Workforce Development Needs Review

Bill McCoy and Hannah Guerrier

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Literature Review on Recent Workforce Development Needs Assessment Conducted in the Goodwill of the Southern Piedmont Service Area
Introduction

Two states. Eighteen counties. Over two million people (2,385,753).¹ Eleven percent unemployment this past January.² Approximately forty-four percent with a high school diploma or less.³ Seventy-seven percent graduation rate among twenty-one school districts in June 2011.⁴⁵ Nine workforce development boards. Two regional partnerships. Countless numbers of government departments and nonprofit organizations. One goal: to equip job seekers with skills desirable by area employers in efforts to improve both individual standards of living and the local economy at large.

In March 2012, Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont contracted UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to conduct a literature review of recent needs assessments surrounding workforce development administered in their eighteen-county region and to extrapolate the major findings from these reports. Looking back as far as 2008, which coincidentally was the height of the most recent recession, online research and direct contact with the area’s key workforce development organizations revealed just over twenty relevant reports. From a considerate and intentional analysis of these reports, three main themes emerged:

- **Coordination and collaboration among service providers and area employers is essential.** Surfacing time and again, reports emphasized the need for system coordination to reduce unnecessary service duplication, collaboration to develop a standardized soft skills curriculum, creation of a shared database to track participant program enrollment and outcomes, and stronger associations with employers to increase work experience opportunities.

- **While dislocated workers remain a target population for workforce development programs, three additional populations – disconnected youth, returning veterans and seniors – have a growing need for specific workforce services.** Some of these groups – like low-income, out-of-school youth – have been present for some time, while others – like Afghanistan and Iraq veterans and seniors with newly diminished retirement funds – have emerged more recently.

- **Gaps in workforce services emphasized that soft skills training was the most valuable and most lacking.** Many reports also endorsed a case management approach to workforce development, with organizations either providing additional alleviating services (including transportation, day care, food stamps, etc) or referrals to other organizations for these needs. Career development (post-entry position employment) and specific occupational skills (per the area’s growing industries) were highlighted as well.

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Target Skills Needed

Ostensibly, the first question that any workforce development program should ask in its evaluation is whether or not it is providing training on valuable skills. More importantly, is it providing training on skills that are valuable to employers in the area? With the recent housing crisis and recession, major and growing industries in the Charlotte metropolitan area have changed. Manufacturing is down, biotechnology is up. Construction and financial services have declined; healthcare is on the rise. Interestingly enough, however, report after report has emphasized the need for soft skills – not specific occupational skills – training among prospective employees.

Soft skills cover a broad range of proficiencies from budgeting and resume writing to teamwork and punctuality. These skills – variously and often vaguely referred to as life skills, job readiness skills, pre-employment skills and basic skills – are valuable across all economic sectors. According to a recent survey of North Carolina employers, improved soft skills training would be the most valuable training programs offered by workforce development organizations. Of these soft skills, the two in shortest supply are communication/interpersonal skills and critical and analytical thinking. Nearly every needs assessment, with scopes ranging from general to specific populations, mentioned the need for standardized soft skills training.

While soft skills training was surely emphasized, specific occupational skills – or employment skills – training did not go unnoticed. According to the North Carolina employer survey, the occupational skills in shortest supply are customer service/sales and skilled trades. In addition to workforce development analyses, most counties in the Goodwill region have undergone industry and labor analyses in recent years to identify which sectors and occupations are growing and which are declining. As each county has its own unique set of resources, occupational training programs should be tailored to these specific area needs.

Career development was also a topic of concern among the workforce development reports reviewed. Most highlighted the fact that programs often ‘forget about’ participants once they obtain an entry-level position, providing little or no support for retention and/or advancement in these jobs. These reports emphasized the need to engage participants with longer term career counseling and support, as opposed to continuously matching them with different entry-level jobs. While the need was made clear, there were few details beyond the named “career and personal development” support needed to guide this suggestion in implementation.

Finally, and potentially most costly, a common suggestion in multiple reports was for a case management approach to workforce development. Often participants face more than training barriers to employment, including needs for transportation, childcare, food stamps, substance abuse treatment, domestic

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“Focus group participants specifically mentioned… the need for continuous coaching on soft skills. Breaking old habits and developing new competencies in how to communicate, dress and present oneself in a room with others requires more than one class session… Finding and hiring job seekers with good soft skills, regardless of skill level, is a clearly stated priority for employers.”

