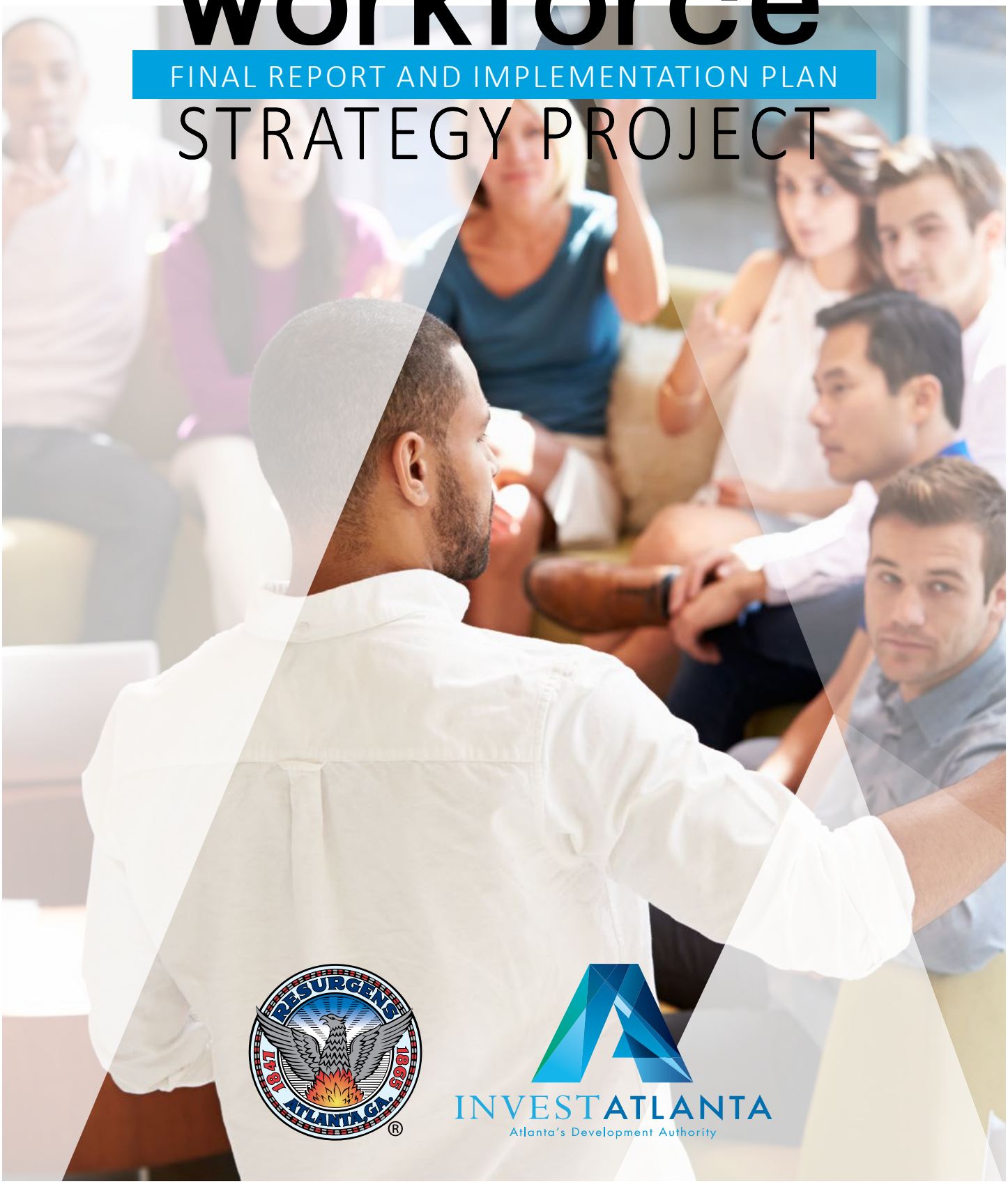
workforce

FINAL REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STRATEGY PROJECT



INVESTATLANTA
Atlanta's Development Authority

Submitted by

Maher & Maher
Investment Advisors for Talent Development

July 31, 2014

Mayor Kasim Reed

“Today’s competitive global economy demands a prepared and well-trained workforce,” said Mayor Kasim Reed. “A workforce development agency that can support our city’s economic growth with programs, resources and initiatives that will put our residents on the pathway to employment is critical to our financial well-being. This plan gives us a roadmap to maximize existing opportunities and expand efforts to develop a 21st century workforce.”

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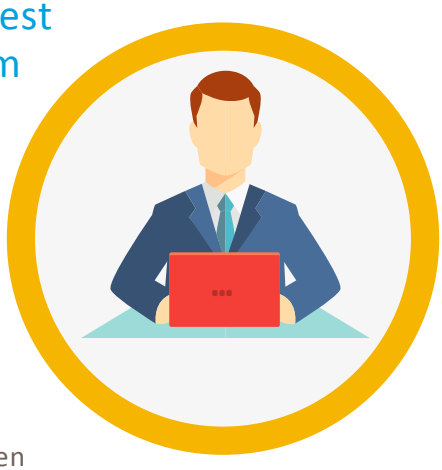
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Introduction and Project Objectives

In August 2013, after a competitive process, Maher & Maher was awarded a contract by Invest Atlanta for the review of Atlanta's Workforce Development Agency (AWDA), with the specific objective of identifying a set of recommendations for reforming AWDA and its efforts to meet the workforce development needs of the City and its residents. We were charged with doing research, conducting personal interviews and focus groups, identifying best practice approaches that could make the AWDA more responsive to the needs of the City, and to formulate an Implementation Plan from which our recommendations could be activated.

The overarching objective of this project was to create a plan to align the City's economic development and workforce development strategies. A foundation of Atlanta's economic development strategy is to be increasingly globally competitive. As is stated in that Strategy, "The types of industries Atlanta wants to retain and attract require higher levels of training and education. Invest Atlanta should work with the Atlanta Public Schools system and… Workforce Development program, and… team with the City's workforce investment board and area workforce training institutions to help facilitate what Invest Atlanta's stakeholders need to be competitive in a local and global competitive environment."



In our work for the federal government and in states, regions, and cities around the country, we regularly see a significant disconnect between economic development strategy and workforce development systems, a disconnect that often extends to the educational system as well. Therefore this project seeks to address the need to bring educational institutions (K-16) into alignment with workforce and economic development efforts.

While there is certainly some collaborative activity around short-term projects and objectives, our research in Atlanta confirmed that the City's economic development, workforce development and educational systems are not currently working collaboratively, and in a systematic manner, to set and achieve common, well-defined goals. The recommendations contained in our report provide a framework through which the City can attain this alignment, thereby advancing economic development efforts, bolstering regional economic growth, and improving residents' chances for current and future prosperity.

Workforce Strategy

B. Organization of the Project and this Report

Working collaboratively with Invest Atlanta representatives, we conceived a three phase process, each of which is detailed more fully in this report:

PART I: RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

We have summarized the research activities and other actions taken to help us build a thorough understanding of the current state of workforce development in the City. First, we utilized our knowledge of emerging policy directions and best practice approaches from around the country to write a paper describing the elements of an "Ideal" workforce system, entitled "Building a 21st century Talent Development Organization for the City of Atlanta" (see Appendix A).

We then reviewed numerous documents to determine the general state of the City's workforce system and its current position and role in relation to the larger constellation of economic development and workforce education and training strategies and programs, as well as the regional labor market. We also conducted over twenty formal interviews and had dozens of discussions with regional stakeholders. As a result, we produced the following:

- An analysis of the current state of the performance of the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA) entitled "WIA by the Numbers" (Appendix B)
- Our "Workforce Gap Analysis" report, which reported on our economic data analysis of Atlanta's current labor market and a focus group we conducted on that data (Appendix D)
- A series of "Themes Developed from Interviews, Other Discussions and Performance Research" (Appendix C). These themes were developed from the research and, taken together, define the current state.

PART II: IDENTIFY CHALLENGES AND DEVELOP HIGH-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking the findings ("Themes") developed during the first phase and comparing them to the "Ideal," we identified a list of serious challenges for the City's workforce system. These "challenges" constitute the bridge between our findings and the series of High-Level Recommendations developed to meet the challenges and thereby provide a roadmap to transform Atlanta's system into one that would be focused on understanding and meeting the needs of the City's residents and businesses now and in the future..

The recommendations are built around transforming AWDA and the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) into the foundation of a workforce development system that views WIA resources as "seed funding" for implementing an integrated plan that would develop a continuous talent pipeline to drive regional economic prosperity. Further, aligning AWDA functioning with the City's economic drivers will enable the formation of family-sustaining career pathways that will better serve the City's job seekers.

PART III: COLLABORATE TO "TEST" RECOMMENDATIONS AND DEVELOP A HIGH-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

We then formed a Strategic Workgroup comprised of leaders from the broader community, including business, educational leaders, community organizations and more. This Workgroup validated the recommendations and worked together with members of our project team in formulating implementation plans by which they could be achieved. The separate plans appear in Appendix F, and the more clearly stated integrated plan is in Part III of this report.

The following sections summarize the content of the three phases of the project, and therefore each of the three Parts of this report.

C. PART I: Research and Discovery

The Ideal "21st Century" paper, included in the report as Appendix A, revealed the following key themes that guided much of our work and subsequently evolved into specific recommendations:

THE ROLE OF THE AWDA SHOULD BE ONE OF TALENT PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT – That theme became encapsulated in the following workforce development vision:

> "A workforce system with goals, policies, strategies, processes and activities that are fully aligned with those of the K-16 education systems and local and regional economic development organizations, including Invest Atlanta. By effectively connecting Atlanta residents with career opportunities and related supports, the system provides a talent pipeline that meets the human resource needs of high growth industries in the Metro Atlanta area. The strategic foundation for the system lies with the Workforce Investment Board, and AWDA's continuing mission is to ensure that Atlanta's residents are connected to career pathways that lead to family-sustaining employment opportunities."

THE TWO PRIMARY PRODUCT LINES FOR AWDA WERE IDENTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

- Business and Industry Workforce Development – Evolved into the recommendation to pursue a Sector Strategy operating framework
- Job Seeker and Worker Career Development – Evolved into the recommendation to develop Career Pathways within the targeted sectors

THE STRUCTURE AND STAFF QUALITIES IDENTIFIED AS TYPICAL OF "BEST-IN-CLASS" WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS actually evolved into the recommendations to transform Atlanta's workforce system through significant reorganization, as follows:

- The Atlanta Workforce Investment Board (WIB) must be a strategic and visionary body composed of respected leaders and active champions. The current opportunity to appoint a new WIB Chair should recognize the need to install new private sector leadership with the standing and capacity to lead transformational change. A WIB Executive Director should be hired to focus on implementing the Board's vision, among other strategic leadership functions. (Appendix D contains "Recommended Leadership Characteristics" of the new Chair.)
- A Chief Operating Officer or similar staff member would report to the WIB Executive Director, and would be charged with overseeing day-to-day program operations and service delivery.
- AWDA staff should be organized according to product lines (employer or job seeker services) and function (e.g., assessment, job placement) – not by individual program silo or funding stream. This facilitates alignment and coordination across the organization and its partners and reduces silo thinking.

The following reports produced during the discovery phase described the current labor market environment and workforce system operation in Atlanta:

"WIA BY THE NUMBERS" – The overarching finding of this analysis of AWDA performance is that the agency is managing to externally imposed performance standards, rather than to meet customer needs. This also results in misrepresenting actual outcomes and the failure to take advantage of program resources that could bring better value to the City, its residents and businesses.

LABOR MARKET DATA-Based Gap Analysis & Focus Group – In addition to providing a snapshot of the Atlanta region's capacity to meet current and future workforce needs in each key industry sector, this Gap Analysis Report highlighted the need to create an ongoing, regionally-based data team to reduce costs, improve timeliness of data and thereby increase its utility, and continuously re-assess the focus on growth industry sectors in Atlanta's regional economy.

Taken together with over twenty formal interviews and dozens of less formal discussions, our findings from this research were compiled into a series of **"Themes Developed from Interviews, Other Discussions and Performance Research"** (Appendix C). Overall, we found that:

The organization, operations and performance of the current Atlanta workforce system stand in opposition to the "Ideal" system qualities laid out early in the project.

D. PART II: Challenges and Recommendations

Comparing the themes with the ideal led to development of a lengthy list of challenges, and corresponding recommendations were assembled in response. The overarching challenge is clear: No significant aspect of the WIB's/AWDA's workforce development policy process, operational structures, program design, or partner relationships reflect the realities of operating a value-added workforce system in the context of a global or even a regional economy.

