

**A Strategic Planning Approach
for
Workforce Development 2005**
*Setting the Stage
for a
Competitive Workforce*

Developed by the:

**Pee Dee and Regional Partnership
Workforce Investment Boards**

Submitted by:



CSW
corporation for a
skilled workforce

900 Victors Way, Suite 350
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
(734) 769-2900
(734) 769-2950 (fax)
John Metcalf
Tim Dunn

jmetcalf@skilledwork.org
tdunn@skilledwork.org

March 2005

LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY

Preface

The Pee Dee and Regional Partnership Workforce Investment Boards (the Boards) are pleased to present their first strategic plan for workforce development. The Boards are a private sector planning and policy-making entity, appointed by local elected officials representing the **Pee Dee Region**: Montgomery, Moore, and Richmond Counties and **Regional Partnership**: Alamance, Orange, and Randolph Counties.

The planning process, which began in October 2004, was an intense effort involving a cross section of the region. Its purpose was to gather primary and secondary data on the regions' workers and businesses, to engage citizens at the local level, and finally to use the information gathered to set goals and strategies that will guide the work of the Boards.

Under the direction of the Boards, work to develop this plan was supported with consultative services from CSW, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce of Ann Arbor, Michigan. We are especially appreciative of the citizens and businesses in the region that took the time to participate in the local community forum meetings.

A product of this development process includes **The Pee Dee and Regional Partnership *State of the Workforce Report 2005***. This report will be made available through the Boards' office.

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	5
Common Themes and Issues Facing the Workforce In Our Regions	7
Themes From Across the Regions	7
Underlying Issue Drivers	7
Other Issue Points Considered	8
The Plan For Leadership	9
Goals for the Workforce Development Boards	9
Priority Goals	9
Strategic Plan Issues and Their Goals.....	10
Integrating Collaborative Efforts	10
Workforce Issue Awareness	10
Meeting Employer Needs	11
Community Engagement.....	12
Our Preferred Future Over Time.....	13
Conclusions	13
Seizing the Opportunity to Lead	13

Introduction

A good quality of life is related to a good wage...

A good wage depends on a good job...

Good jobs are dependent on a strong, diversified economy...

A strong economy is dependent on a high quality education...

Quality education depends on healthy children and families...

Healthy children and families depend on vibrant communities! ¹

The above statement captures the essence of the challenges facing our regions' workers, employers, and communities. The regions, and the state of North Carolina, will contend with an economic environment that will be dynamic and in constant change. The effects of technology and the global nature of this country's economic landscape will force our businesses, our schools and workforce development system, and our governance entities to be flexible and in a continuous mode of upgrade and improvement in ways that we have not experienced.

Economic well-being is fundamentally about work and the myriad of factors that influence workers, their workplace, and their community. Our Boards must understand these labor market dynamics if we are to influence workforce, education, and economic development. Labor markets have undergone changes in our regions – shifts that have had a profound impact. Movement from industrial brawn based production to service employment and advanced manufacturing has been occurring; white-collar and gold collar workers are slowly replacing blue-collar workers. Such shifts have raised the skills and qualifications needed to hold certain service sector jobs, while at the same time requiring higher levels of skills in more traditional advanced sectors.

The Boards, through this planning process, are attempting to build a planning and policy infrastructure that can respond to the dynamic economic and labor market influences that currently exist. The core building blocks of this plan can be a blueprint for how the Boards will carry out work on a continuous basis. These core elements include the following:

- **Data Driven:** The Boards invested in gathering information about the regions' population, workers, education levels, and industrial/occupational trends. This investment led to the creation of **The Pee Dee and Regional Partnership State of the Workforce Report 2005**. This report assesses the current and emerging status of the region's labor market supply, demand and the emerging components. It will be updated periodically and used by the Boards for informed planning and policy development.

¹ North Carolina Progress Boards NC20/20 2001

- **Engaging the Community:** The Boards conducted four local community stakeholder forums. Leaders from a cross section of the communities came together to share with the Boards their perceptions of the responses needed at the local and state level regarding challenges to employers, workers, and the communities in the region. The Boards will continue to structure its work in ways that encourage broad partnerships and collaboration, and engage the communities in planning and carrying out this work.