Workforce Development Sector Analysis (2011, p.24, 29)

“Entry-level jobs are too often viewed as the end game for job seekers participating in employment and training programs… moving from minimum wage job to minimum wage job traps people in poverty with no way out”

Workforce Development Sector Analysis (2011, p. 27)

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7 Ibid, 7.
8 Ibid, 6.
abuse counseling and money management. In reality, few if any organizations are able to independently offer a case management approach in workforce development or otherwise. However, a collaborative referral system is not an impossible goal. This need was specifically mentioned for disconnected youth and returning area veterans, as these populations (and others) can easily get lost in the fragmented service system.

"For many job seekers, basic needs go unmet such as housing, childcare and transportation, which only make the challenge of securing and holding a job more difficult... Agencies and institutions working with these job seekers may not be fully aware of the needs and/or do not have the capacity to address them..."

*Workforce Development Sector Analysis (2011, p. 21)*

**Target Populations**

While most workforce development programs are addressed to a one-size-fits-all job-seeking population, certain populations would benefit greatly from tailored programming to meet their collective needs. Some of these groups are emerging from the rubble of the recent recession and wars while others have long been in need of specific programming.

**Disconnected youth**, ages 14 to 24 years, have long been an unreached population in the Charlotte region. Recent reports have defined disconnected youth in various terms, including: youth not in school and unemployed, alternative school students, adjudicated youth, pregnant or parenting teens, youth in or aging out of foster care, homeless youth, low-income youth and youth struggling with substance abuse. In general, these young adults lack a high school diploma, much less plans for postsecondary education, limiting their options in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy. Over the past few years, many programs have risen to meet the challenges and needs of this important group, such as the 2009 Summer Youth Employment Program (throughout North Carolina) and the Goodwill Youth Jobs Connection (in Mecklenburg County). While many of their needs are similar to their adult counterparts – like participant tracking and real work experience – some components, like career technical education, could be made available in the public middle or high schools settings to deter dropouts in the first place. Recommendations include:

- Integrating vocational skills into academic curriculums
- Utilizing youth leaderships within youth workforce development programs through peer mentoring, teaching, coaching, advocacy and youth councils
- “Offer[ing] structured opportunities for parents and other significant adults in the youth’s life to engage in the participant’s program experience”

The recent recession has led to dramatic downsizing, with companies going ‘lean’ in the face of financial hardships. Many **dislocated workers** have resulted, with skills no longer as useful in obtaining a position. Much of the area’s dislocation was due to a steady decline in its manufacturing sector, leaving many blue-collar workers with very specific skills and low educational attainment without work. While some of these workers have made the transition, most must be retooled to qualify for jobs of similar pay within the new economy, such as the case for Kannapolis workers when Pilotex Corporation closed its manufacturing plant and it was replaced with a new University of North Carolina Research Campus. Similarly, many **seniors** have approached retirement age, only to realize that their safety net had gone with the implosion of the

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10 Ibid, 34.

11 Ibid, 35.

12 Ibid, 38.
financial market. Both groups now require retooling for the current job market. While there are many programs targeted at dislocated workers, such as North Carolina’s Adult and Dislocated Worker Program and the Charlotte Area Workforce Recovery Program (both funded by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act), programs targeted specifically at seniors in this group are fewer and farther between. While seniors can qualify for the WIA programs, the only North Carolina workforce development program specifically targeted at seniors is the Senior Community Service Employment program, which served less than 600 individuals during the 2010-11 year.13

Right now a significant amount of attention is being given to veterans of the Iraqi and Afghanistan conflicts. When compared to some of the other groups mentioned here, this is a relatively small but important group. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans faced a national unemployment rate of 10.3% in March 2012, compared to 8.2% unemployment among non-veterans.14 In the 10-county region surrounding Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the Veterans Initiative Project exemplifies collaboration with this target population in mind. Bringing together the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, North Carolina’s Eastern Region Military Growth Task Force, the NC Department of Commerce, the US Department of Labor, Coastal Carolina Community College and local JobLink sites, this initiative aims to connect veterans with training and ultimately, jobs.15 In our metropolitan area, Charlotte Bridge Home is currently sponsoring a needs assessment for exactly this population in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. While the full report has not yet been published, an executive summary was recently released indicating that employment is the number one challenge among returning veterans.16 As they transition into the civilian workforce, military veterans would benefit more specifically from:

