

Atlanta BeltLine EAG Human Capital Committee Meeting Notes: October 31, 2011

Present: Deborah Scott/Kay Wallace STAND-UP
Derrick Duckworth, Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce
Katina Raines, GA Dept. of Labor
William Teasley, Atlanta Education Fund
Calvin Hill, Fulton County Workforce Development Agency
Shirley Harris, Atlanta Workforce Development Agency
Angele Harris, New Hope Enterprises
Marc Parham, Atlanta Urban League
Dameon Daniels, The Center for Working Families, Inc.
Rob Brawner, Atlanta BeltLine Partnership
Elke Davidson, Facilitator

Introduction

As several of the group members were participating for the first time, Rob Brawner from the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership began the meeting with a general overview of the goals and structure of the Employment Advisory Group initiative (see attached). Elke Davidson then gave an overview of the goals for the meeting, including the following:

1. Discuss and confirm pilot projects in targeted employment sectors (health care and/or construction).
2. Discuss how to move from *description* to *analysis* to *recommended action* in terms of the existing workforce development system. What approaches (change in recruitment strategies, change in training content, enhanced coordination among programs, enhanced communication between programs and BeltLine businesses, etc.) make the most sense given our general goals and targeted sectors?
3. Generate questions for up-coming focus groups with BeltLine businesses.

Pilot Project(s)

The group began with a discussion of the two proposed targeted sectors for pilot projects. The group agreed that the **health sector** was an important first pilot, as there are several large health-care institutions around the BeltLine, including Piedmont Hospital, Atlanta Medical Center, Morehouse Medical School, the VA Hospital that is moving from East Point to Ft. McPherson, and others. However, the discussion expanded beyond *health-care services* into other health related arenas. At the end of the day, the group decided to focus on the following health sectors:

1. **Health care providers:** The group wants to focus on entry-level jobs that are at the bottom of identified career ladders and can serve as a jumping-off point for residents seeking to grow in a health-related field. For example, New Hope Enterprises focuses its training exclusively on *Certified Nurse Assistants* (CNAs). A CNA is an entry-level position that requires 4 weeks of training; the New Hope program includes both technical and soft skills (i.e. workforce preparedness). The group is interested in asking local health-care businesses – as well as pursuing state and national sources of data like the GA and federal Dept’s of Labor, trade associations in the medical field, etc. to identify current and future trends in hiring.
2. **Environmental health:** Dameon Daniels from the Center for Working Families, Inc. reported that they are seeing a coming trend in federal funding for training in environmental health remediation jobs like lead abatement and asbestos removal, particularly from the EPA. The group is interested in confirming this through research on federal funding and sectoral projections around job growth.
3. **Health Information Technology/Health Infomatics:** William Teasley from the Atlanta Education Fund pointed out growth in health IT and health informatics jobs. He reminded that group that there are state and federal initiatives supporting growth in this arena linked to the computerization of patients’ medical records. Elke reported that Year Up, another organizational member of the Committee, is developing a training program with GA Perimeter College around health IT as they have identified it as a growth field for their students. The group agreed to explore this option as well.
4. **Biotech:** This area was raised because of the biotech focus at Ft. McPherson, as well as recent state-level efforts to grow the biotech industry in Georgia. It remains an area of interest, but will need more background research to confirm its suitability in terms of training required and growth potential.

Group members identified several additional issues for consideration:

- **Georgia Economic Council:** This could be a resource for trends in state economic development policy as well as employment data.
- **Entrepreneurship:** The Urban League includes support services for home-based and other entrepreneurs in their workforce development efforts, and counts these new businesses as jobs. Does the EAG want to address this issue as well?
- **Short/medium/long-term jobs:** The Committee needs to look at jobs that require a *short amount of training* (i.e. New Hope’s 4 week CNA training), a *medium amount of training* and a *long amount of training*. The pilot should be developed with an eye on both entry level and more advanced positions, with appropriate training attached

- **Programs should be tailored to address the needs of a range of populations:**
 - a. *Hard to place candidates with barriers to employment:* Barriers could include prison records, drug and alcohol issues, lack of basic academic skills, lack of child-care, lack of transportation, etc.
 - b. *Candidates with need for training:* High, medium or low levels of training.
 - c. *Candidates with no need for training but who could benefit from matching and placement services:* Candidates who are ready to work from both a soft and hard-skills perspective.
 - d. *Candidates who are already in jobs but would benefit from growing within their field:* Whether the candidates are underemployed or merely looking to grow within their field, programs should be explored to address the already employed as well.