This plan calls forth a *sense of urgency* on the part of the regions' civic, education, and business leadership, as well as the citizens in our communities. The regions have daunting challenges that must be addressed strategically over the long run. The Boards will work to build their capacity to influence solutions and to help provide the necessary leadership to translate this sense of urgency into realistic and strategic steps towards economic and workforce improvements.

Common Themes and Issues Facing the Workforce In Our Regions

Themes From Across the Regions

- Pee Dee and Regional Partnership are at a crossroads in defining the type of area that it is and wants to be
- There are national and global forces that are far greater than local and regional economies can impact
- Pee Dee and Regional Partnership must capitalize on positive industrial and occupational trends to create and maintain a competitive workforce advantage
- The workforce areas must position themselves to stem the tide of outbound commuting residents who are finding work in counties outside the two workforce areas
- Pee Dee and Regional Partnership should build on its labor force strengths including a highly skilled manufacturing oriented adult labor force and a sound post-secondary educational system, while also helping youth prepare for the workforce with a core set of competencies
- The Pee Dee and Regional Partnership regions must promote its high quality of life while also addressing infrastructure challenges and transportation issues
- Sector² based strategies are critical to growing the regions' economy, but understanding the similarities and differences have a dramatic impact on workforce, economic, and education policy

Underlying Issue Drivers

- **Adult Literacy:** Low literacy levels keep many residents out of contention for decent paying jobs, and exclude them from participation in training programs that can lead to better paying jobs
- **Aging Workforce:** Focus groups information coupled with the population data point toward a region that may not have a supply of workers in the future to fill the gap created by older workers exiting the labor force
- **Job Growth vs. Labor Force Growth Misalignment:** Overall the misalignment will have continuing negative effects on the regions. With an increasingly mobile workforce, the regions could lose more of its labor force due to the lack of jobs available to those who are seeking employment in the region.

² A sector can be defined as a concentration of companies and industries, which are interconnected by the markets they serve, and the products they produce, as well as the suppliers, trade associations and educational institutions.

- **Poverty:** In the Pee Dee Region, there are a significant number of people living in poverty. The region's poverty rate is higher than both the state and the nation. The higher overall poverty rate translates to higher single parent family poverty, higher youth poverty, and an increasing gap between the "haves" and the "have nots."
- **Population Growth:** The growth is significant and is a major factor facing the region. Significant population increases can be positive, but they do put stress on infrastructure like roads, transportation, social services, and education.
- **Affordable Housing:** Home ownership is at the top of the list for many Americans. From an employer's perspective, home ownership means a stable workforce that is less likely to pick up stakes and move to another region.
- **Holding Onto College Graduates:** While the highly skilled are highly prized by policy makers and business firms, they are also relatively hard to hold onto; more highly educated workers typically exhibit substantially greater mobility. Regional Partnership has the highest concentration of well-educated young professionals in the region and it will continue to produce high skilled and educated workers. However, keeping that demographic group, and encouraging new graduates to stay remains a major challenge.

Other Issue Points Considered

- **Lack of industry diversification**
 - Lack of labor force skills to transition to new industry sectors (for the new skill and knowledge based economy)
- **Lack of soft skills and basic employment skills for entry-level hires**
- **Lack of basic skill development for the emerging labor force leaving many youth unprepared for the new economy**
- **Technical and vocational education is undervalued compared to a college education**
- **Lack of entrepreneurial development**
 - Connecting economic development with the type of college degrees conferred to stimulate new business development
- **Persistent poverty issues due to a lack of infrastructure to promote wealth**
 - Job and wage development must be a major focus of government policy and economic development pursuits
 - Lack of regional planning

The Plan For Leadership

Goals for the Workforce Development Boards

The work of the Boards will be supported by a “can do” attitude of leadership and partnership building needed to improve the quality of life for the citizens in the Pee Dee and Regional Partnership regions. Our preferred future is for the regions and their citizens to have opportunities for good paying jobs, for businesses to move into the regions bringing good paying jobs, and for people to move to (or back to) the regions because of the opportunities. Our success will be measured by the progress made in the regions toward this preferred future.

