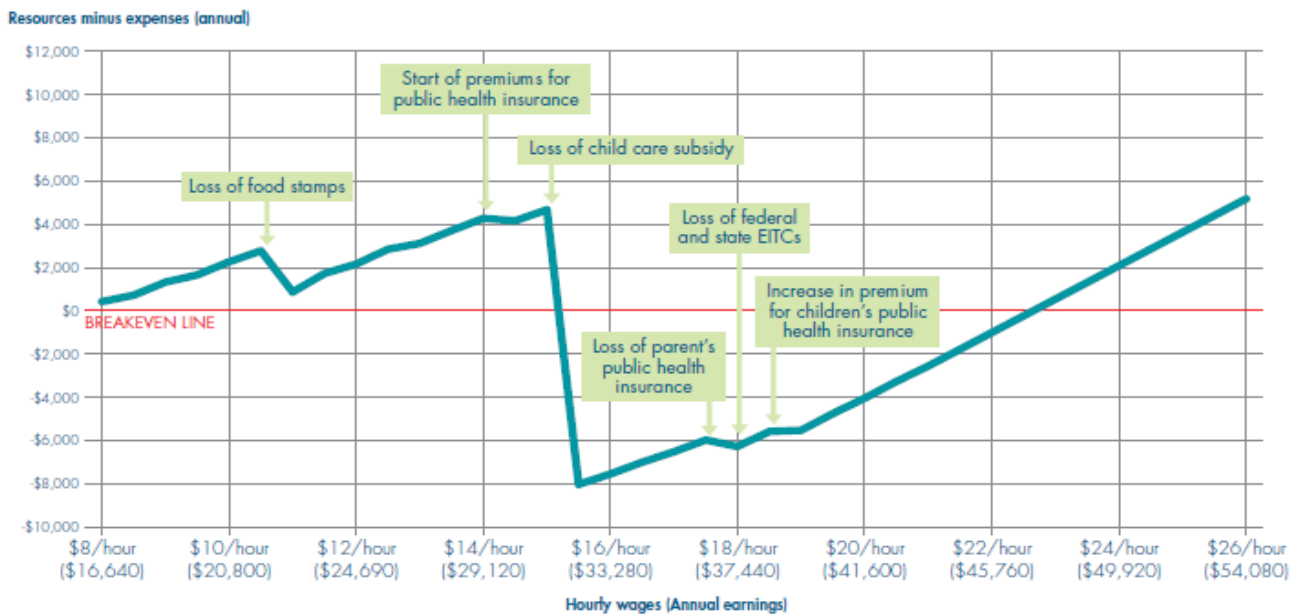
Work supports have the potential to supplement the wages of entry-level workers and allow the worker to support themselves and their family. The eventual goal is for the worker to achieve a self-sufficiency wage – the wage at which they can cover all of their family’s basic needs without outside assistance. Given that entry-level wages in the region are in the \$9 - \$13 per hour range, and self-sufficiency wages for a single parent with two children (one pre-school and one elementary school-age) range from \$20 - \$26 per hour, workers need to be able to advance incrementally in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

To better reward and encourage employment and progress toward a self-sufficiency wage, reforms are needed to expand access to benefits by increasing eligibility limits and covering more eligible families; phase benefits out more gradually to soften or eliminate cliffs; and pay attention to program interaction, so that families do not lose multiple benefits at once.

A primary challenge is that many policies governing work supports wind up creating periodic and dramatic penalties for this advancement. At key points, increased earnings lead to substantial benefit losses. When a small raise leads to a significant drop in benefits – often referred to as a “cliff” – families may be worse off, despite increased earnings.

Figure 2 below illustrates the impact of these “cliffs.” The following graphs illustrate an example of this impact on Chicago – a large metropolitan area with a wide demographic and socioeconomic diversity. Comparable illustrations for Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia would vary based on their particular eligibility policies.