The group next discussed the possibility of developing a pilot project in the **construction sector**. The group acknowledged several built-in difficulties in this area. Unlike the health-care institutions physically located around the BeltLine, the construction companies that are currently – and in the future will be – working around the BeltLine might be located near the BeltLine, in the city of Atlanta, in the metro-region, throughout the state and possibly throughout the nation. Identifying employers to target will therefore be difficult, as will identifying appropriate construction companies to populate our focus groups.

However, even given this challenge, the group felt strongly that we need to pursue a pilot in the construction sector. The bulk of the public dollars from the TAD will be going to constructing the BeltLine. In addition, Kay Wallace from STAND-UP identified a range of adjacent, large-scale and publicly funded construction projects that will take place over the next several years, including but not limited to:

- Renovation of Fort McPherson
- Construction of the multi-modal transit hub in downtown Atlanta
- New international hangar at the airport
- Downtown street-car project

- Better Building Challenge – green retrofits of commercial buildings in the downtown core
- Emerald Cities green retrofit project for MUSH buildings (medical, universities, schools and hospitals)
- City of Atlanta residential retrofit project funded by DOE

Given all these critical projects – and the potential jobs they represent – the group committed to developing a pilot in the construction sector. Kay Wallace presented the group with the flow-chart STAND-UP has developed tracking the different training and placement paths that targeted populations can take towards jobs and careers in the construction field, and the group agreed that we should develop such a visual aide to describe our pilot efforts once the programs have been designed.

In addition, Shirley Harris described a training program the AWDA has already developed and implemented in partnership with ABI focused on construction. Topics included *OSHA, Hazmat, Heavy Equipment* and *horticulture/landscaping*. It would be useful to review this program and assess actual data re: job placement for program participants while developing the construction pilot.

Finally, the group identified two additional issues that would likely impact whatever pilots we developed:

1. **Legal barriers:** Certain jobs in both the health-care and construction fields won't hire applicants with criminal backgrounds *unless they have specific insurance to cover this defined risk*. Group members requested information on who provides this insurance, its cost and acceptance among identified employer groups.
2. **City of Atlanta Jobs Policy:** COA is currently considering a jobs policy that would require 1.5% of all capital budgets for publicly-funded projects be set aside for workforce training and job placement efforts. If passed, this fund could provide important support for the efforts of the EAG.

Performance Measures/Evaluation

The group had a spirited conversation about the importance of identifying the metrics used to evaluate our efforts, and the methods developed for tracking these outcomes. Again, the group emphasized the importance of developing outcomes for multiple

groups, including *new hires, existing workers that move up the job ladder*, and looking at both *jobs that require training/employees that receive training and direct placements*. Katina Raines from the GA Dept. of Labor recommended working with DOL's Marketing Career Centers which may have data clustered at a more targeted level of analysis.

The group also emphasized the need to identify a time frame for defining success: if a resident is trained and placed but doesn't have the job for more than 6 weeks, is that considered successful? Looking at national models, New Hope Enterprises uses the STRIVE model which looks at a **2 year time frame, including training, placement and employment**. **Within this 2 year time frame, New Hope (and other groups) look at 60, 80 and 180 day milestones for tracking and assessment**. Finally, group members raised the issue of *verification*: how do we know that the job numbers that employers report are true?

In addition, the group engaged in a debate about the *geographic focus* of our efforts. Currently, the boundaries are set at ½ mile stretching from each side of the path of the BeltLine, for a total 1 mile band around the corridor; census tracts with a minimum of 50% of their population in this donut are included. This framework was adopted because it tracked the framework used to convene and manage the BeltLine study groups. The group encouraged a reassessment of this framework, perhaps expanding it.

The group considered developing a *several tiered system* for providing services and tracking outcomes. The first and primary tier would be residents from the identified BeltLine neighborhoods, second would be city of Atlanta, third would be Fulton County, and fourth beyond Fulton County. This would be important to increase our chances of success (i.e. any job generated around the BeltLine, regardless of who takes it, becomes a measure of success), as well as to align with the geographic focus of existing workforce development programs.

Finally, the group pointed out that low-income populations tend to be extremely mobile, making it difficult to track success over time.

