

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Board of Directors
March 11, 2009

Proposed Workforce Competitiveness Task Force
Work Program Overview and Membership

Background

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors adopted the policy focus and priorities for 2009 at its February 11, 2009 meeting, including a focus on Regional Workforce Preparation shown below.

COG's Strategic Plan speaks to economic development and competitiveness and also educational opportunities for children and adults; however, its policy structure and programs have limited focus on education and workforce training. Other regional organizations exist to address specific segments or elements of education and workforce training. Also, historically COG has been an organization of general purpose local governments and has not included elected or appointed school board officials or school administrators. The region's continued economic vitality will require continued focus on education and workforce training, especially in light of aging and special needs populations.

At a time of immense economic pressure, including growing unemployment in the private and public sectors, strengthening the capacity of the National Capital Region to meet current and future employee needs is paramount. Responsibility for workforce education and training is shared by a wide-range of federal, state and local government agencies and other regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions. Ensuring that the region is well-positioned to emerge from the current economic crisis more resilient and competitive will require a better understanding how the workforce systems currently perform and anticipate and prepare for the likely labor market needs of the next five to 20 years. Partners in this effort may include area K-12, community college and higher education institutions; workforce investment boards and councils; and chambers of commerce and business development organizations, among others.

The COG Board will appoint a Regional Workforce Competitiveness Task Force to oversee this effort, develop a work plan and schedule, work with partner organizations, and produce a report and recommendations by December 2009. The Task Force will seek opportunities for new partnerships or regional pilot programs with key federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor.

Recommendation to the COG Board

The Executive Committee recommends that the COG Board of Director establish a Workforce Competitiveness Task Force at its March 11, 2009 meeting to oversee an ambitious but focused work program throughout 2009, culminating in a report and recommendations to the COG Board and economic development, workforce planning, education and training organizations in the National Capital Region at the end of the year. The proposed work program and membership are described below.

Work Program Overview

1. The Task Force will meet in March 2009 to review, modify and adopt a work program framework and schedule to guide subsequent activities and preparation of end-of-year outcomes.
2. The Task Force will focus on four interconnected elements of workforce competitiveness:
 - a. Understanding and aligning regional and local economic development goals and strategies --- *what are the job opportunities for today and the future?*
 - b. Education and training infrastructure, for example K-12, community college, higher education, and lifelong learning --- *how can the region better prepare, retain and re-train workers?*
 - c. Strengthening and improving workforce system coordination and communication --- *how can workforce stakeholder responsibilities be integrated at a regional scale that is aligned with the job market and worker mobility?*
 - d. Creating opportunity out of crisis --- *how can the National Capital Region be positioned to emerge from the current economic crisis stronger and more economically diverse and resilient by focusing on new green technologies and jobs?*
3. COG and the Task Force do not wish to reinvent the wheel, but better understand how you get four wheels to move in the same direction, toward a common destination. Proposed Task Force activities and interim products will include:
 - a. *Listening and learning virtual field hearings* to better understand workforce system needs, challenges and opportunities.
 - b. *An environmental scan to assess who does what*, and how workforce systems can be better aligned to respond to customer needs, now and in the future.
 - c. *Relationship mapping to determine how current workforce system agencies, organizations and stakeholders connect* (or not) and assess opportunities for greater regional collaboration and coordination.
 - d. *Evaluating and pursuing opportunities to build a more cohesive regional workforce development system in partnership with regional stakeholders and key federal agencies*, such as the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, among others.
4. It is anticipated that the above-listed Task Force elements, activities and interim products will come together in periodic updates to the COG Board and outreach events, and culminating in a draft report and recommendations to be shared with area governments and workforce stakeholder organizations, prior to COG Board action in late 2009. It is also anticipated that the Task Force will reach out to senior Obama Administration officials and members of the National Capital Region congressional delegation to explore opportunities to advance a federal-regional pilot workforce partnership.

Task Force Membership

COG proposes to create a twelve member task force to lead the work program. The Task Force will be comprised of both COG member officials and representatives of regional, local and state economic development, education (K-12, community college and higher education) and workforce development and training organizations.

Staffing and Budget

No additional staffing will be required to support the task force and COG will assign existing staff to provide lead support, with other staff incorporated as the work plan moves forward, for example, staff in COG's Department of Environmental Programs may be asked to assist in work plan elements dealing with "green collar" jobs. COG management projects that administrative costs to support the task force will not exceed \$10,000 and can be accommodated in the adopted FY 2009 and FY 2010 budgets. Should the Task Force require additional resources, for example, technical or consultant support, COG management will advise the COG Board and present a recommendation or options.

Task Force Manager

Nicole Hange, policy coordinator

Task Force Director

David Robertson, executive director

Next Steps

The COG Board Chairman will appoint members to the task force in mid-March 2009. Following COG Board action, the Workforce Competitiveness Task Force will hold its kickoff meeting in April to review and adopt its work plan and schedule. The Task Force will complete its activities and issue its report and recommendations by the end of 2009.