**Figure 2. Net Family Resources on Earnings Increase: Chicago, IL
Single parent with two children, ages 3 and 6**



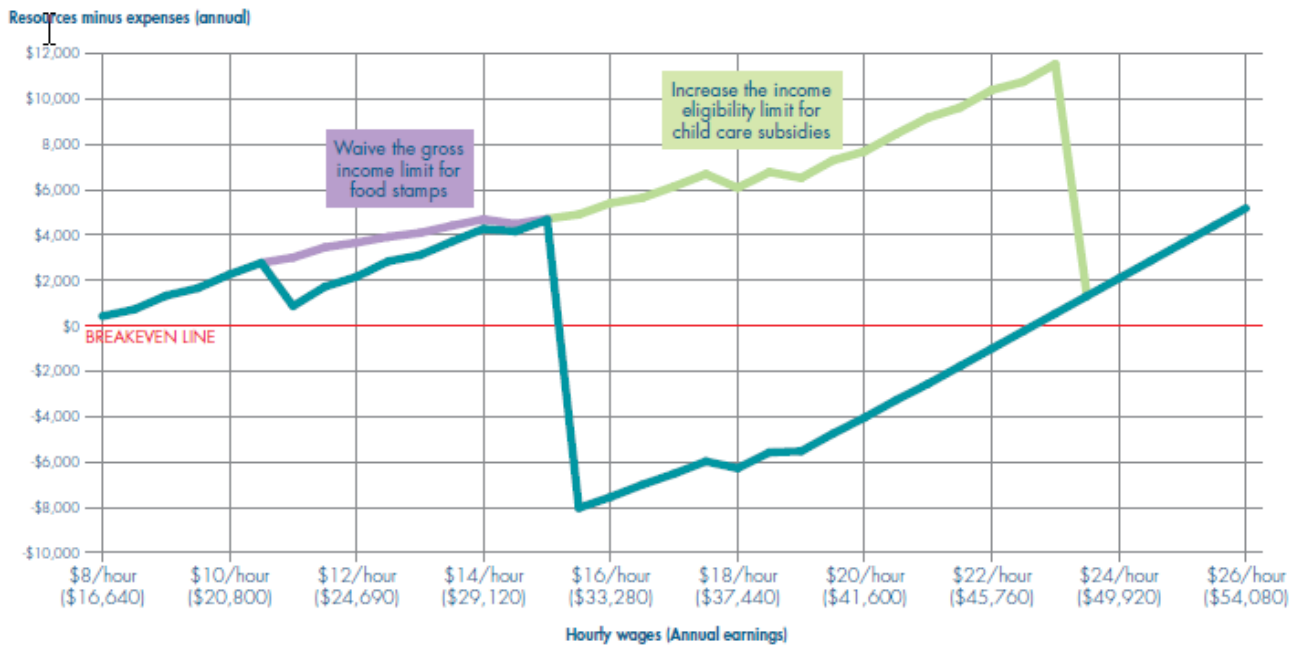
Source: NCCP's Family Resource Simulator, Illinois 2008 <www.nccp.org/tools/frs>. When eligible, the family receives the following work supports: federal and state EITCs, food stamps, public health insurance, and a child care subsidy.

To better reward and encourage employment and progress toward a self-sufficiency wage, reforms are needed to expand access to benefits by increasing eligibility limits and covering more eligible families; phase benefits out more gradually to soften or eliminate cliffs; and pay attention to program interaction, so that families do not lose multiple benefits at once.²⁴

States and localities have the option of altering work support policies to address this problem. Figure 3 below illustrates the potential impact of policy changes that would lessen the harm to the family wage earner:

²⁴ Making Work Supports Work; National Center for Children in Poverty; March, 2009

Figure 3. Impact of Hypothetical Policy Reforms: Chicago, IL
Single parent with two children, ages 3 and 6



Source: NCCP's Family Resource Simulator, Illinois 2008 <www.nccp.org/tools/frs>. When eligible, the family receives the following work supports: federal and state EITCs, food stamps, public health insurance, and a child care subsidy.

Ensuring Mobility and Advancement Opportunities: Seedco/EarnMore, New York NY²⁵

Federally-funded workforce development programs are largely driven by their short-term initial job placement and six-month retention measures. As a result, while these programs allow many job market entrants the opportunity to get a first job, the workers rarely experience subsequent gains in advancement or earnings.

Working within the realm of publicly funded workforce programs, Seedco sought to develop pragmatic incremental solutions to creating career advancement opportunities for a wide range of workers through its Welfare-to-Work (WtW) and One-Stop contracts. Seedco's EarnMore pilot program explores a new approach to scalable career advancement programming. It employs an alternative career advancement program model, offering intensive career coaching services and leveraging labor market services available in the community.

In order to maximize EarnMore's impact and minimize its costs, Seedco's pilot program

²⁵ Career Advancement: From 'Work First' to 'Worker Mobility'; Emma Oppenheim and Ben Seigel; Seedco Policy Center; December, 2008

seeks to utilize the services that already exist to serve disadvantaged workers. Early results suggest that career advancement strategies can produce real gains for a broader range of low-wage workers, at a lower per-capita cost, than is currently achieved by existing career advancement programs.