The WIB and AWDA are at a crossroad where a new structure, new leadership and enhanced accountability are vital. The current vacuum in leadership of the WIB and within AWDA must be filled before alignment with economic development and education or enhancement of services can be achieved. If there is full commitment to the vision and system of services described in the final four recommendations, then implementation of the first two recommendations is absolutely essential simply to begin to make the major cultural shift needed. Only then can the City realistically seek non-WIA funding to finance its broader strategic objectives.

In depth discussions of challenges and recommendations is presented in Part II of the report; the following Chart is a very brief summary.

Challenges	Recommendations
#1 and #2: The foundations for the workforce system – the WIB and AWDA – are neither organized nor led to address the challenges and recommendations in this document. The WIB has not considered the potential for an integrated, demand-driven workforce system that is regionally-based and sector-driven. As a result, AWDA manages its resources strictly to achieve performance standards, rather than to compile, understand and meet customer needs.	#1 and #2: Reconstitute and reorient the WIB to fulfill its strategic policy role. Institute new leadership by appointing a WIB Chair and filling a new WIB Executive Director position with individuals eager and capable of leading the needed change. Adopt a formal vision and strategic plan as included herein to drive Implementation of the recommendations. Reorganize AWDA to utilize a functional rather than program-oriented approach to service delivery and provide for accountability through the WIB and its Executive Director.
#3 and #4: AWDA currently operates a number of disconnected, non-aligned programs. There is no perceivable foundational service philosophy, principles or framework; little strategic thinking about or attempts to fully assess and meet aggregated customers' needs; and programs are administered without systematic leveraging of relationships with key partners, even though partnership opportunities appear to be plentiful.	#3 and #4: Atlanta should establish a guiding principle of building the City's talent pipeline in alignment with regional growth industry sectors, and in partnership with key employers and education and training providers. AWDA's operations would then be organized around a sector-based service delivery strategy and driven by training solutions creating career pathways for AWDA customers.
#5 and #6: The five WIA programs in Metro Atlanta do not currently share industry information or employer data, yet they all seek to provide services to employers and place their participants in jobs within the region. This results in duplication of effort, lost opportunities and less than optimum services to regional business customers.	#5 and #6: The City should spearhead development of a system to share real-time economic, occupational and industry information, and organize business services, according to sector, across the five Metro Atlanta regional workforce areas.

Build Support

Benefiting

The business community, job & career seekers

Collaborate

E. PART III: Collaborate to Implement Recommendations

In order to build support and gain insights from key regional leaders for our recommendations, we formed a Strategic Workgroup to collaborate with our Team in developing our final recommendations. A full-day Strategic Work Group meeting was attended by approximately forty stakeholders in April, and a second meeting was held in June. After being briefed on our Draft High-Level Recommendations, stakeholders from across the region contributed their knowledge and guidance by providing substantial input in developing an implementation plan to achieve each of the recommendations. The process each group followed, the key perspectives gained in the sessions, and a plan matrix tied to each recommendation are included as Appendix F, and a more cogent Integrated Plan is presented in Part III of this Report.

Achievement of recommendations to re-organize and re-focus the Atlanta WIB and AWDA will allow the new WIB and AWDA leaders to work effectively with this Plan. However, our other recommendations (numbers 3 through 6) are all very closely related and interdependent, and all require working closely with partners from across the region to create regional approaches to talent development. Given the interdependencies and regional focus, there is a need for a regional consortium to be built around the foundation of the Work Group convened by the project in April and again in June. Support, engagement and leadership will be required from these stakeholders to fully implement the recommendations advanced here, and a strong, regional collaborative with this group as its core is, in our opinion, the best way forward. It is, we believe, a critical initial step toward achieving the world-class workforce system the City of Atlanta desires.

It is important to recognize that the recommendations in this report were shaped by the briefings, consultations and other research conducted, and therefore represent not only our recommendations, but the considered opinions and values of the broader regional community – business, education, workforce and political leadership in and around Atlanta. It is our hope and intention that such a broad, consultative process offers the City of Atlanta and its residents the best opportunity to attain transformation and change – and gain the benefits it needs and desires from this initiative.

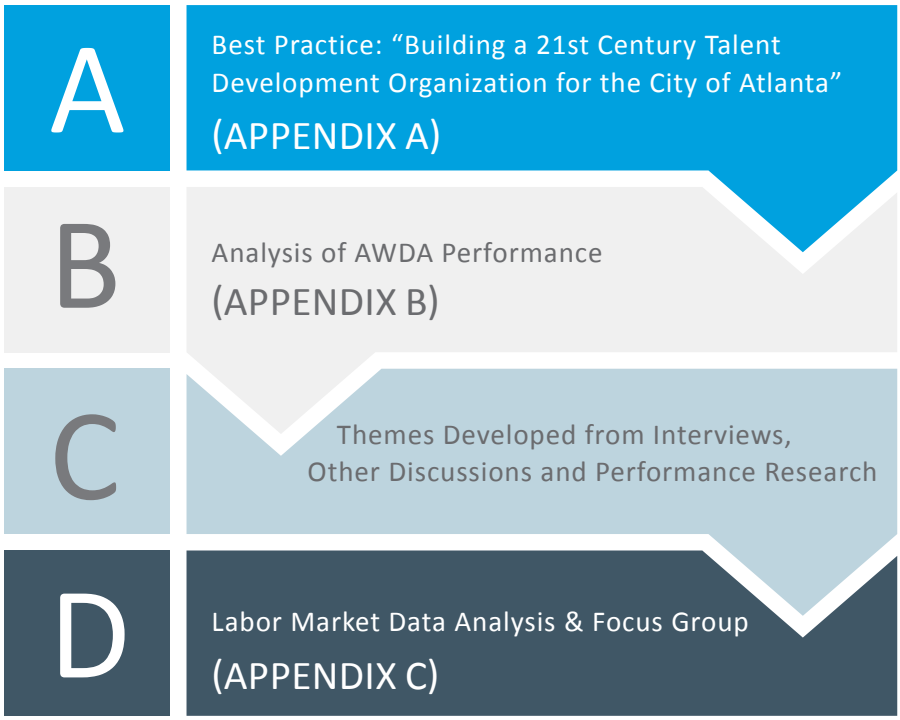
To achieve the system recommended in this report, it will be vital to engage business-oriented groups like the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Invest Atlanta, and the Atlanta Committee for Progress –as well as the WIB itself – to bring enough influence and expertise to bear to make the substantive changes that will benefit the business community as well as job and career seekers. Implementation will also require marshaling the political capital necessary to focus seriously on achieving the largely regionally-based solutions offered in this report.

> The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.
>
> Michelangelo

PART I. BACKGROUND & RESEARCH FINDINGS

Following our engagement with Invest Atlanta, and beginning in August of 2013, we reviewed numerous documents and reports related to the operation of the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA), as well as strategic plans and other documents from partner organizations, and the Atlanta and regional job markets. Importantly, we also reviewed documents, reports, and plans related to other workforce and economic development agencies in the Atlanta Metro region, and had regular communication with various stakeholders in the City of Atlanta and throughout the Metro region.

The intelligence gathered, combined with the best practice knowledge we have accumulated through working with high-performing workforce development organizations at the state, regional, and local levels, was used to guide our design of an ideal framework for a reformed workforce development system to serve the residents and employers of Atlanta. That framework was articulated in our special report: "Building a 21st Century Talent Development Organization for the City of Atlanta," which is further discussed below, along with our detailed research that formed the basis for the recommendations here. Our detailed research is discussed below under the following categories:



A. Ideal best practice system:

"Building a 21st Century Talent Development Organization for the City of Atlanta"

"Building a 21st Century Talent Development System for the City of Atlanta," included here as Appendix A, presented our initial recommendations for organizational characteristics, structure, and staffing functions. The Report pre-dates our assessment of Atlanta's existing workforce development agencies, programs, and current operation; as well as our determination of the specific needs of the City's residents and employers. Nevertheless, as we moved forward with Atlanta-based research, it became clear that key elements of the framework discussed in the Report would be highly relevant in the Atlanta workforce development context. The following key themes from that report evolved into specific recommendations:

The overarching theme going forward should be one of talent pipeline development. That theme became encapsulated in the workforce development system vision developed later on.

FURTHER, THE TWO PRIMARY PRODUCT LINES FOR THE SYSTEM WERE IDENTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

- Business and Industry Workforce Development – Evolved into the recommendation to pursue a Sector Strategy operating framework
- Job Seeker and Worker Career Development – Evolved into the recommendation to develop Career Pathways within the targeted sectors

The structure and staff qualities identified as typical of "best-in-class" workforce development organizations evolved into the recommendations around Workforce system reorganization:

- The LWIB is a strategic and visionary body composed of respected leaders and active champions.
- An LWIB Executive Director is focused on implementing the Local Board's vision, among other strategic leadership functions, rather than on day-to-day program operations and service delivery. A Chief Operating Officer or similar staff member reports to the WIB Executive Director, and is charged with overseeing operations and service delivery and other supporting functions.
- Staff is organized according to primary product lines (business or jobseeker-focused), and customer-relevant functions, such as assessment and job placement – not by individual program or funding stream. This facilitates alignment and coordination across the organization and its partners and reduces "silos."

B. Analysis of AWDA performance

In assessing the current activities at AWDA, we began by reviewing the Agency's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program performance data. Through our partnership with FutureWork Systems, a workforce development performance management reporting and analysis firm, we conducted a review of the City's Program Year 2012 (July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013) WIA performance data, extracted from the public Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) file released by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.

Many WIA programs across the country are driven by their focus on meeting Federal (WIA) performance measures. While those measures are a necessary factor for program managers to heed, they are not, in and of themselves, a valid measure of the value or impact of services being delivered. In addition, the particular methods employed in tracking and reporting participant progress (who and when to enroll, and to terminate; how long to hold persons in the performance computations, etc.) certainly affect whether measures are achieved on paper. In other words, "managing to measures" (the need to show certain WIA performance outcomes) can become more important than ensuring positive interactions with and results for customers.

THIS MYOPIC FOCUS ON MANAGING TO STANDARDS IN ORDER TO "LOOK GOOD" SO AS TO QUALIFY FOR CONTINUED WIA FUNDING IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IN TWO WAYS:

- **It obscures what is actually happening and being accomplished (or not) in the program; and**
- **It reveals a focus on thinking that WIA funding is the only source of funding services, when it fact WIA funds are and have been declining and should represent only a piece of the funding pie for 21st Century workforce system operators.**

Calculating the value produced by program resources – the value actually received by both system customers, no less the economy in general – is a far different, much more complicated matter than meeting performance measures. Clearly the AWDA meets its performance measures; however, the text and accompanying charts that follow suggest the need to look beyond the Federally-designated metrics to determine the quality of outcomes AWDA produces for its customers.

Following are some of the more important findings from the report, based solely on our analysis of the numbers. When one combines the impact of these findings, ***it is clear that AWDA is managing its programs and reporting protocols strictly to achieve Federal performance standards.*** The full "WIA by the Numbers" report, from which this information is taken, appears as Appendix B.

FINDING 1: Overall, Atlanta met or exceeded all state targets for the nine common measures. Adult and Dislocated Worker performance met, but did not exceed, all but one of the state targets by achieving 80% to 99% of the target. However, Youth performance outcomes show that the program has not served the youth most in need, but rather those most likely to succeed.

TABLE 1: ATLANTA PERFORMANCE – PERCENT ACHIEVED OF STATE TARGETS

	Actual	Negotiated	% Negotiated Achieve
Exiters (Adult)	568		
Served (Adult)	523		
num Adult EER	315		
den Adult EER	449		
Adult Entered Employment	**70.2%**	**71.5%**	**98.1%**
num Adult Retention	362		
den Adult Retention	441		
Adult Retention	**82.1%**	**82.4%**	**99.6%**
num Adult Avg Earnings	$4,865,037		
den Adult Avg Earnings	359		
Adult Avg Earnings	**$13,552**	**$12,500**	**108.4%**
Exiters (DW)	225		
Served (DW)	296		
num DW EER	95		
den DW EER	135		
DW Entered Employment	**70.4%**	**77.5%**	**90.8%**
num DW Retention	103		
den DW Retention	118		
DW Retention	**87.3%**	**88.3%**	**98.9%**
num DW Avg Earnings	$1,554,425		
den DW Avg Earnings	102		
DW Avg Earnings	**$15,239**	**$16,250**	**93.8%**
Exiters (Youth)	424		
Served (Youth)	1,074		
num Youth Placement	221		
den Youth Placement	317		
Youth Placement	**69.7%**	**60.0%**	**116.2%**
num Youth Degree	222		
den Youth Degree	291		
Youth Attain Degree 76.3%	**76.3%**	**70.0%**	**109.0%**
num Lit Num	22		
den Lit Num	52		
Literacy Numercacy	**42.3%**	**40.0%**	**105.8%**

Youth performance exceeded all state targets, which may be explained by the high percentage of in-school youth being served, as detailed in the charts below. Table 2 benchmarks Atlanta against other urban areas of similar size, and Table 3 against other Georgia WIBs. In-school youth programs often achieve higher WIA performance outcomes than programs serving high school dropouts. In the case of Atlanta, it may be significant that only 1.8% of youth participants are dropouts. This is not in line when compared to the nation and other WIA areas in the state, even more so due to the urban nature of the WIA area.