- Assistance in translating their military skills to civilian vernacular and obtaining verifiable civilian credentials17
- Quick and appropriate referrals among all organizations serving veterans, especially within the workforce development sector18
- Experience in the civilian workforce through on-the-job training opportunities19
- “Career planning and training opportunities that may help veterans leverage their military skills”20
- Services that helped both veterans and employers deal with the mental and/or physical disabilities that many returning veterans acquire connected with their service; of particular concern is Post

16 Morris, Carol, Transitioning from the Military to the Civilian Workforce in Charlotte-Mecklenburg: The #1 Challenge of Returning OIF/OEF Veterans (Charlotte, NC: Charlotte Bridge Home, 2012), 1.
17 Ibid, 2.
18 Ibid, 7-8.
19 Ibid, 7.
20 Ibid, 7.
Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as individuals must deal both with their handicap and society’s stereotype of this disorder within the workplace.21

System Changes

At the center of almost all of the needs analyses is a set of core system changes suggested for the improvement of workforce development delivery. While each suggestion could be implemented individually, they are inextricably intertwined and if implemented together, would result in the greatest community benefit.

First on this wish list of system changes is for coordination and collaboration among service providers, including a central data system. Often, participants are lost in a myriad of programs, enrolled with multiple service providers for various – and sometimes duplicate – services. In North Carolina alone, a recent legislative report identified “22 programs administered by six state agencies and one nonprofit that provide workforce development services at more than 500 local sites”. 22 The only nonprofit identified by the report is the NC Rural Center; these numbers do not appear to account for the multitude of the nonprofit workforce development programs available, like those of Goodwill. Establishing a means of coordination for the workforce development sector could help reduce duplicate services and enhance those services being provided. Further, a central database of workforce development programs could include information on area service providers, the programs they provide, participants in each of the programs, employers participating in work experience programs, and supplementary service providers for referrals. Such a wealth of information could help all workforce development service providers, regardless of the programs they themselves offer, assist job seekers with greater breadth and depth.

To measure the effectiveness of any program, data is essential. However, data and tracking is one of the components most lacking in workforce development programs. In addition to collaboration between service providers on general program delivery, development of a systemic approach to tracking workforce development program participants is an important step towards evaluation and data-based improvements. Presently, most programs track participants for no more than six months to a year post-completion, only looking for short-term employment numbers as successes. In fact, according to a recent report in Mecklenburg County alone, researchers were unable to determine either how many adults were participating in area programs or the “collective outcomes” of this participation due to a lack of a tracking system.23 Further, a General Assembly report in North Carolina just recommended the development and mandated collection of statewide performance measures for its workforce development programs.24 Using a systematic combination of multiple evaluation techniques like surveys, focus groups and individual interviews, individual workforce development programs and the sector as a whole will be better able to answer the questions regarding which programs are successful and financially efficient.

The importance of soft skills training was mentioned previously in this report and repeatedly in the needs analyses reviewed. One item of interest, particularly from the employer perspective, was the need for a standardized core curriculum surrounding the workforce development programs with specific focus on soft skills. Currently, Career Readiness Certificates through Work Keys have been shown as an useful tool.

21 Ibid, 2.
24 North Carolina General Assembly, 30.
for certifying general academic aptitudes; 68 percent of North Carolina employers surveyed indicated that this work readiness skills training and certification is either useful or very useful.\textsuperscript{25} However, there is no similar set of goals and assessments to measure worker soft skills. To this end, one report suggests integrating “some [agreed-upon] evidence-based curricula components of soft skills training” into sector workforce training programs to provide a contextualized learning approach; however, it discloses that “little to no discussion has transpired among service providers across the sector – with input from employers – about the expectations and competencies for soft skills and the best approaches to teaching them”.\textsuperscript{26}