Enrollment in EarnMore is open to workers of all educational and skill backgrounds and career interests. To serve this broad spectrum of low-income workers, Seedco's model considers each participant's skills, needs, and goals in the development of career and services plans. The core features of Seedco's pilot model of career advancement include:

Expansive enrollment allows Seedco to target a broad range of workers. The only enrollment requirements are that participants must have been working for at least six months and earn \$14 per hour or less. Seedco systematically reaches out to workers who were served through its TANF and WIA-funded workforce programs, and those account for about one-third of the participants.

Tailored services allow clients to pick the advancement-oriented activities that best meet their needs. EarnMore acts as an information and referral network, combining resources into a package that works for each client, including community college and nonprofit-based education and training courses that are generally the same as those offered to all students. As a result, EarnMore participants enroll in a wide variety of career advancement-oriented services.

Career coaching is the key to Seedco's advancement model. Coaches based at three community organizations work with each participant to develop a personalized advancement plan, and then help participants put their plans into action. Career coaches help plan and implement a career strategy and select appropriate service options. In addition, the coach offers career training on topics such as how to negotiate with employers for better wages or hours.

Employer partnerships allow Seedco to target industries and employers that offer better opportunities for participants. EarnMore works closely with employers to identify upcoming job openings and requirements for workers. Seedco also works with employers to place new entry-level workers from Seedco's TANF and WIA programs in positions left vacant by advancing workers. In addition, Seedco leverages its free business services to demonstrate to companies the bottom-line benefits of promoting internal advancement.

Example: Seedco forged a strong partnership with an online grocery delivery company, FreshDirect, to help participants get their commercial driver's licenses (CDLs). The company, which hires many of its entry-level workers from Seedco's TANF and WIA workforce programs, has an ongoing need for drivers with CDLs. With Seedco's encouragement, FreshDirect agreed to pay its drivers who attained provisional CDLs a bonus of \$220, and those who attained their permanent CDLs an additional \$500 bonus, and \$1 per hour raise. Seedco arranged with the training provider to give permit training to interested workers.

Customized training is sometimes developed in partnership with employers and training providers to help fill crucial gaps in the available education and training services. In its first year, EarnMore worked with its training and community partners to organize groups of participants to take part in short-term trainings in fields typically not supported by current programs, such as guest services and hospitality, commercial driving, and hazardous materials safety.

Preliminary Outcomes

Since its launch in July 2007, the EarnMore pilot has shown promising results. The program operates at about \$2,000 per participant and about \$5,000 per advancement outcome. In its first full year of operation, 528 workers participated, of whom 213 achieved employment upgrades. Many participants are still enrolled in program services. Average weekly earnings among clients rose from \$295 a week to \$411 a week. Of those who achieved upgrades, 73 did so through career coaching and supportive services alone — either by increasing the hours they worked, obtaining employer-sponsored benefits, or receiving a pay raise—and the remaining 140 had either enrolled in or completed training.

INTEGRATING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Build on the region's competitive assets to foster inclusive economic growth with a focus on growing our own workforce and promoting innovation.

Overview

Although traditionally, economic development experts have focused on the need to replace declining industries with more competitive ones, there is a more recent focus on occupations and the jobs local workers perform instead of what they produce. This approach not only benefits firms looking for workers with similar skills, but also should help in the design of regional workforce training programs.

The Greater Washington Initiative has identified four top emerging growth sectors in the region:²⁶

- Health care/biotechnology/life sciences
- Business services and information technology
- Alternative energy/clean technology
- Homeland security/defense

An analysis by the DC Workforce Investment Council identified the following key industry sectors in the region suitable for workforce development efforts:²⁷

- Construction
- Hospitality and tourism
- Healthcare
- Banking and finance
- Administrative/technical support
- Green jobs

Given the turmoil in the national and regional economy over the last few years, this kind of analysis and identification of specific sectors should be subject to reconsideration and candid discussions with employers. That being said, however, the diversity of sectors provides tremendous potential for a “mixed portfolio” of skill levels as these industries bring many mid- and higher-skill level jobs.

Several strong local economic development agencies exist in the NCR, as well as organizations that promote the region as a whole. Local jurisdictions generally contribute funding to the Greater Washington Initiative (GWI), which is a marketing effort for the region.