TABLE 2: YOUTH CHARACTERISTICS BENCHMARKED WITH OTHER CITIES

	All School Status at Participation	Out-of-School	**Percent Out-of-School**	High School Drop Out	**Percent Drop Out**
Baltimore Co Office of Workforce Dev.	352	244	69.3%	244	69.3%
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	390	286	73.3%	169	43.3%
City of Phoenix, PHX Workforce Conn.	844	530	62.8%	308	36.5%
Boston Private Industry Council	391	195	49.9%	124	31.7%
San Francisco (SFO)	371	223	60.1%	113	30.5%
All Location	218,585	102,521	46.9%	54,257	24.8%
Office of Economic Development	540	152	28.1%	67	12.4%
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**1,074**	**91**	**8.5%**	**19**	**1.8%**

Out-of-school youth include those that graduated from high school and dropouts. Atlanta served only 8.5% out-of-school youth and 1.8% dropouts; both significantly less than the state and most other WIBs in Georgia.

TABLE 3: YOUTH CHARACTERISTICS BENCHMARKED WITH WIBS IN THE STATE

	All School Status at Participation	Out-of-School	**Percent Out-of-School**	High School Drop Out	**Percent Drop Out**
All Location	218,585	102,521	46.9%	54,257	24.8%
GEORGIA	9,057	3,380	37.3%	2,601	28.7%
Middle Flint (Area 15)	86	86	100.0%	86	100.0%
Coastal (Area 20)	553	335	60.6%	295	53.3%
Southwest Georgia (Area 17)	497	259	52.1%	249	50.1%
Northwest Georgia (Area 1)	434	232	53.5%	217	50.0%
South Georgia (Area 18)	734	368	50.1%	348	47.4%
Atlanta Regional (Area 7)	1,320	756	57.3%	595	45.1%
Cobb County (Area 4)	654	368	56.3%	274	41.9%
Northeast Georgia (Area 9)	468	131	28.0%	103	22.0%
East Central Georgia (Area 13)	184	46	25.0%	39	21.2%
Heart of Georgia (Area 16)	441	100	22.7%	84	19.0%
West Central Georgia (Area 8)	667	190	28.5%	99	14.8%
Dekalb County (Area 5)	795	149	18.7%	111	14.0%
Fulton County (Area 6)	255	118	46.3%	33	12.9%
Macon-Bibb (Area 10)	59	9	15.3%	5	8.5%
Richmond/Burke (Area 12)	240	79	32.9%	19	7.9%
Georgia Mountains (Area 2)	229	26	11.4%	16	7.0%
Middle Georgia (Area 11)	131	10	7.6%	4	3.1%
Lower Chattahoochee (Area 14)	236	27	11.4%	5	2.1%
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**1,074**	**91**	**8.5%**	**19**	**1.8%**

FINDING 2: Based on days in program and carry-overs, it appears that AWDA operators may be retaining participants for extraordinarily long periods of time in hopes that the participants will find jobs, thus exiting with a positive outcome, thereby improving reported "performance". In addition, there were very few new enrollees served in PY '12. In light of funding reductions, the reasonableness of staff vs. services allocation of resources may be a concern.

TABLE 4: FLOW MEASURES BENCHMARKED WITH WIBS IN REGION – ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKERS

	Days in Program Exiters	New Participant	New Rank	Exited	Exited Ranks	Served	Served Rank
Atlanta Regional (Area 7)	634	806	1	1,019	1	2,620	1
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**618**	**190**	**5**	**754**	**2**	**777**	**5**
Cobb County (Area 4)	389	432	4	581	4	830	4
Dekalb County (Area 5)	610	577	2	741	3	2,182	2
Fulton County (Area 6)	541	505	3	225	5	1,137	3

Atlanta had significantly fewer new participants than other WIBs in the region and also served the fewest number of participants. The 754 exiters averaged 618 days in the program, which is somewhat higher than most other WIBs in the Region.

As indicated in Table 5, and in line with Table 4, Atlanta's days in program metric is also significantly higher than other cities, while the number of new adults and dislocated workers is very low.

TABLE 5: FLOW MEASURES BENCHMARKED WITH OTHER CITIES – ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKERS

	Days in Program Exiters	New Participant	New Rank	Exited	Exited Ranks	Served	Served Rank
Boston Private Industry Council	305	230	6	296	6	426	7
District of Columbia	261	569	4	896	2	1,150	3
Baltimore Co Office of Workforce Dev.	578	1,047	2	388	5	1,469	2
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**618**	**190**	**7**	**754**	**4**	**777**	**5**
Office of Economic Development	311	276	5	295	7	480	6
City of Phoenix, PHX Workforce Connection	296	1,144	1	1,206	1	1,897	1
San Francisco (SFO)	300	777	3	817	3	1,071	4

This could indicate overspending on staff vs. services, when compared to other cities, and also compared to prior years, or the area might have underspent in the program year. With so few new Program Year (PY) '12 participants – especially in training – and given only a small decrease in funding, this should be examined.

Even though many WIA areas retain "trainees" in the program in order to wait for a positive termination for entered employment, this is not a best practice approach; and the relative length of time indicates that either the training may not be aligned to demand occupations and/or a lack of attention paid to placing individuals after they complete training.

FINDING 3: Atlanta serves a significant number of adult and dislocated workers with only core services compared to all other WIBs. The percent trained at 58.6% is also much lower than the state average of 78.8%. The WIB should take a hard look at the actual services provided to those shown as "core" to determine whether value is received, or if there are other reasons for retaining so many jobseekers for relatively long periods of time. In the end, the WIB must ensure that resource allocation and programming is done with maximum attention paid to meeting the needs of Atlanta business and jobseeker customers, rather than merely achieving externally-imposed performance standards.

TABLE 6: SERVICE LEVELS FOR ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS BENCHMARKED WITH WIBS IN STATE

		Core	Intensive	Training
GEORGIA	% Exited	4.6%	16.5%	78.8%
Coastal (Area 20)	% Exited	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Middle Georgia (Area 11)	% Exited	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Heart of Georgia (Area 16)	% Exited	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Northeast Georgia (Area 9)	% Exited	0.0%	0.2%	99.8%
Georgia Mountains (Area 2)	% Exited	0.3%	0.6%	99.1%
Northwest Georgia (Area 1)	% Exited	0.1%	1.4%	98.4%
Lower Chattahoochee (Area 14)	% Exited	0.0%	2.4%	97.6%
Macon-Bibb (Area 10)	% Exited	0.0%	2.8%	97.2%
South Georgia (Area 18)	% Exited	0.0%	4.8%	95.2%
Atlanta Regional (Area 7)	% Exited	0.5%	5.7%	93.8%
Cobb County (Area 4)	% Exited	0.0%	6.2%	93.8%
Dekalb County (Area 5)	% Exited	4.0%	8.9%	87.0%
East Central Georgia (Area 13)	% Exited	0.0%	17.0%	83.0%
Richmond/Burke (Area 12)	% Exited	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%
Southwest Georgia (Area 17)	% Exited	0.0%	24.4%	75.6%
Georgia : NEG	% Exited	0.0%	26.3%	73.7%
Middle Flint (Area 15)	% Exited	0.0%	29.5%	70.5%
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**% Exited**	**27.9%**	**13.5%**	**58.6%**
Fulton County (Area 6)	% Exited	0.0%	47.6%	52.4%
West Central Georgia (Area 8)	% Exited	12.2%	61.1%	26.7%

FINDING 4: On-the-job and other occupational training activities are very low when compared with benchmarked areas. This raises questions such as the staff/services distribution, as well as whether the occupations being trained for are aligned with regional focus industries and/or occupations in demand in the region. This is an area of service delivery on which the reconstituted WIB should provide policy guidance to program staff to ensure that program services result in meaningful, family-sustaining jobs for its participants.

TABLE 7: FLOW MEASURES FOR THOSE TRAINED BENCHMARKED WITH WIBS IN REGION – ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKERS

	Days in Program Exiters	Days in Program Exiters	New Rank	Exited	Exited Ranks	Served	Served Rank
Georgia	579	4,778	1	6,983	1	14,000	1
Atlanta Regional (Area 7)	637	756	2	956	2	2,453	2
City of Atlanta (Area 3)	**857**	**57**	**6**	**442**	**5**	**516**	**6**
Cobb County (Area 4)	395	385	4	545	4	755	4
Dekalb County (Area 5)	621	424	3	645	3	1,672	3
Fulton County (Area 6)	585	220	5	118	6	601	5

Atlanta had significantly fewer new participants (57) in training than other WIBs in the Region, leading to questions related to programming and reporting procedures.

The 442 exiters from training averaged 857 days in the program, which is significantly higher than the state or other WIBs in the region. Given the high number of OJTs and short-term occupational training programs detailed in prior years' reports, over two years in program seems very high. The days in program do not ordinarily consist solely of actual time in training, but could include additional time needed to attempt to find employment.

As in Table 5, which benchmarked flow measures against other cities, even though other Metro Atlanta WIA areas may also retain "trainees" in the program in order to wait for a positive termination for entered employment, this is not a productive management practice. Further, the relative length of time trainees spend in the program indicates that either the training is not aligned to demand occupations and/or staff are not assisting customers to find jobs once training is completed. This aspect of service delivery also needs attention by the reconstituted WIB.

Summary of Findings from Performance Reports

While AWDA is meeting federal WIA performance measures, there are a number of factors that, when considered together, strongly indicate that both participation and reporting procedures are managed strictly to meet those standards and are not adding the degree of value that should be expected from a well-conceived, planned and managed WIA program. This is the case whether benchmarked against other WIBs in the Metro Atlanta region, all WIBs in the State, or against a selection of other cities. To sum up, the review determined that AWDA's operations include:

- Extremely long period of time "enrolled" in the program
- Far fewer new participants than comparable benchmarked areas
- Low percentage and number of people receiving training
- High concentration of core services as opposed to intensive and/or training services
- Few Out-of-School/Dropout participants in Youth programs

While Atlanta is hardly the only WIA area in the nation to "manage strictly to standards," this practice detracts significantly from the potential to use program resources in more constructive ways, such as meeting the needs of both customers (job seekers and employers) by concentrating on developing talent to connect to opportunities in the regional job market. At least as important, **it tends to create an insular culture where, since the program is perceived as "meeting its goals," there is little incentive to develop and continually leverage relationships with partners; seek non-WIA funding to meet customer needs; and, indeed, even seek to discover what those needs might be. In a more forward-looking and ambitious environment, meeting those standards would incentivize developing stronger relationships, spending time getting a better handle on both customers' needs, and seeking non-WIA funding to meet those needs.**

C. Themes developed from interviews, other discussions and performance research

Over twenty extensive individual interviews were held with stakeholder representatives from within the City and outside, including workforce and economic development officials and staff, private sector Atlanta Workforce Investment Board members, State WIB and higher education representatives, State and City officials, foundations, and community-based organizations. The objectives for interviews included gaining input and perspectives from stakeholders on Atlanta's current workforce system and informing the vision for an ideal, high-functioning talent development system. Literally dozens of less formal discussions were held with other stakeholders to collect additional information and to cross-check items of interest heard in interviews. Areas of particular focus included:

- Alignment of the workforce system with economic development, business, and education;
- The current workforce system's contribution to Atlanta's economic and community well-being;
- The business community's notion of value provided by the workforce system;
- AWDA and its partners' perceptions of working with each other;
- Benefits, drawbacks, and challenges of regional approaches to workforce development in the Atlanta context;
- Readiness of the current system to transform its organization, roles, and operations; and
- Utilization of AWDA resources.

Several themes developed as a result of those interviews, supplemented by the performance information previously discussed, document reviews, and visits to the AWDA One Stop Center. Taken together, these themes represent our findings and are summarized as the "Challenges" discussed in Part II of this report.

Themes Summary

1. INVEST ATLANTA (IA) AND AWDA DO NOT CURRENTLY SHARE A COMMON VISION FOR THE ROLE OF AWDA IN PROVIDING A TRAINED WORKFORCE FOR ATLANTA BUSINESSES.