Finally, one of the largest requests of participants was for real-world experience. According to a survey of North Carolina employers, 46 percent indicated that the primary reason for turning an applicant away is lack of relevant work experience.\textsuperscript{27} Workforce development programs have a chance to combat this issue by building upon partnerships with area employers – particularly in growing industries – to offer internships, on-the-job training and other work experience. Because this often comes at a cost to employers, workforce development programs might need to meet them halfway; area expert panelists stated that “employers need incentives to invest in OTJ training”.\textsuperscript{28} Also, the more of these experiences that are paid, the better, as job seekers often face financial strains that prevent them from utilizing beneficial internships and other work experience opportunities. Further, collaboration with area employers would help workforce development programs stay apprised of skills and careers that are in demand locally.\textsuperscript{29} One example of success in this arena is the Apprenticeship Carolina program in South Carolina. Launched in 2007 and highlighted at the national level, this program currently partners with 305 companies to provide paid apprenticeships, and in exchange, companies receive a $1,000-a-year state tax credit; at present, South Carolina boasts of more than 3,100 apprentices at work.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{25} North Carolina Business Services, 10.
\textsuperscript{26} Carol Morris Consulting and The Lee Institute, 35 & 29.
\textsuperscript{27} North Carolina Business Services, 12.
Conclusion & Recommendations

The review of the recent studies commissioned by Goodwill as well as a number of other studies commissioned by various groups involved with workforce development in the Goodwill service region indicates an amazing level of consistency in findings. The major themes or primary findings have probably not changed appreciably over the years; however, because of the recent severe recession, the high unemployment rate, dislocated workers, returning veterans, and the continuing need of those young people who have either dropped out before graduating from high school or did not pursue additional training after high school graduation, the need for comprehensive workforce development programs is even more pronounced.

The most common theme is the need for collaboration and coordination among the service providers. To give the state-wide context, the following quote from the Final Report to the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee: State and Local Improvements Needed for Workforce Development System Integration and Accountability, March 28, 2012 is provided:

“North Carolina’s workforce development system is a complicated array of 22 programs administered by seven entities that provide services at more than 500 local sites. State-level leadership and the structure of 23 local workforce development areas compromise the system’s effectiveness… State and local program coordination have failed to create an integrated, effective workforce development system”.

Further, a myriad of funding streams – national, state, and local – each with its own mandate provide the governmental funding for the workforce development programs.

With this context, the lack of coordination and collaboration at the local and regional levels is not surprising; however, reports continually suggest that the effectiveness of the existing programs is problematic without an integrated, coordinated approach.

The second most common theme is that a tracking of participants in programs is absolutely necessary in order to determine the effectiveness of the respective programs. Again the findings from the legislative report mentioned above summarize the problem: “Despite investments in a data system to track participants, there are no statewide performance measures for the workforce development system”.

At the local level there seems to be no investment in any sort of data system for tracking participants, although some of the programs make an effort to maintain some sort of contact for a relatively short period of time. But the findings from these nominal tracking systems seem more anecdotal than systematic.

The third theme relates to the needs of the clients of the workforce development programs. The systemic change most needed is a common curriculum that is used by all of the service providers. This common curriculum is not related to job specific training but to pre-employment training. Exactly what is included in pre-employment training is not clear from the studies reviewed. People use different categories to describe this need, and it is not clear whether the various types of training are inclusive or whether each has specific skills. Some of the words and phrases used are life skills, soft skills, job readiness, pre-employment skills, remedial academic work and others. Among the skills and behaviors included are punctuality, interviewing skills, how to dress, basic academic skills in preparation for job training, resume writing, how to work in a team, what it means to work, how to deal with supervision, and the list goes on.

A fourth theme and one closely associated with the third theme is that the multiple barriers that prevent people from becoming successful participants in the civil and economic life of the community have to be addressed. Without wrap-around services for such barriers as transportation, child

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31 North Carolina General Assembly, 1.
32 Ibid.
care, domestic abuse, criminal backgrounds, and preparing and executing a personal budget, the actual job training is likely to be unsuccessful. Most of the studies suggest that a case management approach is needed.

A fifth theme relates to who needs the services. The largest group with needs has not changed: it is the youth who have dropped out of school before graduating or have graduated but decided to not pursue additional training. In addition to the youth, dislocated workers, older adults who dropped out of the work force but need to reengage due to economic circumstances, and veterans returning from the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars are also prime candidates for workforce development services.

A sixth theme is the need to engage employers in everything that is done on the workforce development front. Employers hold the ultimate keys to the success of this system: jobs for the people completing the workforce programs and apprenticeships and related programs for young people who have never been employed.