Pilot Project(s) Next Steps

The group next identified the core elements of the pilot projects – organizing elements that represent the skeleton of each effort, and around which programs, incentives, partnerships and policies will cluster. The key elements include

1. **Identifying employers:** Address challenges with existing data describing businesses around the BeltLine (i.e. business license). Build partnerships with large-scale employers (GA Power, Piedmont, Atlanta Medical, Morehouse Medical, Wells Fargo, Whole Foods, etc.).
2. **Identifying key job categories:** This will involve working with local businesses, local/state/federal data, trade association data, etc. to identify the jobs with growth potential we are interested in training, placing and tracking.
3. **Recruitment:** Strategies linked to identifying key populations both geographically and by characteristic (income level, hard to place, recent high school graduates, mid-career, etc.), and designing programs and policies to link them to training and placement pipelines.
4. **Training:** Strategies linked to existing training programs, new training programs, revised training programs, creation of partnerships between training programs, etc. Issues include quality assurance, funding, links to employers, etc.
5. **Addressing barriers:** Barriers include but are not limited to prison background, drug and alcohol issues, remedial education needs, child-care, transportation, etc. How do we build up-front programs and on-going support to address these issues that can work against stable employment for hard to employ populations?
6. **Matching/placement:** For both candidates that do and do not come through workforce training programs, strategies linked to job matching and placement.
7. **Measurement:** What metrics do we use? Number of candidates completing training? Number of candidates employed (BeltLine/COA/Fulton Co./other)? Length of time employed? Measurement linked to *self-sufficiency* (employment as a proxy for financial sustainability – can we assume if one then the other? Household income – can we parse what is a function of new/higher-income households vs. increases in income of existing households)? Other?

8. **Retention:** Linked to *measurement* – we need to identify the time frame we will use for measuring retention. National models (i.e. STRIVE)? Other?

The group next addressed the issue of *data sources* – where will we get the information necessary to target employers, training activities and measurement issues? The group focused primarily on health services in this discussion; potential group member links are identified as well. Sources include but are not limited to:

Health Care:

- Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (**K. Raines, Dept. of Labor**)
- State of GA Labor Statistics (**K. Raines, Dept. of Labor**)
- Federal Reserve Bank

Environmental Health

- Environmental Protection Agency (**D. Daniels, TCFWFI**)
- HUD
- Centers for Disease Control

General

- Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (**W. Teasley, AEF**)
- Atlanta Development Authority
- National think tanks focused on employment issues (**Kay Wallace, STAND-UP**)

Focus Groups

The group finished the meeting with an initial brainstorm of questions for focus groups we will be developing for Atlanta BeltLine businesses. Questions included but are not limited to the following:

1. Employment needs over time: numbers of new employees needed, skills needed, projected salary levels, jobs with ladders, new job categories, etc.
2. Importance of *soft-skills training*?
3. Issues related to criminal backgrounds: do you hire? under what conditions do you hire? what has been your experience with employees with criminal backgrounds?

To-Do List for Human Capital Committee

The following items have been identified as “next steps” to be initiated and potentially completed before the next committee meeting:

- Investigate local, state, federal, trade association, think tank and focus group data to identify current and future hiring trends (projected growth, low/med/high level

training req's, living wage, job ladder, etc.) to focus training and placement activities in health care, environmental health, health IT, biotech and construction.

- Coordinate with TCFWFI around environmental health job growth and training activities.
- Coordinate with key stakeholders to secure data around hiring trends in construction (STAND-UP, Ponce City Market, local and nat'l trade associations, etc.).
- Investigate new COA jobs policy with 1.5% of project costs committed to training. If passed, will this be a funding source for EAG's efforts?
- Coordinate with Dept. of Labor's Marketing Career Centers for data, recruitment and training activities.
- Coordinate with Dept. of Labors Dept. of Statistics for data.
- Investigate STRIVE model for tracking workforce development/placement efforts. Are there other models (locally/nationally) that serve as best practice? What timeframe and tracking model makes most sense for EAG?
- When targeted jobs are selected, assess current workforce development system (see matrix) to determine proper recommendations re: coordination, revision, new program development etc. to create pipelines and trained workforce.
- Expand set of questions from Human Capital for focus groups.
- Link to existing workforce development coalitions (i.e. Promise N'hoods, Emerald Cities, etc.) – how to leverage those efforts in support of the BeltLine EAG?