- AWDA isn't routinely engaged with the business community outside of weekly job fairs. Discussions indicated that there are key industry sectors where businesses cannot find workers.
- AWDA noted that the type of clientele they work with is typically not suited for higher-skilled jobs. Many clients have background or drug issues. AWDA sees itself as helping people access a first job, rather than getting individuals started on a pathway to a career ladder.
- There is not a strategic relationship or common vision around which IA and AWDA are aligned at present. This also appears to be the case with the other economic development and business organizations in the region.
- There was an emerging consensus that AWDA should focus on economic mobility as a major element in a common vision.

2. ROLE OF THE WIB AND ITS MEMBERS IS TACTICAL RATHER THAN STRATEGIC. THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE WIB APPEARS TO BE WEAK, ESPECIALLY AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR MEMBERS.

- It is clear that AWDA staff guide the Board, rather than the other way around.
- The WIB does not engage in any strategic planning activities to guide its work or the work of the AWDA.
- WIB meetings are largely tactical conversations: reviewing performance measures, examining individual programs, etc. There is little evidence of conversations around how to engage companies more systematically; how to bring greater value to a wider demographic of students/workers; or which other regional partners should be approached to maximize impact.
- Most business members especially are clearly not fully engaged as Board members.

3. AWDA LACKS A VISION OR STRATEGY TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE APPROACH. ALL PROGRAM MANAGEMENT IS PREDICATED ON MEETING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS RATHER THAN ON PROVIDING CUSTOMER VALUE.

- Staff acknowledges they serve whoever walks in the door, and characterize those individuals as generally very low-skilled.
- There are a number of methods employed to ensure achievement of performance standards, even while not fully or accurately reporting program activity. As one example, customers remain reported in the program far longer than most other areas in Georgia or in benchmark cities (as may be seen in

Appendix B), and far beyond the time any meaningful services are provided, in order to accrue a positive termination when a job is eventually found -- whether or not the job was found as a result of AWDA services.

- Employer comments indicated that several industries present opportunities for AWDA to build career pathways, including construction, hospitality, health care, and transportation and logistics. Such pathways would potentially benefit job seeker customers and businesses employing workers in these industries.
- There is no strategy for identifying or serving dislocated workers and very few are served.

4. WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS OVERALL ARE WEAK AND SITUATIONAL; THE PARTNERSHIPS THAT DO EXIST ARE NOT STRATEGICALLY LEVERAGED.

- There were differing views by interviewees on extent of partnership with the K-12 system, with opinions varying from the K-12 representative "almost never attended WIB meetings," to claims that the "relationship is strong." Several attempts to set up interviews with K-12 personnel for this project were unsuccessful.
- The Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) and AWDA relationship is not a strong partnership. Local DOL staff goes to the AWDA One-Stop two days per month to assist with job search and also send over job opportunities for AWDA to post. While AWDA staff does make presentations at Georgia DOL layoff events, AWDA staff indicated there is not much other interaction. Attempts to interview State-level DOL staff were unsuccessful.

- The extent of true engagement with community-based organizations is unclear, even though there is a need to leverage these partners in order to provide a full and effective service continuum, particularly for the most disadvantaged City residents.
- It appears that AWDA has not established effective partnerships to (a) help address drug issues and soft skills; (b) provide more job training opportunities; and (c) design a coordinated "job readiness" effort across partners to provide quality workers to City businesses.
- Although it was reported that the five Atlanta Metro WIA organizations once had quarterly coordination meetings, recent interactions with the other four metro workforce areas have been limited and not strategic in nature.
- Atlanta Tech appears to be the only training provider that receives significant contracts from AWDA. It is possible that other training providers are untapped, including missed opportunities for training funded by partner agencies.

5. THERE IS NO SYSTEMATIC COLLECTION OR REVIEW OF LABOR MARKET INFORMATION (LMI) AND INDUSTRY WORKFORCE DATA INTELLIGENCE; AS ONE CONSEQUENCE, AWDA ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY SEEMS TO BE WEAK AND SITUATIONAL RATHER THAN STRATEGIC IN NATURE.

- There is no evidence or mention of labor market data being gathered or examined by AWDA staff or the WIB. The only mention of LMI in our interviews and other discussions is that AWDA talks with industry representatives that sit on the WIB. There is no routine engagement with LMI staff in Georgia DOL.
- There is no organized business coordination or information sharing between IA and AWDA or related entities in the larger region. Representatives from IA, the Metro Chamber, and AWDA (in addition to neighboring WIA programs in the region) all visit City businesses to learn about growth challenges, including workforce development. However, there is no process for sharing information about employer needs, nor is there any formalized avenue for collaboration to act on that information.
- There is only one designated WIA business representative on AWDA staff, whose main role is to coordinate weekly job fairs. There are no systematic efforts to determine the needs of businesses and few efforts made to identify and train workers needed in target industries.
- AWDA is not a member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce or other City-based business groups. The former WIB Chair acknowledged that he tried to get the Chamber engaged with AWDA multiple times, to little effect.
- The main focus of the WIB Economic Development Committee appears to be planning an annual golf tournament, the proceeds from which are used to fund college scholarships. AWDA's proposed strategy for stronger business involvement is to hold "Lunch & Learn" sessions at the One-Stop so businesses will be aware of services available.
- There is some connection to entrepreneurial resources, but not to the major groups in Atlanta that might guide AWDA in training and placement efforts. Interviewees noted that AWDA could add value by learning about the cutting-edge jobs and training workers in these fields, especially in technology, film industry, and medical devices.

6. SERVICES IN GENERAL, BUT ESPECIALLY SERVICES TO YOUTH, SEEM TO BE STRUCTURED TO PROVIDE THE BEST WIA PERFORMANCE RESULTS, RATHER THAN SERVING CUSTOMER NEEDS.

- AWDA serves very few out-of-school youth and almost no dropouts, in spite of a persistently high dropout rate in the city. Virtually all youth currently served are in-school. Aside from summer work experience, meaningful service strategies seem to be absent.
- There is some mentoring of summer youth by college students; with the large college population in the City, this could be significantly expanded to year-round youth services (for in- and out-of-school youth)
- It was noted by several interviewees that there is a very great need to strengthen soft skills for youth and new workforce entrants.
- Stakeholders report that Mayor Reed is interested in stemming Atlanta's high dropout rate. AWDA is well-placed to contribute to defining the challenge and developing positive strategies, but a current focus on meeting WIA performance standards may block this type of effort.

7. AWDA ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES OF CONCERN

- The WIB's agenda, as well as virtually all information received by the WIB, is provided by the Program Director. There is therefore very little strategic direction or real oversight of WIA services provided by the WIB. The Director's time is spread across many activities and programs, and yet she serves as the only key staff to the WIB.
- The One Stop is not demand-driven. There appears to be little staff training for, or emphasis on, business services, understanding how to interact with business, sell services, or understanding target industry labor market needs. As noted earlier, there is only one WIA-funded business representative in AWDA. In the absence of a real partnership with the local Georgia DOL office, it is unclear where the business connection is currently made.
- The focus for AWDA seems to be on continuing entrenched programs and staffing special grants, rather than engaging with the City, the WIB, IA and other partners and stakeholders throughout the region to meet changing local needs.

8. SUMMARY AND OPPORTUNITIES

While most comments by interviewees focused on inadequacies in the current workforce system in Atlanta, a number of representatives also mentioned opportunities that could be available. These fell into three general categories:

- **Regional Approaches –** The Metro Atlanta area contains five local workforce boards and five WIA administrative entities that encompass the City and ten counties. The particular nature of this population and jurisdictional cluster results in a constellation of workforce service offices that is not designed to meet customer needs, but is rather decided based largely on a political basis in and by each of the five areas. Since both individual and business customers seek services at the WIA office/One Stop Center that is most conveniently located, it is often the case that an Atlanta resident or business will attend an office NOT operated by AWDA, and vice versa. This results in confusion on the part of customers and staff, as the various WIA administrations and One Stop Centers do not have reciprocal policies, and it is unclear just who "should" be served by which office under which WIA administration, and what level of service might be provided. This kind of "jurisdictional" question results in service that is distinctly NOT customer or staff-friendly. It is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of inefficiencies and inequities that result from this fractured "organization."

  The Metro Atlanta area is certainly not alone in this situation. A number of city/suburban areas have consolidated into one entity (see the Houston/Gulf Coast area as a prime example of this), but most have not. Nevertheless, from a strictly programmatic, customer service and administrative cost-saving perspective, the ideal situation would be creation of ONE Workforce Board and ONE WIA administrative entity that would be capable of creating ONE comprehensive workforce system that is closely aligned to ONE economic development entity, both of which claim the entire Metro area as its jurisdiction.

  Advocating for this sea change is beyond the scope of this immediate project. However, all parties should be aware of certain aspects of the anticipated reauthorization of WIA. While the new law does not mandate regional administrations, it does encourage and incentivize such arrangements. Just as important, ALL ETA special grant opportunities (as well as many opportunities emanating from the Departments of Commerce and Education) require regional approaches. In considering alternative recommendations, we therefore sought areas where regional approaches would be (a) most logical; (b) would accrue the most immediate as well as long-term benefits for workforce customers and WIA administrative entities; and (c) could be accomplished without disturbing the basic political nature of workforce development jurisdictions. Our solution is to begin by aggregating the demand side of the labor market equation. In workforce development terms, this equates to regionalizing services to employers.

  In the area of services to employers, there is clearly duplication of effort, intense competition for access to job openings, and little, if any, information-sharing on industries and employers among the five WIA areas in Metro Atlanta. Many stakeholders interviewed agreed there is value in collaborative efforts across the five metro WIBs. While there is a real sense that regional business services approaches could be beneficial to the business community, no one interviewed offered to champion this effort. However, we see real potential for accomplishing this through the regional work group, and doing so is highlighted in our recommendations and implementation plan.

Currently, the **five metro workforce** areas are collaborating to provide work experience and related opportunities to a small group of long-term unemployed individuals under a special Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant. We believe this approach, which draws participants from all five areas and aggregates employer demand on a regional basis, or a variation, might be brought to scale in the form of regionally-provided business services based on a collaborative strategic plan.

In addition, comments from employers and others indicated that several industries present opportunities for AWDA to build career pathways for its individual customers, including Digital Arts/New Media, construction, hospitality, health care, and logistics. The potential benefits to job seeker customers AND businesses employing workers in these industries would be further enhanced if such activities were undertaken on a regional basis. It will also position the Metro region to apply successfully for any number of special grant opportunities that would help to finance implementation of the regional plan.

- **Youth Programs –** As mentioned previously, several interviewees, including employers, mentioned a very great need to strengthen soft skills for youth and new workforce entrants. Stakeholders reported that Mayor Reed is interested in stemming Atlanta's high drop-out rate. AWDA is well-placed to contribute to defining the challenge and developing positive strategies if it develops the intention and capacity to do so.
- **Partnership-based Opportunities/Promising Practices –** Interviewees identified a number of opportunities that be better leveraged to provide long-term benefits to AWDA customers, including the following:

  - CVS partnership for pharmacy technicians and work experience – More might be done on career pathways in this partnership.
  - First Source – A

percentage of entry-level workers hired by City contractors are identified by AWDA. This could be leveraged to explore more systematic training opportunities and job/promotional opportunities beyond the entry level.

- Best grant with Atlanta Tech and Piedmont Technical College that integrates remedial and occupational training to accelerate training completion
- The new Rapid Response grant from the State could be an opportunity for AWDA to identify and serve more dislocated workers, if a strategic service model is developed.
- New and existing TAACCCT grant opportunities with Atlanta Tech around mechatronics training and other fields.
- New Ready to Work grant opportunity from ETA that requires regional approaches to reemploying the long-term unemployed.
- Atlanta Tech is the recipient of an Accelerating Opportunity grant that AWDA may be able to leverage as a partner for the benefit of City residents.
- AWDA provides entry-level computer classes onsite. Perhaps additional partners could be involved to make this a larger-scale effort – well-advertised and promoted.
- Work with TRADE-UP could be expanded. AWDA could help fund classes and enroll more participants in TRADE-UP, thereby creating a significant worker pipeline for the Falcons Stadium construction and other major City projects.

D. LABOR MARKET GAP ANALYSIS & FOCUS GROUP

Another key component of our work in Atlanta was a workforce gap analysis. We set out to evaluate the Atlanta region's capacity to meet current and future workforce needs through a review of economic and occupational data. Successful regions have concluded that economic development and workforce development can no longer operate in programmatic silos and be effective, especially in an environment of declining state and federal resources. Economic development and workforce development initiatives must be aligned (together with the education system) in a way that results in maximum impact and cost effectiveness. Employers are taking note—regions demonstrating the capacity to respond quickly to changes in the labor market are gaining an advantage in the competition for jobs and private investment. A region's capacity to educate and train workers is clearly becoming a differentiator in strategic economic development.