The seventh theme actually is related to the curriculum of job-specific training. Studies point to the need for that training to be as closely allied with the needs of the local economy as possible. Technology should be emphasized in this training. And the training should have a strong career advancement component. Although the outcomes of the training are difficult to assess if the participants are not tracked, anecdotal information suggests that many of those completing job training programs move through a succession of low-pay, entry-level jobs without ever moving into a career ladder.

These seven themes are universal – every report and study at some point mentions each one of these topics. The studies successfully describe the “what” about these themes, but they provide little guidance on the “how” to do something about solving the issues that are related to the themes. Both of the studies commissioned by Goodwill do include some “best practice” information.

The next step would seem to be the development of an implementation strategy for taking on one or more of these themes. How can the system become more integrated? How can tracking be done? How can we get employers to participate meaningfully in the program? How can we design a common curriculum to be used by all programs to instruct on soft or life skills? How can we find work experience opportunities for our younger clients who have had no job? What kind of model might we employ to provide wrap-around services for our clients? How can we introduce more technology into our programming? How can we make our training more responsive to the needs of the economy?
## Appendix A: Workforce Development Board Information

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Centralina Workforce Development Board
*Anson, Cabarrus, Iredell, Lincoln, Rowan, Stanly, Union*
525 North Tryon Street, 12th Floor
Charlotte, NC 28202
Phone: 704.348.2717
www.centralinaworks.com

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board
*Mecklenburg*
700 Parkwood Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28205
Phone: 704.336.6270
www.charlotteworks.org

Gaston County Workforce Development Board
*Gaston*
330 N. Marietta Street, 2nd Floor
Gastonia, NC 28052
Phone: 704.862.6624
www.gastonworks.com

Lumber River Workforce Development Board
*Richmond, Scotland, Hoke, Robeson, Bladen*
30 CJ Walker Road, COMtech Park
Pembroke, NC 28372
Phone: 910.618.5533
www.lumberriverwdb.org

Region C Workforce Development Board
*McDowell, Cleveland, Polk, Rutherford*
111 West Court Street
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
Phone: 828.287.2281
www.regionc.org/WDB

Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board
*Alamance, Moore, Montgomery, Orange, Randolph*
221 South Fayetteville Street
Asheboro, NC 27204
Phone: 336.629.5141
www.regionalpartnershipwdb.org

Pee Dee Workforce Investment Board
*Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Marlboro*
1319 South Fourth Street
Hartsville, SC 29550
Phone: 843.669.3138
www.peedeewib.org

SC Works Catawba
*Chester, Lancaster, York*
215 Hampton Street
Rock Hill, SC 29731
Phone: 803.327.9041
www.catawbaonestop.com

Competitive Workforce Alliance
*Alexander, Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Union, Chester, Chesterfield, Lancaster, York*
www.agreatworkforce.com

North Carolina’s Southeast
*Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, New Hanover, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland*
707 West Broad Street
Elizabethtown, NC 28337
Phone: 800.787.1333
www.ncse.org
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<td>Preparing Our Youth for Work</td>
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Annotated Bibliography


A presentation given by local consulting group 10-x and contracted researcher Dr. Charles Duke (Clemson University) on Lancaster’s workforce. The report made the following major conclusions: more skills are needed for higher tech positions (as opposed to manufacturing); some companies do not understand ReadySC and OneStop training; collaboration is needed among government agencies; the lack of worker transportation is a disadvantage; soft skills training is essential, especially for younger workers who have technical skills but low work ethic.


A report detailing the workforce barriers faced by disconnected adults in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area after the recent recession and the resources currently available through both public and private organizations. The report concludes with five sector-wide issues to be addressed with priority:

1. The workforce sector generally operates as a patchwork of organizations working independently.
2. Weak linkages exist between the sector and the employer/demand-side of workforce development.
3. Employment expectations for low-skilled workers are often too low, with entry-level jobs seen as the “end game”.
4. Individualized needs of job seekers are often not identified, and resources to address them are limited.
5. The continuum of services for job seekers is not fully developed in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.


This paper details the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board’s proposed plan to improve its services in light of the recent recession and current budget constraints. The changes include consolidating JobLink resources to one central Workforce Center, creating an extensive network of SHARE Network Access Points (SNAP) sites with internet-based job search assistance, developing a web portal that provides online classes, career management and assessment tools, social media and information and links to job-market intelligence.