The NCR is well-positioned to attract businesses. As a region, we are able to offer key qualities companies contemplating relocation are seeking: access to a highly qualified workforce, and strong educational opportunities, both at K-12 and post-secondary education.

²⁶ Greater Washington Initiative Regional Report 2009

²⁷ Reingold, Industry Sector Initiative Recommendations: A Report for the D.C. Workforce Investment Council and D.C. Chamber of Commerce, September 2008

Technology, Talent and Tolerance

Richard Florida, former George Mason University professor and author of the 2002 best-seller “Rise of the Creative Class,” put forward the idea that metropolitan Washington, along with cities like Boston and San Francisco, are the preeminent regions for economic development because of their focus on technology, their talented labor pool and their reputations as diverse, welcoming communities.

Dr. Florida’s next book, “The Flight of the Creative Class,” published in 2005, again makes a point that is critical to economic development in this region. He says that many economists mistakenly assume that countries are naturally endowed with a certain amount of human talent. In fact, he argues, human talent is not stockpiled; it flows easily between countries and regions. There is aggressive competition for talent by other countries and regional units within them.

A region like metropolitan Washington, that has already attracted growing industries and talented workers, might be smart to understand that talented workers and development strategies should be shared freely across local borders before they are attracted to a foreign venue. Cities and Counties in the National Capital Region must come to realize that their success might depend on the degree to which they become allies in economic and workforce development because they have many competitors around the globe.

Challenges

One of the challenges that both workforce development and economic development agencies face, is determining what the next big “job market” or “industry demand” will be and being well positioned to capture that momentum. While it is important to analyze growth trends and use them as part of the planning process, there also is a need for systems that are agile enough to respond quickly and effectively to evolving demands. Integrating economic and workforce development planning is an important ingredient in this process.

Regionally, higher-skill jobs are being added and lower-skill jobs are being lost. Yet, a significant segment of the workforce possesses only entry-level skills and requires significant training and preparation to move up to middle or high skill jobs. This underscores the need for workforce and economic development strategies that create opportunities for incremental advancement, and ensure access to the education and training that will allow workers to pursue such advancement.

Within the NCR, consistent state and local strategies are needed to emphasize support of high-wage industries and occupations with accessible career paths, and the development of a substantial pipeline of workers who are prepared with the skills and knowledge needed for those careers.

Although, traditionally, economic development experts have focused on the need to replace declining industries with more competitive ones, there is a more recent focus on occupations and the jobs local workers perform instead of what they produce.

Another challenge in integrating workforce and economic development is the nature of categorical funding associated with many federal workforce programs. In implementing these programs, public agencies often become confined to work within limited or narrow ‘silos,’ serving only eligible individual jobseekers or distressed companies. Many related state programs have similar restrictions.

When economic and workforce development collaboration does occur, it tends to happen primarily at the agency level, and does not necessarily infuse itself into the many organizations involved in implementing the overall goals of the system. In order for full alignment and integration to occur, there must be strong leadership and continual coordination to assure that federal, state and local resources within their purview are focused on carrying out particular economic development prospects and strategies.

A competitive workforce and a robust economic development strategy is critical to the long-term vitality and prosperity of the NCR. While many systems are in place to address individual elements of these challenges, regions around the country are increasingly finding that in order to maximize effectiveness and value, these efforts must be fully integrated, coordinated and focused on common goals.

Task Force Priority

A Regional Strategy for Integrating Workforce Development with Economic Development

Focus economic development strategies on businesses that will generate good jobs and opportunity for advancement and mobility

- Focus on building and sustaining career pathways
- Jobs/industries to look at:
 - Middle-skills jobs
 - Future likely growth industries/occupations

Ensure robust career lattices

Align economic development and workforce development more fully; nest workforce development within the regional growth strategy

Coordinate economic development efforts

- Common agenda and plan, with each organization taking its own initiative in the context of that plan
- Group accountability -- ground rules regarding how players will behave (e.g., two jurisdictions agree not to compete against each other)

Best Practice: Labor Market Information and Planning

Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative Green Consortium

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative (MARC) originally formed to address regional workforce planning around Base Realignments and Closures (BRAC). In July 2009, state labor agencies from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia again coalesced under the MARC banner to pursue a Labor Market Information Improvement Grant made available by USDOL with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The coalition proposed a comprehensive research project to analyze the potential for green jobs opportunities in the NCR. In November, 2009 the Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative Green Consortium was awarded a \$4 million grant to carry out a joint initiative to achieve the following:

- Conduct a survey and additional research to develop estimates of labor market data indicating green job skills requirements and occupational characteristics at the local, state and regional levels
- Estimate the impact on job creation resulting from green technologies and investments
- Conduct workforce gap analysis and develop an approach for matching dislocated and under-employed workers with the emerging green employment opportunities
- Disseminate research and data to inform stakeholders of the occupational skills and growing needs of the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries
- Publish data through multiple modes and formats for various target audiences; include information on careers, competency models, and job guidance
- Create a regional labor market exchange system for green jobs, education and training

Best Practice: Aligning Workforce and Economic Development Agencies

“The most effective strategies for economic development are technology based and regionally focused. It is also clear that the most effective way to provide a real future for people who need jobs is to provide training that is related to the economic future of the region those people live in, for jobs in growth industries.”²⁸

In localities where organizational restructuring has taken place in order to pursue full integration of workforce and economic development, several outcomes have been consistent. These outcomes, listed below, do not tend to be realized when separate agencies merely agree to coordinate their efforts.²⁹

- Improved problem-solving from holistic thinking
- Consistency and alignment in pursuit of one clearly defined and articulated mission

²⁸ Tough Choices or Tough Times; NCEE; 2007

²⁹ Under One Roof: New Governance Structures for Aligning Local Economic and Workforce Development; NCEE; undated

- Greater resources under one roof, savings from administrative efficiencies
- Greater accountability, with staff answering to only one leader in the organization
- Potential to institutionalize desired changes through long-term alignment of organizational culture, business processes, and performance management

In co-locating (but not merging) workforce development and economic development agencies, it is also possible to achieve significant advantages. Furthermore, it gives both sets of staff the incentive and opportunity to break down silos and work collaboratively to meet employer needs. The challenge is often for the workforce development agency to apply creative approaches to packaging services from disparate funding sources, much as they are accustomed to doing in serving jobseekers.

1. SkillSource, Northern Virginia³⁰

The Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board actively engages employers by facilitating access to a wide range of resources and services that are of immediate value to regional employers. The Board's leadership is strongly committed to fully serving both of their key customer groups: jobseekers/workers and employers. In order to increase their capacity to serve employers, SkillSource is located within the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA), while also supporting economic development priorities on behalf of the other jurisdictions comprising the Northern Virginia Workforce Area.

SkillSource Group works cooperatively with the FCEDA and the other economic development offices of the surrounding jurisdictions to attract employers and to provide service to employers in Northern Virginia. SkillSource facilitates employer access to a range of training services using two key strategies. They assemble resources from various funding sources (multiple WIA programs, state training dollars, state tax credits, etc.) and make them accessible to employers in a seamless, accessible package. Training resources include on-the-job training wage subsidies to support regional employers in hiring and training local workers. Incumbent worker training subsidies are offered, utilizing WIA funds under a state waiver. Customized training for new hires is also offered, provided through the WIB's approved training vendors. In addition, SkillSource facilitates employer access to the Virginia Worker Retraining Tax Credit, which is available to employers who provide qualified training for their employees through noncredit classes at Virginia community colleges.

The Center for Business Planning and Development is a partnership among the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board, Business Development Assistance Group, and the Fairfax County Department of Family Services. The mission of the Center is to provide resources and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs and existing businesses throughout Northern Virginia. The original Center is located in Falls Church and additional locations in Prince William and Loudoun Counties are planned. Services include one-on-one counseling to assist prospective entrepreneurs, technical assistance in essential operational and legal procedures, and workshops covering key business planning and start-up skills. The Business Development Assistance Group, which specializes in assisting help small

³⁰ SkillSource Web site; December 2009 interview with David Hunn, SkillSource Group President

and minority-owned businesses, is a key partner. SkillsSource, BDAG, and Fairfax County are currently delivering entrepreneurship services to older dislocated workers through the Growing America Through Entrepreneurship Grant (GATE), funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, through September 2012.

2. Under One Roof, Montgomery County³¹

Montgomery County's Division of Workforce Investment Services (DWIS) was integrated with the Department of Economic Development (DED) in July 2002. The idea behind the merger was that co-location with an effective economic development partner would help DWIS more easily tap additional resources and create new opportunities for the county's job seekers and incumbent workforce. In turn, DED would benefit by being able to broaden its services to address employers' needs related to job training and employment.

Following the merger, a strategic plan and economic development vision for the County was developed. The plan emphasizes two desired outcomes:

- Enhancing the skills and abilities of the local citizenry to meet the workforce needs of local businesses; and
- Matching those citizens with local employers that provide good jobs at good wages.