In a word, a high-value workforce system is one that creates a talent pipeline that meets the human resource needs of high-growth industries and simultaneously ensures that its constituents are connected to career pathways that lead to family-sustaining employment opportunities in those industries.

1. OBJECTIVE AND CONTEXT – IN A VERY BROAD SENSE, THE PURPOSE OF A WORKFORCE GAP ANALYSIS IS TO EVALUATE A REGION'S CAPACITY TO MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS (I.E. IS THE REGION'S TALENT "PIPELINE" SUPPLYING ENOUGH WORKERS WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES TO MEET HIRING DEMANDS OF LOCAL EMPLOYERS). SIMILARLY, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORKERS, DO RESIDENTS HAVE SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT CAN LEAD TO WELL-PAYING JOBS IN GROWING INDUSTRIES? A WORKFORCE GAP ANALYSIS SEEKS TO QUANTIFY, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, REGIONAL SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN THE LABOR MARKET AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLOSING ANY EXISTING OR PROJECTED GAPS.

The purpose of the gap analysis undertaken for this project was to provide a data-based starting point, a "snapshot in time" for:

- Evaluating the Atlanta region's capacity for meeting workforce needs;
- Facilitating alignment of economic and workforce development strategies; and
- Encouraging and supporting the development of regional sector strategies and career pathways.

Our initial data analysis and report was also informed and refined with help from employers, educators, workforce development professionals, Invest Atlanta, and other local experts during interviews and focus groups. However, the need for on-going data analysis should not and does not

end with this report. It is expected that, during the implementation phase of the project, Invest Atlanta, AWDA, and their partners will be evaluating education and training capacity for targeted occupations, designing career pathways to help workers advance to better paying jobs, and working with employers on a range of strategies for ensuring that workforce development and economic development efforts in Atlanta are aligned. Data presented here, and additional data collected throughout implementation, will play a significant and sustained role throughout the planning and implementation process.

This report should therefore be viewed as the starting point for understanding the current state of economic and workforce development alignment in Atlanta and, more specifically, which occupations could be accessed as vehicles to improve coordination between the public and private sectors in an effort to provide quality job opportunities for residents of Atlanta.

2. STUDY AREA – THE STUDY AREA WAS PRIMARILY THE CITY OF ATLANTA, USING FULTON COUNTY DATA AS A PROXY WHERE NEEDED. IN OTHER WORDS, DATA FOR THE CITY OF ATLANTA IS USED WHENEVER POSSIBLE TO CAPTURE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL WORKFORCE, SUCH AS THE PRIMARY WORKING AGE POPULATION OR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT.

However, since a labor shed does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries, the overall purpose of the workforce system is to connect Atlanta residents with **regional opportunities.** Therefore, the 10-county metro area was used to quantify current and projected job openings and qualified candidates for the regional labor market.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS – THOSE WISHING TO EXAMINE THE DATA TABLES AND DETAILED FINDINGS MAY VIEW THE FULL REPORT AS PRESENTED IN APPENDIX C. FOR OUR PURPOSES HERE, FOLLOWING IS THE OVERALL SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM THE DATA REPORT.

- **Human capital is a competitive advantage for the City of Atlanta.** Atlanta's labor force is growing and possesses educational attainment rates that far exceed U.S. averages overall. However, there is significant disparity in educational attainment—and therefore labor market

outcomes—for African American and Hispanic/Latino residents of Atlanta compared to Asians and Whites. Closing those gaps to ensure that all residents of Atlanta are positioned to succeed in the labor market should be a key priority of economic and workforce development alignment.

- The talent pipeline in Atlanta is full of college graduates, but may not be integrated sufficiently to meet the needs of some growing employers. Comparing the number of graduates of education institutions in Metro Atlanta with the number of projected job openings during 2013-2023 reveals a significant oversupply of graduates at all levels of postsecondary education (there are more graduates entering the workforce annually than the labor market can seemingly absorb at present). **However, despite the overall oversupply, some occupations are expected to face shortages, which present opportunities for Invest Atlanta, AWDA, and their partners to coordinate targeted education and training to match City of Atlanta residents to those opportunities.** Furthermore, just because there is an oversupply of graduates in raw numbers does not mean that students are graduating with the skills and experience to close reported "skill gaps" at local employers.
- **Workforce availability is an asset for growing Invest Atlanta's six targeted clusters.** Most of the critical occupations in terms of the number of jobs that need to be filled can be satisfied with graduates of higher education institutions in Metro Atlanta, notwithstanding potential skill and experience mismatches discussed earlier. But there are also a few occupations facing projected shortages that are opportunities for collaboration on new workforce training initiatives, such as creating career pathways in the six targeted clusters for City of Atlanta residents.

4. DATA/GAP ANALYSIS FOCUS GROUP – FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT, WE INVITED A WIDE SELECTION OF STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE BUSINESS, EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SECTORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP THAT WAS STRUCTURED TO ELICIT ON-THE-GROUND INSIGHTS ON:

- The report's major findings, conclusions and implications;
- The workforce needs of key industry sectors; and
- Ideas for closer engagement with Atlanta's economic development, education, and business/industry-based organizations.

While there was insufficient employer participation to analyze the workforce needs of key industry sectors, there was agreement that the data supported participants' general knowledge of labor market conditions in Atlanta. In addition, there was spirited discussion around possible uses of the data going forward. Comments centered on responses to the following questions:

- In your particular position, what causes you the most difficulty when it comes to trying to match Atlanta industry workforce needs with existing talent? What is not working?
- What opportunities exist? Could be new industries, new partnership opportunities, etc.
- What is the one thing that needs to happen to rally all stakeholders in Atlanta around a common vision for a talent development system?

A summary of the themes that emerged from the discussion, listed below, served to validate the "best practice" approach to building a talent development system elucidated in our initial "Building a 21st Century Talent Development Organization" paper, including a collaborative, region-wide approach to developing sector strategies and career pathways:

- There is a need for active, ongoing partnerships; all partners need to be at the table to address talent development issues: Employers, K-12 education, post-secondary education, economic development, workforce development agencies, supportive service agencies, and community partners, including Community and Faith-based organizations.
- The leadership of all these groups should collaborate to develop a vision and engage in a solution-oriented process by developing and implementing a well-defined plan with well-defined partner roles.
- Sector strategies must be driven by the employer community. There is a need to engage employers now and throughout the long-term process and to develop materials that can help demonstrate the benefits of engagement to area employers.
- Examine and build on best practices that involve collaborative models.
- Develop one or more success stories (e.g. Grady, Beltline, and the workforce system) to build buy-in from the employer community and all involved disciplines.
- Workforce partners should collaborate across discipline and jurisdictional silos, and specialize in various target industries to build an effective industry sectors/career pathways model throughout metro Atlanta.

Currently, the City, region and state focus on somewhat different high-growth industries, as evidenced by the different sectors identified at a statewide level by the Governor's Office; the geographic area encompassed by the Atlanta Regional Commission; and Invest Atlanta (for the City only), as shown below. (In considering the differences, it is important to note that those industries targeted by Invest Atlanta are "traded" industries, that is, industries that bring money into the region.) In building a sector-based approach for service delivery to Atlanta residents by AWDA, there will be a need to align around a common set of sectors that drive the broader regional economy, since Atlanta residents should take advantage of the regional job market. It is the responsibility of the LWIB to decide which industries will be the focus of AWDA's talent development efforts, just as the other Metro WIBs will make those decisions for their jobseeker population; it will therefore be important to continue to re-visit gap analysis information on a regular basis, including the determination of which industries should be focused on.

INDUSTRY	Source of Industry Information		
	Governor's Office (Statewide)	Atlanta Regional Comm. (Atlanta Region)	Invest Atlanta (City-specific)
Aerospace	x	x	
Agribusiness	x	x	
Applied Computational Processing/Engineering			x
Bioscience	x	x	x
Construction	x		
Digital Arts/New Media		x	x
Energy	x	x	
Healthcare		x	
Logistics/Transportation	x	x	x
Manufacturing	x		
Professional & Management Services			x
Software Development		x	
Specialized Business Support Services		x	x
Telecommunications	x	x	
Tourism			x

SUMMARY: As a result of this process, it was determined that building and maintaining a strong data-based foundation for decision-making and planning for sector-based service delivery would require the capacity to consider how the local economy and job market, and therefore skill needs, are changing at any point in time. We therefore have included a recommendation that a collaborative partnership be formed to examine economic and occupational data on a continuing, regular basis. This became our high-level recommendation number six (6), as can be seen in Part II of this report.

(This type of group has been established throughout the country in dozens of states and regions. Maher was instrumental in their formation in the State of Kentucky and in Newton, Iowa as long as ten years ago.)

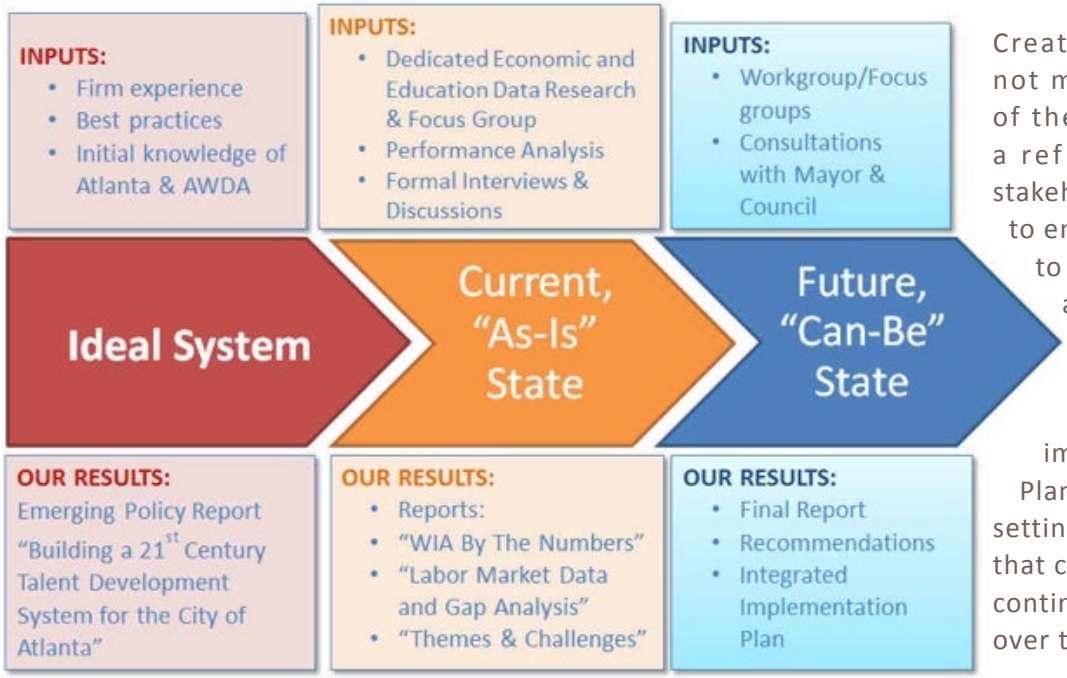
PART II. SUMMARY CHALLENGES AND HIGH-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Introduction

Based on research of Atlanta's current state, we compiled a list of challenges the AWDA must overcome to meet the standard of a "21st Century" workforce system that can best serve the residents of Atlanta and the broader regional economy. This report is included as Appendix A. The overarching challenge is clear: The WIB and AWDA's current policies, processes, operational structures, program design and partner relationships need to be re-visited in order to transform service delivery to better meet the challenges of the future for the City.

The focus for the WIB and AWDA seems to be on continuing entrenched programs and staffing special grants, rather than engaging with the City, other partners and stakeholders throughout the region to identify and work strategically to meet changing local needs. The insular culture thereby created is continually reinforced and, as will be seen, the challenges identified in our research are in direct contrast to the ideal.

An Ideal "Best Practices" workforce organization was described in our "21st Century Talent Development Organization" report. The vision and the high-level recommendations discussed in this Part II all go to support moving the AWDA toward that "ideal" system. Finally, the Implementation strategy and Action Plan in Part III of this report offer a way forward to making AWDA more responsive to the regional economy and the residents of Atlanta alike. It does not assume an "ideal" outcome. Rather, we constructed a set of recommendations and an Implementation Plan that might better reflect a "can-be" set of results – results that are achievable and actionable for Atlanta's leaders today. The following graphic represents our thought process:



Creating this plan does not mark abandonment of the Ideal, but rather a refinement of it by stakeholders on the ground to ensure that it is tailored to local/regional needs and opportunities. Because of that local stakeholder refinement, full implementation of the Plan is attainable, while setting out a future vision that can continue to drive continuous improvement over time.