Adopted in November 2010 after a thirty month planning process, the Vision 2020 Plan is a “guide to community decision making regarding growth and development, public facility investments, regulation of land uses, and economic development initiatives” in Rock Hill, South Carolina. This planning resulted in seven priority policy directions, which were: focus on redevelopment & infill, achieve sustainability, plan for Dave Lyle Corridor East, enhance mobility & connectivity, promote redevelopment & infill development along key corridors, create livable places, and leverage resources through partnerships & coordination. Providing statistics on the existing economic conditions (among others), this report includes recommendations for collaboration among economic development partners and targeting of growing area industries.

Commissioned by United Way of Central Carolinas, this community needs assessment utilized review of previous needs assessments, data analysis, online survey of local organizations and expert panel focus groups to identify the region’s needs and gaps in provided services. These needs fell into four main categories – Education, Housing & Poverty, Health & Mental Health, and Systemic Change. With regards to workforce development, panelists agreed that employers need incentives – primarily financial – to invest in on-the-job training over staffing agencies. With high unemployment rates and changing area industries, this need is ever higher.


This study reviews the changes that occurred between the initial 2005 State of the Workforce Report and 2009, in the midst of the most recent recession. Drawing on secondary data and stakeholder interviews, this paper concludes the following:

- Job seekers still outnumber available jobs
- Tighter focus, single vision help unify workforce strategies
- Improved use of technology aids economic growth and workforce flexibility
- Low graduation rates will cause employers to by-pass the region
- Potential for entrepreneurs remains strong
- Public transportation is better now, but more is needed

Further, new needed employee skills have evolved since 2005, including business’ global context, entrepreneurial spirit, technology-drive communications, collaborative planning, and job retention skills.


Conducted five years after the initial region workforce development report, this paper examines the two regions’ opportunities and challenges as deducted from secondary data analysis and stakeholder interviews. According to these, employers are looking for new skills in employees, including team skills, multi-tasking skills, global context and higher educational attainment levels. Additionally emphasized was the need for regional collaboration in goal setting, infrastructure, shared intelligence and accountability.


An overview report on the challenges faced by returning veterans in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. Taken from more than 30 one-on-one interviews with organizations serving veterans and several focus groups with specific veteran populations, this assessment concludes that the key issues affecting the joblessness of veterans include:

- Difficulty in translating their unique military skills into civilian occupations.
- Not having resume writing, interviewing, and networking skills of their civilian peers.
- Dealing with mental and/or physical disabilities that may limit their employment options.
- Finding employers who understand the value, discipline, work ethic and skills returning veterans can bring to a job.
• Dealing with perceptions/fear among employers about PTSD and its impact in the workplace.
• Deployment of members of the Guard or Reserves.
• Lacking formal education.
• Access to/retention in postsecondary education.

The report lists the available veteran-specific resources in the Charlotte area and identifies ways that each type of organization (player) can contribute to solving this dilemma. The full assessment report, along with veteran resource guide, is set to be released in spring 2012.


This report details the findings of a seven-week survey from employers in all 100 counties of North Carolina. With questions regarding skill needs, gaps, value and challenges in offering employment, this survey updated that of 2007 and addressed issues in light of the recent recession. Key findings included:
• There are skills shortages in Customer Service/Sales and Skilled Trades.
• Communication and Interpersonal Skills represent a primary gap in workplace soft skills.
• Businesses indicated that improved Soft Skills/Personal Effectiveness training would be of most value.
• Businesses are more often relying on In-House Training resources to deliver training, as opposed to community colleges.
• Employers say there is a strong need for standardized work readiness skills training and certification.
• Job applicants are frequently rejected due to lack of Relevant Work Experience.


This short report provides information on North Carolina workforce development programs that have benefited from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus money and their outcomes. Programs included in the report are:
• Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs
• 2009 Summer Youth Employment Program
• JobsNOW “12 in 6” Initiative
• Charlotte Area Workforce Recovery Project
• Rural Community Mobilization Project
• Offender Employment & Training Initiative
• Veterans Initiative Project


Examining the state of North Carolina’s workforce in 2010 as well as the impact of the 2008-09 recession, this study assesses the state’s ability to meet current and future workforce challenges. Major workforce challenges identified include:
• Because of industry structural change, worker dislocation sped up during the recent recession and workers in low-skill, middle-wage jobs competed for fewer positions.
• Most of the unemployed are lower-skilled workers and in order to obtain good-paying jobs, they will need to increase their skill sets with education and credentials beyond high school diplomas.
• Certain industries like manufacturing, finance and construction downsized and these workers are more likely to lose their positions and need retraining.
• The recession hit both the young and the old, slowing baby boomer retirements and increasing difficulties for new workers without much job experience on their resumes.