In the first six months, DED coordinated formal training among staff and board members, and convened a staff retreat designed to break down some of the cultural barriers between the worlds of workforce and economic development. DED and DWIS staff visited each others' worksites, and staff were encouraged to share tools and resources and to include one another in relevant meetings and conferences. It took about 18 months to achieve full integration and true cooperation and collaboration between the two functions. Having the Economic Development director as a WIB member was a major asset in helping the board and staff adapt to new roles within the new department.

Both partners have benefited significantly in terms of their effectiveness in addressing employer needs. DED has access to the most current labor market information. That access, as well as a menu of workforce services to offer businesses, has allowed DED to improve its ability to attract and retain businesses offering good job opportunities. DWIS has also been able to expand its menu of options available to employers.

Similarly, the partnership has resulted in improvements in meeting the needs of job seekers and incumbent workers. The Business Services Team customizes workforce solutions for local employers with a need for trained workers in demand occupations. One example of a customized solution was DWIS' development of a Sales and Service Learning Center within a mall location to provide training and certification to individuals seeking retail, clerk, customer service and other sales and service jobs. The Center has expanded to serve a broad range of sales- and service-focused industries beyond retail, including hospitality, transportation, banking and health care.

³¹ Under One Roof: New Governance Structures for Aligning Local Economic and Workforce Development; NCEE; 2005

In addition to WIA funds, the Montgomery County workforce system receives state funds from the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, as well as funds from the county. County funds (initially about 7% of DWIS' budget) support administrative and infrastructure costs. Combining the departments resulted in significant cost-savings from increased administrative efficiencies.

DWIS remains fully integrated into the DED. In addition to the activities described above, the DED sponsors an awards breakfast honoring both companies and individuals in the workforce and economic development in Montgomery County. DED staff assist in the recruitment of work sites for the 2009 summer youth employment program and in identifying employers for job fairs held by MontgomeryWorks. Since the merger in 2002, County funding has grown to 25% of the DWIS budget.

Best Practice: Focus on Higher Skills and Higher Wages

High Skills, High Wages Strategic Fund, Washington State³²

Washington State created the High Skills, High Wages Strategic Fund to advance the ability of workforce and economic development partners to meet industry cluster needs and increase employment opportunities for low-income populations. Administered by the Washington State Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board, the Fund is using \$850,000 in Workforce Investment Act funds (via a competitive grant process) to support initiatives that meet the following criteria:


- Advance the competitive position of regionally targeted industries
- Identify and promote career pathways
- Narrow cluster-specific skill gaps
- Increase cluster-specific worker training and employment opportunities for low-income populations
- Create clear pathways for low-income populations to access cluster-specific employment opportunities and advancement
- Fill gaps in near-term worker training needs
- Include long-range planning for workforce training and development

The Fund supports both planning and implementation grants. Of particular note is the Fund's focus on middle-skill jobs. It requires grantees to "... have a concerted focus on developing and promoting middle-skill jobs within the targeted cluster." Furthermore, they are required to "include specific strategies for advancing the labor market security, advancement opportunities and earnings of low-income populations and/or those with marginal labor market attachment/

³⁰ 2008-10 High Skills, High Wages Strategic Fund Request for Proposals; Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board; Olympia WA; October 2008

barriers to employment.” In addition, the Fund requires grantees to focus on “narrowing skill gaps in targeted industry clusters by devising ways to prepare workers for entry and progression along career pathways, up-skilling incumbent workers and creating back-fill employment opportunities for new hires [and] retaining mature workers...”

Equally important, the Fund only supports initiatives that can demonstrate full engagement of a range of partners from workforce development, economic development, industry and local education and training providers.



Closing the Gaps to Build the Future marks the first time that the National Capital Region has addressed workforce development at the regional level. In this report, we have taken the first of many steps to better understand the needs and challenges of our workforce and our employers. COG is committed to partnering with regional stakeholders to help facilitate sustained dialogue and turn that discussion into action.

COG is placing a renewed focus on integration, as evidenced by *Region Forward*, a new comprehensive guide to regional planning that pulls together multiple issue areas which are traditionally approached separately. The strategies espoused in this report align with many of the goals within *Region Forward* aimed at increasing the prosperity of the National Capital Region.

Region **Forward**

Closing the Gaps to Build the Future: Improving Workforce Development in the National Capital Region
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments | January 2010