B. Challenges

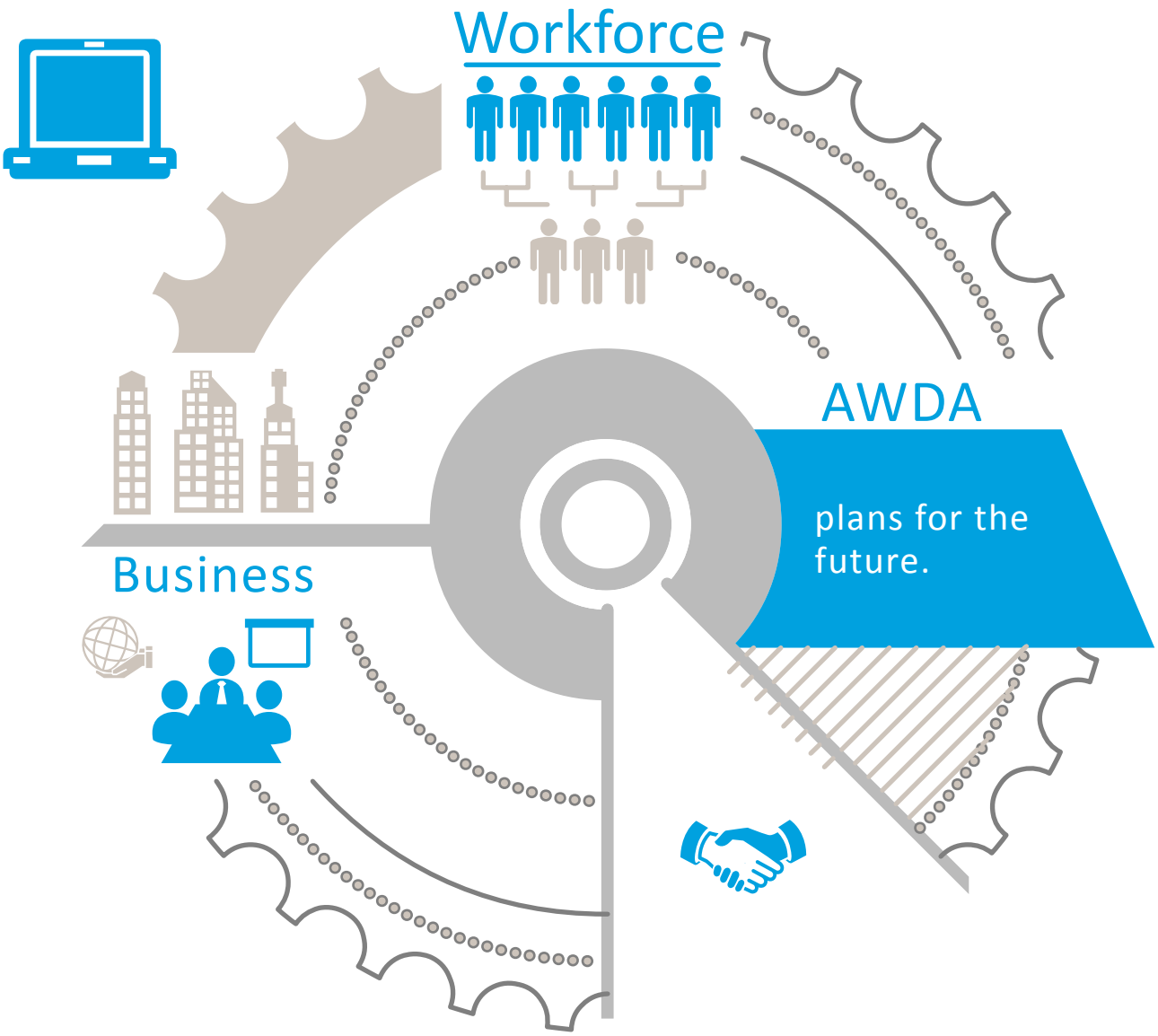
Today, Atlanta's Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the AWDA operate in ways which are in direct contrast with emerging best practices, and should be addressed as the AWDA plans for the future.

- **CHALLENGE #1:** The Atlanta WIB as a whole does not exhibit that it appreciates the potential for an integrated, demand-driven workforce system. As a result, there is no "workforce system" in Atlanta today; there is a workforce Agency and a number of disconnected funding streams that create programs and agencies that are not aligned toward any common set of goals. There is no stated vision that succinctly and clearly articulates the goal or purpose of developing talent within the City; therefore, the abundance of resources that are available are not fully leveraged or connected to develop a talent supply to drive Atlanta's economy and employment opportunities in a strategic manner.

- **CHALLENGE #2:** The foundational elements for the workforce system – the WIB and AWDA – are not organized to address the challenges and recommendations put forward here. The WIB provides little or no policy guidance, strategic thinking or a vision for the City's workforce system. At present, it is not organized to provide the strategic leadership necessary to drive the transformation. Also, the WIB's staff support comes from the AWDA Director, meaning that its intelligence comes almost solely from the organization over which it has oversight responsibility.

- **CHALLENGE #3:** AWDA has no foundational service philosophy or principles upon which its operation is based. AWDA is currently driven by only one Priority – that is, to meet Federal (WIA) performance standards. As a result, there is little apparent strategic thinking around allocating and utilizing grant resources, or seeking and leveraging other resources, to meet the needs of the labor market on either the supply or demand side. In addition, its reporting practices are designed to meet standards rather than accurately reflect the quality of customer outcomes.

- **CHALLENGE #4:** AWDA administers its programs in a responsive mode, rather than by determining needs and designing services to strategically address those needs. Programs are administered in



isolation from several key partners, including the local Department of Labor Office, Invest Atlanta and other WIA areas in Metro Atlanta. Its relationships with partners, including business, appear to be episodic rather than strategic, although there have been some positive outcomes in specific situations. Overall, AWDA lacks an operational framework that extends beyond strictly program-based WIA performance standards. This results in missed opportunities to leverage existing relationships and institutionalize them in a comprehensive talent development system. If the goal is to grow real family-sustaining career opportunities for Atlanta residents, building a true workforce investment system that is focused on the opportunities present in a growing regional economy is essential.

- **CHALLENGE #5:** Job markets are not limited by political jurisdictions, and employers deal in the regional job market and with the regional labor shed, not one demarcated by lines on a map. Since all five WIA programs in Metro Atlanta seek to provide services to employers and place their participants in jobs somewhere within the region, there is duplication of effort, non-productive competition among WIA areas for access to job openings and a lack of information sharing on industries and employers among the WIA areas. These practices are not welcomed by the business community and indeed discourage them from accessing the workforce system.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the transformational process must begin with strong new leaders promulgating a strong vision for moving the system forward in a direction designed to provide real value to the City.

C. Vision and High-Level Recommendations

We have carefully considered all of our research activities, the challenges articulated here and emerging best practices in workforce development to craft a set of recommendations to improve outcomes for the AWDA and enable it to better serve Atlanta's job seekers and employers today and in the future. All the recommendations here are ultimately designed to overcome the challenges described and help support a 21st century workforce development capacity for the City of Atlanta.

It is important to recognize that these recommendations have been shaped not just by research, but also by the briefings and consultations previously discussed. They therefore represent not only our recommendations, but the considered opinions and values of the broader community – business, workforce and political leadership in Atlanta and the Metro region. It is our hope and intention that such a broad, consultative process offers the City of Atlanta and its residents the best opportunity to attain transformational change – and gain the benefit it needs and desires from this initiative.

Further, the High-Level Recommendations discussed below were presented to a large group of stakeholders at a full-day Strategic Work Group meeting in April. The group was comprised of business, workforce, post-secondary education, economic development and labor representatives, as well as individuals from partner programs, workforce intermediaries, and City Council. Approximately 42 of the 60 invitees attended the April meeting, and a similar number attended a follow-up meeting in June. Their charge was to review and provide feedback on the initial recommendations and to begin to shape high-level implementation plans for several of these recommendations. The output of this work is detailed in Section C below.

The first two recommendations are organizational in nature, and their achievement would create the foundation for the transformation of Atlanta's workforce system. To be successful, a visionary WIB Chair with strong standing and exceptional leadership abilities should be appointed from the business community; and a WIB Executive Director position should be created. A strong, knowledgeable individual should then be identified and hired to fill that position.

The reconstituted WIB will need training to fully understand its role and mission in providing effective policy guidance to and oversight of the program. It will then need development work in order to decide just what that policy guidance should promote. Once these elements are in place and roles firmly established, the WIB, its Executive Director, and the AWDA Program Director and staff must then be held accountable for program outcomes that provide real value to Atlanta residents and businesses. Only then will AWDA be in a position to develop its capacity as a leader in the regional approaches that are detailed in Recommendations #3-#6.

The following two ***organizational recommendations*** are accompanied by action items the City might undertake immediately in order to accomplish each one.

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #1: **Adopt a Formal Vision and Strategic Plan to Drive Implementation of the Recommendations** A vision and strategic plan are needed to bring together and connect not just AWDA and Invest Atlanta, but all critical public, education and private sector partners, and gain buy-in and alignment to an overall goal and vision for building a talent development system. The vision must serve to unite all partners around the goal of building the City's talent pipeline to staff upwardly mobile, family-sustaining jobs in the region's target industry clusters. AWDA (and others) would be brought into alignment with the City and Metro Atlanta's economic development efforts, and henceforth be seen as the human investment arm of the City's overall economic development strategy	After seeking direct input from business-oriented groups like the Metro Chamber, Invest Atlanta and the Atlanta Committee for Progress, the City should vet and adopt a "forming vision" statement for a new workforce system. Note that the following statement, which served as a touch point for building recommendations, foresees improvements in the Atlanta system, with direct benefits for regional employers as well: "A workforce system with goals, policies, strategies, processes and activities that are fully aligned with those of the K-16 education systems and local and regional economic development organizations, including Invest Atlanta. By effectively connecting Atlanta residents with career opportunities and related supports, the system provides a talent pipeline that meets the human resource needs of high growth industries in the Metro Atlanta area. The strategic foundation for the system lies with the Workforce Investment Board, and AWDA's continuing mission is to ensure that Atlanta's residents are connected to career pathways that lead to family-sustaining employment opportunities" As a first order of business for a reorganized WIB/AWDA (see Recommendation #2), the WIB should finalize and adopt the vision. The WIB should resolve that everyone connected to or part of the developing system, from the Mayor's Office to members of the WIB to front-line staff serving customers, should not only understand the vision but also actively champion and advance it in their daily work An important step in the transformation of Atlanta's workforce system is the (re)branding of the system. Just as the Atlanta Development Authority was very strategically rebranded as Invest Atlanta, Atlanta's "rebirthed" workforce system needs its own new name and image, signaling to its business community, workforce partners and the community at large, as well as to AWDA staff, that the transformation is real, far-reaching and long-term

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #2: **Reorganize the Atlanta WIB and AWDA** The Atlanta Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the AWDA, as the foundation of a 21st century workforce system, should be reorganized, clearly separating the WIB and its strategic and oversight functions from service delivery management and operations of the AWDA. The Board should be reoriented as to its strategic leadership function and how it may best fulfill that broader leadership role. The current vacancy in the WIB Chair position presents an opportunity for new leadership with the standing and capacity to lead transformational change. Mayor Reed should consider appointing a business leader with that thought in mind, and securing training for new and existing Board members on their roles and responsibilities as leaders FOR CHANGE of Atlanta's workforce development system. Once the Chair is in place, a WIB Executive Director position should be established consistent with these new priorities; and the City should search nationally for an individual with the independence, ability and experience to provide true staff support to the Board. The Mayor's Office should hold the WIB accountable, and the WIB should hold AWDA accountable for fulfilling the roles needed to implement clearly defined strategies to build an integrated, demand-driven talent development system that delivers optimum value to both employer and individual customers	1. The City should move immediately to appoint a new (acting) WIB Chair who has the standing, capacity and desire to lead the change effort. After appointment, the Mayor formally asks the full Board to remove "Acting" from the title by voting to confirm the Chair, as required by statute. Appendix D contains our "Recommended Leadership Characteristics for New City of Atlanta WIB Chair" 2. Working collaboratively, the Chair and the City should immediately appoint an interim WIB Executive Director to provide staff support to the WIB and accountability for AWDA while conducting a national search for a permanent Executive Director. 3. Immediately following these appointments, schedule a one to two-day facilitated WIB retreat to accomplish the following: • Reorient the Board to its strategic functions • Finalize and adopt the "forming vision" referred to above. • Consider the recommendations and high-level plans in this report, and resolve and strategize to bring them to fruition. These include recommendations 3-6 below, involving sector strategies, career pathways, regional business services and • Give serious consideration to recommend to the City that it change the name of AWDA to one that reflects the new mission and vision. Rebranding the agency will demonstrate to City residents and the business community the new value that can be expected from the agency and its services In organizing this retreat, it would be productive to invite a number of additional carefully selected business leaders (optimally representing targeted industry sectors in the Atlanta economy) to participate as external stakeholders. 4. As WIB members' terms expire, the Mayor and new Chair should consider whether those individuals are suited to embrace and undertake the WIB's new leadership mission and functions. In some cases, appointing new members may be appropriate

As noted above, implementation of Recommendations **#1 and #2** is a necessary precondition for success with the remaining four recommendations. The need to install new leadership and independent staff support for the WIB is vital to transforming the Board into one that is truly business-led and capable of setting strategic policy for the Atlanta workforce system. Selecting a new Board Chair, reorienting the Board and establishing and filling a new WIB Executive Director position are critical steps to achieving significant enhancement of Atlanta's workforce agency, both locally and in the regional context.