This detailed report analyzes the needs of the workforce development system at the local and state levels in North Carolina for administrative and organizational improvements. Among its many findings, a repeated theme is the need for coordination and collaboration among the “22 programs administered by seven entities that provide services at more than 500 local sites” and that systematic participant tracking is essential to improving the system based on outcomes measures. The report additionally details each of the current North Carolina workforce development programs by their services for individuals, services for businesses, exclusive eligibility criteria, and funding sources.


This report tracks multiple economic, demographic, educational and business indicators to help better define the opportunities and challenges that North Carolina’s Southeast region faces in promoting economic growth. As North Carolina’s Southeast is an collaborative marketing effort of an eleven-county region in southeast North Carolina, its mission is to connect interested companies to advantageous locations in the area and in so doing, create jobs and investment for the community. The data is presented in a marketing manner for these potential companies. With regards to Scotland County, it had the highest unemployment rates in the region during both 2009 and 2010 as well as one of the region’s highest poverty rates consistently.


This report updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy developed in 2008 for the four-county region in western North Carolina. It provides an economic and demographic analysis of the region and its changes as well as explores key industries and occupations. In doing this, the report additionally offers recommendations based on the area’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Major recommendations include:

• Assist existing businesses to become globally competitive
• Establish an environmental conducive for entrepreneurial development
• Market emerging opportunities in agriculture and animal husbandry
• Promote expanded travel and tourism
• Invest in career counseling for students pursuing career and technical education
• Encourage worker transition into growth occupations
• Advocate for improvement in key transportation infrastructure
• Advocate for improvements in telecommunications infrastructure
• Encourage reuse of existing buildings
• Promote inter-county cooperation for water/sewer/natural gas systems
• Promote inter-county cooperation for regional economic development activities


Through a combination of secondary data analysis, focus groups, online surveys of youth, employers and school professionals, and interviews with civic and business leaders, employers, school officials and area youth service providers, this report offers an extensive look at both the need and supply of youth employment services in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. Commissioned by Goodwill of the Southern Piedmont and focusing on youth ages 14 to 24 years, this paper recommended the following:

• Split Goodwill Youth Job Connection (YJC) program in two: one for youth adults, the other for in-school youth
• Work experience is crucial and can happen through intensive/extensive public, private, non-profit collaboration
• Goodwill must track the success of participants
• Goodwill can and should be a coordinator/leader of a new, community-wide initiative for youth workforce development


This brief report compares and contrasts two recent reports commissioned by Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont relating to workforce development. The first focuses specifically on the Mecklenburg youth population while the second looks more broadly at service gaps and recommendations relating to dislocated workers. Despite the differences in focus, both papers recommended the following:

• Bring the members of the workforce development sector together to build a unified, system for workforce development
• Develop a system-wide tracking system
• Enhance community-based partnerships and opportunities
• Create better and more employer relationships and partnerships
• Increase real work experience opportunities for program participants
• Improve work/career exploration, planning, and development opportunities for participants
• Develop a case management (one-on-one tailored counseling and support) approach to services and support
• Improve soft skills curriculum and training
• Provide more motivational and energizing program experience

This report provides a detailed analysis of Chester County’s population growth, worker characteristics, income by industry and occupation, educational attainment, occupational projections, and industry breakdowns. Major points from this analysis include:

- Chester’s population has declined in recent years and while half of its workers live in the county, a significant number commute from York County.
- Because of population declines, its per capita income growth has been faster than that of the state.
- Industries with the highest potential in Chester include nondurable goods merchant wholesalers, nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing, and heavy and civil engineering construction.


This report provides a detailed analysis of Lancaster County’s population growth, worker characteristics, income by industry and occupation, educational attainment, occupational projections, and industry breakdowns. Major points from this analysis include:

- Lancaster’s population has grown faster than that of South Carolina and over sixty percent of its workers live in the county.
- Its per capita income remains below the state level and its growth has been slower than that of either the state or nation.
- Industries with the highest potential in Lancaster include nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, construction of buildings, miscellaneous manufacturing, and durable goods merchant wholesalers.