That said, it is important to understand that **recommendations #3 - #6 are all very closely related and interdependent.** Critically, they also all require working closely with partners from across the region to create regional approaches to talent development. Given the interdependencies and regional focus, there is a need for a regional consortium to be built around the foundation of the Work Group convened by the project in April. At that meeting, significant progress was made by regional leaders in affirming the recommendations and detailing plans to implement those recommendations (see Part III). Support, participation and leadership will be required from these stakeholders to fully implement the service delivery recommendations discussed immediately below.

In order to maintain the regional momentum garnered thus far, it is critical that one organization be identified and accountable for continuing to convene and facilitate these conversations. While a re-organized AWDA/WIB would be an ideal organization to play this role, we recognize that the foundational recommendations 1 and 2 may not be achieved in a manner timely enough to capitalize on the region wide momentum that has recently been achieved.

Atlanta leaders will need to determine how to sequence approaching the recommendations presented here. There is potentially great value in quickly engaging the stakeholders in the process to leverage the momentum already achieved. In the absence of new leadership at AWDA, the City may opt to appoint an intermediary (such as Invest Atlanta, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Committee for Atlanta Progress, or others) to convene meetings until such time as the AWDA is ready to assume that role. Whatever agent does convene, and whenever it occurs, it is important that the Work Group be renamed and expanded to both reflect and fulfill its mission. (See Appendix E for a recommended Draft Team Charter.)

With the organizational changes in AWDA recommended herein, we would expect the WIB and AWDA to eventually serve as a major regional convener.

The following four **operational recommendations** are accompanied by immediate action items the City might undertake in order to accomplish each one. Each of these recommendations was then addressed by a focus group consisting of a broad cross-section of regional leaders at the Work Group meeting in April. High-level implementation plans were then developed based on the input from those sessions. A discussion of each focus group process, the plans thereby developed, and a list of the representatives serving in each focus group, may be found in Appendix F. A fully integrated plan that combines the four individual plans in a more coherent fashion constitutes Part III of this report.

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #3: **Focus on Targeted Growth Sectors in the Regional Economy** In order to provide real value to its customers, and to be an integral part of the City's economic development efforts, AWDA should establish a guiding principle of building the City's talent pipeline in alignment with regional focus industry sectors. These industries should be identified in collaboration with other workforce development and economic development agencies in the Metro Atlanta area, most importantly Invest Atlanta, and in partnership with key employers in targeted growth sectors. This strategy of focusing service delivery on growth sectors must be clearly articulated by both Invest Atlanta and AWDA and used to inform and guide the investment of workforce funding from all sources	1. Determine regional and local stakeholder groups that must lead this effort 2. Determine a regional organization to convene the stakeholder groups and facilitate the development of target sectors. ARC was identified as a candidate as it has a new "educated" work group of regional industry leaders discussing cross-sector workforce challenges 3. Using labor market data from the Data Team (see Recommendation #6), identify a set of industry sectors that could benefit from a sector strategy approach. Use Invest Atlanta's and ARC's recently-created target cluster studies as starting points, considering the question from both economic and workforce development points of view.. Identify 1 or 2 sectors to prioritize for sector strategy development. Logistics/Distribution and the Entertainment/Film industry are recommended, and Health Care has an existing strategy (through CareerRise) that could be expanded with more representation from City health care firms and AWDA 4. Working with the Career Pathways team (see Recommendation #4), identify existing training/education that needs to be re-tooled, or new needs to be developed to support industry. Begin to identify techniques (e.g. career awareness initiatives in K-12, accelerated learning at community colleges) that may be employed for graduating more students into target industry education pipelines and ensuring they leave with the necessary credentials for employment 5. Embed sector strategies into AWDA strategic plan as core framework (e.g. for prioritizing job training grants, contracts, ITAs, etc. toward target occupations) 6. Working with the Career Pathways team (see Recommendation #4), identify at least two targeted sectors that lend themselves to entrepreneurial ventures, creating opportunity and motivation for individuals to start their own businesses. Develop or expand existing curriculum and support structures, including business mentorship that will support new small businesses, including community-based businesses, within the City of Atlanta

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #4: **Embrace a Focus on Career Pathways** To positively impact on the lack of economic mobility for some residents in the City, AWDA should develop an operational service framework for and strategically engage in the development of career pathways linked to targeted industry sectors. Such an approach requires engaging with public and private partners for the long term around a common vision, goals and operating framework that re-designs education and training programs in collaboration with employers to drive opportunities in growth sectors. The resulting shift in focus will lead from an emphasis on job placement in low-level jobs to a focus on making meaningful job placements in positions with the potential for career advancement and family-sustaining careers for Atlanta's residents	1. Identify and engage additional stakeholders in the effort and reconvene the group; begin inventory of existing models/ resources (see Matrix #2 for more information on groups to be included) 2. Using information from the Sector Strategy team (see Recommendation #3) identify two industry sectors in which to pilot pathways/worker supports 3. Engage industry associations/employers in targeted industry sectors to inform career pathway discussions 4. Map career pathways 5. Identify overlaps and gaps in education/training and in worker supports for targeted pathways 6. Retool existing and develop new education/training programming and worker supports aligned to pathways requirements 7. Launch the pathways pilot (one per each of the two targeted industry sectors) 8. For AWDA/WIB: use pathways to inform training and employments service investments

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #5: **Regionalize Business Services** The City should actively participate in development of a system to share real-time economic, occupational and industry information and organize business services, according to sector, across the five Metro Atlanta regional workforce areas. Then, the metro areas should develop a plan to deliver business services to employers on a regional basis and in a strategic manner (sharing costs to reduce business services costs to each WIB). This best practice solution, developed in conjunction with the region's economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce and other industry groups, will maximize the capabilities of each of the Metro WIA areas, enhance services to employers throughout metro Atlanta, eliminate duplication of effort, and enhance the effectiveness of a sector-based/career pathways approach to service delivery	1. Discuss concept with the other four workforce areas and with Georgia DOL 2. Discuss concept with Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and other partners; request their assistance to convene initiative from employer side 3. Working with Sector Strategy and Career Pathway teams, conduct a listening session with selected employers in key growth sectors to determine most critical business service needs 4. Working with Sector Strategy team, design and administer a survey (to be administered annually) to get broader business input 5. The regional group discuss findings and begin to design regional business approach 6. Present concept to WIB Chairs and GOWD 7. In coordination with Sector Strategies team, convene first meeting of areas, GA DOL, Metro Chamber to develop strategic vision, core values, draft measures of success and data sharing protocol 8. Briefing/orientation for business services staff in WIA areas and GA DOL 9. As soon as the Plan is clear and comprehensive, actively pursue funding for eventual rollout 10. Test the concept on 1-2 businesses; evaluate results and retool as needed 11. Develop/acquire and Implement CRM 12. Full roll out of concept

Recommendations	KEY ACTIVITIES FOR CITY OF ATLANTA/AWDA/WIB
RECOMMENDATION #6: **Provide for the Efficient, Ongoing Provision of Comprehensive Regional Labor Market Intelligence** AWDA and appropriate regional partners should collaborate to form a common regional data team that should examine the labor market resources currently existing in the region and the data needs of the regional partners, optimize the use of available data and Labor Market Information (LMI), and help to ensure alignment across partners and with sector-based strategies and local/regional program design. We recommend setting a goal that, by summer 2015, AWDA will be participating with its regional partners on a common regional data set which will include occupational and skill data drawn from the City's and region's targeted, high-growth industry sectors. AWDA, along with its regional partners, will use this data to inform its sector-based strategies, its career pathways framework, and its program design on a continuous basis. Such an approach will conserve resources by eliminating redundancy, and foster a sense of alignment and collaboration between all stakeholders in serving the greater Atlanta regional economy	1. Contact ARC to be the regional data collector 2. ARC invites potential partners to meeting, and convenes 3. Collect/organize data, with assistance from existing partners in completing the following tasks: • Identify data elements needed • Design formats for ongoing presentation of information • Identify who currently holds these data • Identify gaps in data • Identify who will fill gaps 4. Regional Data Review reviews/modifies/expands/contracts data compilation 5. Regional decision makers convene to share/make collective decisions on sector strategies, program design, shared initiatives and move forward

PART III. IMPLEMENTING THE OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed above, Recommendations #3 - #6 are interrelated both in planning and practice. For example, based largely on information provided by the Data Team (#6), the Sector Strategies (#3) activity identifies the focus sectors and key occupations and works with the Data Team to keep that information current. These focus sectors and the identified occupations are the ones for which career pathways (#4) are developed so as to enable Atlanta residents to take advantage of career opportunities. Business Services (#5) is the operational element of the sector and pathway strategies; that is, it is the operation of actually meeting employers' day-to-day needs by providing well-prepared job candidates and performing other services.

The other overarching aspect of these operational recommendations is their regional nature. Identifying growth sectors and occupations, seeking to develop talent for them, and getting jobseekers onto productive career pathways are all properly regional activities because the job market is regional. They become advantageous for Atlanta residents because a regional business service approach opens up opportunities in the regional job market to Atlanta residents.

Also as discussed earlier, the regional stakeholders who assembled to participate in the project Strategic Work Group spent significant time engaged in focus groups at the meeting in April. Four sub-groups were held, with each one focusing on one of the operational recommendations 3 – 6. During that time, they revised the recommendation as needed and provided invaluable on-the-ground information to help build an implementation plan for that recommendation. The focus group discussions and implementation plans developed for each operational recommendation constitute the initial work done by those focus group/Work Group members, and reflect a step-by-step approach to implementing each of the recommendations #3 - #6. These items appear in Appendix F.

After the April meeting, we refined those plans and integrated them into a format and process that better connects the tasks involved in pursuing each recommendation. That integrated plan appears immediately below.

Strategic Goals & Plan

A. Draft Integrated Plan

NOTES: All “timeline” entries are in relation to the date recommendations are adopted. “Work Teams” refer to sub-groups established by dividing the Leadership Group to plan and oversee implementation of the high level goals.

	Key Goal/Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
1.0 Establish, engage and convene a Regional Leadership Group/Planning Collaborative					
1.1	Identify a Regional Leadership and Planning Collaborative (dubbed the "Leadership Group", or LG)	Mayor Reed and regional leaders	Upon adoption of recommendations	Facilitation and planning coordination for regional WIBs, employers, educators, and others to align around regional solutions to create a talent pipeline.	Define and gain formal commitments from the stakeholders that need to be engaged in the effort, including but not limited to: each of the Metro Atlanta WIBs and WIA areas; Atlanta and regional Economic Development organizations; K-16 education; etc.
1.2	Adopt team charter and establish work teams for sector strategies, data, business services and career pathways	Leadership Group	Adoption plus 30 days	Draft Team Charter	Final Charter that aligns LG around mission, roles, expectations, deliverables and overarching timelines.
1.3	Work Teams set up work schedules to refine and execute overall implementation plan	Work Teams	Plus 45 days	Project administrator and/or outside LG facilitator	Project plan; team assignments and rosters; venue and meeting support.
2.0 Establish, engage and convene a Sector Strategy (SS) Work Team					
2.1	Define and gain formal commitments from the stakeholders that need to be engaged in the Sector Strategies Work Team	SS Work Team	Plus 50 days	Project administrator and/or outside LG facilitator	A formal team of committed leaders, including employers, ready to take action.
2.2	Approach ARC to see if they would convene the Sector Team going forward	Mayor Reed and regional leaders/Leadership Group	Plus 50 days	ARC is the WIA area most experienced in sectors. Tap into their work team of industry and regional leaders starting to discuss cross-sector workforce challenges	A committed "owner" of the regional sector process/initiative.
2.3	Identify current SS consortia and key sector strategies to build upon. Career Rise (health care sector) is one example	SS Work Team	Plus 75 days	Map of current initiatives from partners, including ARC's work team.	Gain understanding of the current state of sector-based initiative within the region; gauge strengths and weaknesses; and decide whether expanding any of those consortia and/or sector approaches would work for Task 2.4.
2.4	Identify 1 or 2 target industry areas which might be prioritized for sector strategy development (this will be driven in part by information from the Data Team)	SS Team. Data Team. Also involve Career Pathways Team so as to ensure that their initial pathways efforts are directed at the appropriate sectors.	Plus 90 days	Existing economic and occupational data studies; analysis from Data Team.	One or two clear target sectors through which to focus initial sector strategy investments.
2.5	Determine the key occupations, and associated occupational skills gaps within these prioritized industry sectors.	SS Work Team	Plus 100 days	Information from the Data Team, as well as qualitative information from employer surveys and interviews.	Key occupations and skill gaps within pilot industries identified and quantified for the region.
	Go to 4.0, complete and return here				

	Key Goal/Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
2.6	Embed sector strategies into AWDA strategic plan as core framework (e.g. the way it prioritizes job training grants, contracts, ITAs, etc. toward target sector occupations)	AWDA and Atlanta WIB	Plus 210 days	WIB support; guidance and training for AWDA staff; Business Services Work Team	New strategic plan operating within a sector strategies framework
2.7	Working with Data Team, identify additional focus sectors around which to organize – develop plans to do so based on pilot Industry Partnership outcomes (see 4.6)	SS Work Team	Plus 220 days	Data Team	Agreement among regional businesses, agencies and K-16 on next sectors.
3.0 Establish, engage and convene a Career Pathways (CP) Work Team					
3.1	Identify and engage additional stakeholders in the effort and convene a CP Team	Convener should be neutral and able to engage diverse audiences. Mayor's Office, IA or Atlanta Tech?	Plus 50 days	Need to identify a lead convener(s)	1. Affirm and commit to vision, goals, and high-level CP plan 2. Identify additional partners to engage for CP Team
3.2	Begin to inventory existing CP models/resources	CP Work Team	Plus 75 days	Input of all regional partners, especially K-16	Template and collection/population process initiated
3.3	Work with SS Team to identify two industry sectors with which to align a pilot for pathways/worker supports	CP Work Team	Plus 90 days	Sector Strategy Team	Agreement on one to two sectors to pilot regional Industry Partnership
	Go to 4.0, complete and return here				
3.4	Working with the SS Work Team and K-16 partners, identify new/advanced techniques to bring more students into target industry education pipelines	SS Work Team and K-16 partners	Plus 120 days	Expertise of all partners, promising practices	Identification and utilization of techniques such as career awareness initiatives in K-12, accelerated learning at technical colleges
3.5	Plan for implementation of additional Industry Partnerships		Plus 240 days and ongoing	Funding for additional partnerships and education and training to realize results	Priorities to retool sand develop: include: 1. Embedded, contextualized, co-requisite (vs. stand-alone, prerequisite) Adult Education, foundational/basic skills development, and literacy development 2. Earn-and-learn models (Registered Apprenticeship, on-the-job training, etc.) 3. Embedded support services, particularly at pathways transition points 4. "Chunking" programs and curriculum to make them more modular and "plug-and-play" 5. Tying training/education modules to industry-recognized, stackable, interim credentials 6. Compressing education/training to expedite career entry and advancement

	Key Goal/Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
4.0 Organize a regional Industry Partnership pilot in one - two sectors					
4.1	Engage and convene industry associations, combine with employers in targeted industry sectors (2.1) and regional stakeholders from 3.1	Chairs of the SS and CP Work Teams	Plus 100 days	Partnership that includes sector employers, Eco Dev, K-16 education, metro WIAs and related stakeholders/partners.	Industry Partnerships Team built from SS and CP Teams, to pilot the partnership in one - two sectors.
4.2	Map Career Pathways for the pilot sectors	TBD, but K-12 and post-secondary education and metro WIAs would have key roles here	Plus 140 days	Sector employers and promising practices from around US	Clear understanding of career pathways from entry-level to advanced. and of the specific education, training, competency, credentialing, etc. requirements for each level of the pathways
4.3	Using information from 3.5, identify overlaps and gaps in education/training and in worker supports for targeted pathways	TBD – education, metro WIAs, and community-based organizations all critical here	Plus 180 days	Data Work Team, educational institutions	1. Understanding of existing programs and services that can be leveraged and connected (including areas of duplication/overlap), and of areas where new programs and services are needed.
4.4	Identify existing training/education that needs to be retooled, or new education/training that needs to be developed to support industry needs	Technical colleges, K-12, industry, possibly 4-year colleges; metro WIAs	Plus 180 days	K-16 educational institutions	Responsive support/wrap-around services that will assist students/workers progress through pathways successfully.
4.5	Identify and begin to address barriers to employment for disadvantaged workers entering the pathway within the target sector	Technical colleges, K-12, industry, CBOs, metro WIAs	Plus 180 days	Social service, Community and Faith-based organizations. Incorporate promising practices around US	Enhanced understanding of education and employment barriers, and ways to overcome them.
4.6	Launch the Industry Partnership pilot(s)	**Go to 2.6, 3.4 and 6.10**	Plus 200 days		
4.7	Explore funding opportunities to maintain sector teams already established and for the establishment of new teams as the need arises.		Plus 200 days and ongoing	Access to foundations and other regional funders	Plan for funding sector strategies over the long-term.
4.8	Evaluate impacts/outcomes and refine and improve strategies as needed	Consortium engages outside evaluator and/or surveys employers and jobseeker users. Will require ongoing engagement with participating employers and students/workers to solicit feedback and recommendations for enhancement.	Plus 365 days	Define measures of success and value for: ▪ Employers ▪ Students/workers ▪ Systems change (e.g., improved collaboration among partners, better leveraging and alignment of budgets and other resources, etc.)	Continuous improvement and increasing value and results for employers and students/workers.
5.0 Form a Regional Data Team to examine the existing labor market resources in the region and the data needs of the regional partners, optimize the use of available platforms and reports, and work to ensure alignment across partners and with sector strategies and local/regional program design					
5.1	Contact ARC to request they serve as the regional data collector.	Mayor's Office	30 days after recommendation is accepted.	Initiation by Mayor's Office. Not sure if ARC would require additional funding. (ARC has a regional reach. Mayor is a member, ARC should have the capacity and platform.)	ARC accepts expanded role as collector/ compiler and disseminator of data from variety of regional sources.

	Key Goal/Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
5.2	ARC invites potential partners to meeting, and convenes	ARC, with partners	Plus 45 days	ARC may require pooled or other funding to assume full role. WIA areas and other partners could pool funds to enable ARC's role; could appeal to State WIB for special demonstration funding.	ARC convenes meeting and achieves buy-in from partners to serve on Regional Data Team, and to participate in next steps.
5.3	Collect/organize data, with assistance from existing partners in completing the following tasks: • Identify data elements needed • Design formats for ongoing presentation of information • Identify who currently holds these data • Identify gaps in data • Identify who will fill gaps	ARC, with partners	Plus 120 days	Emory, GA State, GA Tech, and Kennesaw State Universities; Federal Reserve Bank Other data sources (NOTE: A lengthy list of possible data sources is included in the text description for this Team.)	Agreement for all relevant regional data to be combined on one platform (existing ARC platform).
5.4	Regional Data Team reviews/modifies/expands/contracts data compilation	ARC, universities, TCSG, GDOL, Board of Regents, Federal Reserve Bank, others TBD	Plus 220 days and on an annual or semi-annual basis thereafter (whenever sectors, formats or other key items need to be revisited or updated)	Data experts from major data-producing entities; Sector Strategies Work Team	Refinement and validation of data collected/ displayed by ARC.
5.5	Regional decision makers convene to share/make collective decisions on sector strategies, program design, shared initiatives and move forward.	Atlanta Committee for Progress, Metro WIAs, tech and 4-year colleges, K-12, GDOL, CBOs, labor, business.	Plus 365 days	Atlanta Committee for Progress acts as convener to get business people to the table AFTER ARC gets the data together. Team meets annually/ semiannually to continue discussion. Reps from all major regional partners in talent development included. Meeting location, logistics.	Consensus on regional sectors/ strategies, discussion of localized/ tailored approaches, identification of overlaps and opportunities for collaborative implementation of some initiatives.
6.0 Develop a system to share industry information and organize and deliver business services in a collaborative, sector-based fashion among the five metro Atlanta workforce areas					
6.1	Discuss concept with the other four workforce areas	Atlanta WIB and/or AWDA	Plus 30 days	Leadership from City of Atlanta required	Agreement to proceed among the five areas.
6.2	Discuss concept with Georgia DOL	Discuss with Commissioner Mark Butler and Chief of Staff Brooke Lucas	Plus 30 days	Leadership from City of Atlanta required	Decision by DOL to participate.
6.3	Discuss concept with Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MAC); request their assistance to convene initiative from employer side	City would reach out to MAC President and to Brian McGowan	Plus 30 days	MAC leadership	Agreement to assist with and participate in the process in an ongoing manner.

	Key Goal/Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
6.4	Conduct a listening session with selected employers in key growth sectors	• Metro WIA reps • WIB members (invited) • GA DOL (depending on 6.3) • MAC • Key business reps	Plus 60 days	Metro Atlanta Chamber - MAC to host Involve chair of SS Work Team in determination of key sectors	Input on needs of employers and how they would like such an approach structured.
6.5	Design and administer a survey to get broader business input	Metro WIA staff MAC	Plus 75 days	MAC to send survey and collect data	Additional employer input received and opportunity to let businesses know this approach is coming.
6.6	Staff of metro WIAs and key WIB members discuss findings and begin to design regional business approach. Coordinate with Regional Data Team to align workforce intelligence.	Metro WIA reps WIB members GA DOL MAC Chair, Data Work Team	Plus 90 days	Promising practices, and perhaps a facilitator/consultant	Initial approach designed
6.7	Present concept to WIB Chairs and State WIB	Metro WIA directors WIB members State WIB	Plus 120 days		Understanding of approach, State WIB on board and offering to assist with costs (e.g., CRM).
6.8	Convene first meeting of WIA areas, GA DOL, MAC to develop strategic vision, core values, draft measures of success and data sharing protocol	Metro WIA directors/reps Georgia DOL MAC Other potential partners	Plus 150 days	MAC as convener?	Agreement reached on framework and division of staff into sectors.
6.9	Briefing/orientation for business services staff in WIA areas and GA DOL	Metro WIA reps GA DOL MAC	Plus 180 days	Location – Metro Chamber?	Staff understanding of concept and roles
	the two targeted key industry sectors identified by Sector Strategies Team and Regional Industry Partnership	Georgia DOL Metro Chamber	See 4.6	Teams	refine approach as needed
6.11	Develop/acquire and Implement CRM	TBD, but a shared expense	Plus 180-240 days	Funding needed after business requirements are developed.	Customer Relations Management system installed and utilized.
6.12	Full roll out of concept, using industry sectors identified by SS Team.	Metro WIA reps Georgia DOL Metro Chamber	Plus 365 days		Each key industry sector has designated Business Rep(s) in the region; services to employers delivered collaboratively.

APPENDICES LIST

The following Appendices are available:

- Online at the addresses noted
- Scanned via QR Code

Appendix A
Building a 21st Century Talent Development Organization for the City of Atlanta
http://goo.gl/tGsZjg

Appendix B
WIA by the Numbers
http://goo.gl/bQcUI9

Appendix C
Gap Analysis Report
http://goo.gl/m0lLFk

Appendix D
Recommended Leadership Characteristics for New City of Atlanta WIB Chair
http://goo.gl/gAeGaA

Appendix E
Draft Team Charter
http://goo.gl/nO8iPZ

Appendix F
Focus Group Discussions and Plans
http://goo.gl/5OdCzx

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Name	Organization
Albrechtson, Keven	Americas Mart Atlanta
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Bailey, James	Operation Hope
Bartleet, Matthew	Mayor's Office
Brawner, Rob	Atlanta Beltline Partnership
Browning, Christine	Year Up Atlanta
Butler, Mark	Georgia Department of Labor
Callahan, Larry/Nault, Beth	Grady Hospital
Cherry, Pedro	Georgia Power Company
Conde, Tamika	AAEP Foundation SCSEP
Cornett, Cheryl	Goodwill Industries of N. Georgia
Craig, Harold	Atlanta Technical College
Dawkins, LaShanda	MARTA
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Dragon, Yvonne	Georgia Tech Minority Business Development Center
Dresner, Faye	Year Up Atlanta
Dunson, Corinne	Atlanta Transportation Union Local 732
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Flake-Johnson, Nancy	Urban League of Greater Atlanta
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Keiser, Natalie	Center for Working Families
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Walker, Varonia	DeKalb Workforce Agency
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Wise, Lance Lamont	Urban League of Greater Atlanta

mahernet.com

3535 Route 66, Bldg. 4 • Neptune, NJ 07753 • 732-918-8000