This report provides a detailed analysis of York County’s population growth, worker characteristics, income by industry and occupation, educational attainment, occupational projections, and industry breakdowns. Major points from this analysis include:

- York’s population has grown faster than that of South Carolina in recent years and future growth is expected to continue to outpace that of the state. While roughly sixty percent of its workers live in the county, a substantial number also commute from Mecklenburg County.
- While its per capita income remains above that of the state (but below that of the nation), York’s per capita income growth has been slower than both.
- Industries with the highest potential in York include telecommunications, wood product manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing, nondurable goods merchant wholesalers, ambulatory health care services, transportation equipment manufacturing, and paper manufacturing.
Towards the end of 2011, a four-person review team reviewed the Catawba Local Workforce Investment Board and found it in completion of only four of seven board standards. Intended to measure the board’s progress toward becoming high-performing, the report indicates that the board needs to work on the following:

- Increase the number of members in the area of business (currently two vacant seats) and add meeting minutes to online website.
- Create a comprehensive five-year strategic plan with input from and collaboration with major local stakeholders.
- Seek and utilize non-government resources (in addition to WIA resources) such as private sector, foundation and other public sources.

This report details how both local workforce investment boards and local workforce investment areas figure into South Carolina’s workforce development system. Describing the available programs and breaking down WIA funding, it makes four recommendations:

- Build upon the existing statewide One-Stop Delivery System
- Collaborate with the existing business-led Workforce Investment Boards
- Support strong collaboration and coordination between workforce development, education and economic development through the local Workforce Investment Boards
- Create more opportunities to align workforce development funding
### Appendix C: Reports in Progress

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<td>Veterans Employment</td>
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<td>NC's Southeast</td>
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<td>Workforce Analysis</td>
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Appendix D: Glossary of Workforce Development-Related Terms

These selected definitions are pulled directly from the following source:

Career Development: The outcome of actions on career plans as viewed from both individual and organizational perspectives. The outcomes desired by individuals range from status to job flexibility to monetary rewards, depending on the situation. Organizations’ desired outcomes include achieving the best match between people and jobs.

Career Pathways: A series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a pathway is designed to prepare the participant for the next level of education and employment.

Case-Management: A client-centered approach in the delivery of services designed to prepare and coordinate comprehensive employment plans and service strategies for participants, connecting the client to necessary workforce development and supportive services.

Dislocated Worker: An employee who has been laid off from his/her job because of a business cutback or plant closure.

Entry-Level: Jobs or occupations for which employers hire workers with little or no previous work experience or with relatively minimum training or education.

Industry: A group of businesses that engage in similar activities.

Job Readiness Services: Services that prepare individuals with basic information and resources to search for, find, and keep a job. Programs typically teach resume writing, interviewing skills, customer service, personal appearance, job search, computer literacy, and other basic information that new workers need in order to be successful in work.

On-the-Job Training: A type of vocational training in which the trainee learns skills at the work site while earning a wage. Often, employers are offered cash training reimbursements or other incentives to hire hard-to-employ people and train them on the job.

Postsecondary Education: Education beyond high school, including community college, technical colleges, universities, colleges that offer baccalaureate degree and higher, and private technical schools, as well as certified apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Postsecondary education and training can be provided in traditional classrooms, at worksites, and/or via distance learning facilities.

Soft Skills Training: A form of pre-employment training that prepares job seekers who have few job skills or little workplace experience. It provides job seekers with information on what it takes to be hired and to keep a job. Typical components in this training include the importance of a strong work ethic, punctuality and reliability, a positive attitude, dressing for success, effective interview techniques, budgeting, conflict resolution and how to get along with supervisors and coworkers.

Occupational Skills: Skills needed to practice a particular occupation or career. Typically these are “hard skills” (such as welding) rather than “soft skills” (such as punctuality), also called vocational skills.
**Supportive Services:** Non-employment related assistance provided to help clients overcome barriers of employment. Common examples include transportation passes, childcare assistance, healthcare, and substance abuse treatment.

**Workforce Development:** Assisting individuals, employers and communities achieve occupational competencies necessary for competitive advantage in the marketplace.