Priority Goals

The Boards have worked diligently to create a strong organizational foundation to be able to identify and manage the region’s workforce issues. The intent is to move decision-making concerning workforce needs and employment and training services to the level that could best determine those needs and respond accordingly.

As the JobLink service delivery system continues to evolve, the Boards will become more strategic in its work. The Boards have the opportunity to forge collaborations and be the convener for conversations around finding solutions to workforce, education, and economic development issues in the region. Led by the private sector, the Boards are a unique mix of public, private, and civic representation. If developed and positioned properly, the Boards can influence change in our communities’ approach to the many factors that affect the economic, educational, and social viability of our communities.

We have some serious conditions in our regions that adversely affect employment opportunities and the quality of life for too many of our families. The Boards feel a sense of urgency to begin to provide the leadership, and to reach out to other leaders in the regions and in Raleigh, to begin to peck away at the things that are holding us back. This is a long-term challenge, but we must begin now.

Thus, we offer the following goals as a starting point in this journey. These initial goals are responsive to the regional data and community perspectives from the local forums that form the issues we must address. The Boards’ intent is to establish goals that are realistic, doable, and that will be only the beginning of longer-term goals and strategies to be assessed and updated each year.

Strategic Plan Issues and Their Goals

Integrating Collaborative Efforts

Issue Statement: At present, educational institutions, workforce training providers, economic developers, elected officials, community organizations, employers, and chambers of commerce are working separately in pursuit of their own goals. This creates “chaos” and confusion, thus, valuable resources are used ineffectively.

Goal: The Boards will convene the above groups to create awareness amongst citizens and elected officials of the issues facing this region

Assignment: Adhoc group reporting to the boards to:

1. contact elected officials and chambers of commerce to bring groups together
2. recommend and implement changes from the *state of the workforce report*
3. identify and secure resources to effect changes
4. target one major region workforce issue for implementation in 2006

Measurement: Our measures of success will be to:

1. convene group(s) before end of 2005 with at least ½ of those invited to attend
2. demonstrate consensus that there are problems in need of attention
3. identify a project to undertake in 2006
4. undertake project in 2006

Workforce Issue Awareness

Issue: There is a general lack of what the workforce issues are and their overall impact on our economy and quality of life. Too many of our regions’ citizens and stakeholders have a lack of understanding and have low expectations in the areas of required job skills, levels of education required and the impact of low work ethic.

Goal: Communicate workforce issues reported in the *state of the workforce report* and educate the community on their implications to our region

Assignment: Adhoc group in each county reporting to the boards to:

1. create awareness of issues through various media formats and outlets
2. create a speakers’ bureau with access to a “canned” presentation to present to stakeholder groups
 - a. PTOs
 - b. Senior citizens groups

- c. Rotary and Lions clubs
- d. Education groups and entities
- e. Local elected officials
- f. Faith based ministries
- g. Ethnic groups

Measurement: Our measures of success will be:

1. presentations made (number and group type)
2. evaluation of the process to determine level of awareness
 - h. surveys
 - i. forums

Meeting Employer Needs

Issue: The region is failing to meet the emerging needs of employers to provide them with the adequate numbers of employees who possess the required skills, education, and attitudes.

Goals: We will:

1. improve awareness of the issues of employers to all education providers
2. decrease the dropout rates
3. establish a curriculum to improve life skills of potential employees

Assignment: Adhoc group reporting to the Boards

Measurement: Our measures of success will be to:

1. conduct two education forums by end of first quarter 2006
2. decrease dropout rate by 10% by end of 2010
3. expand life skills curriculum and require ALL school systems to implement by school year 2006

Community Engagement

"Without engagement there is no lasting change." Michael Porter, professor, MIT

To create the lasting changes needed by the Pee Dee and Regional Partnership, community engagement is a necessity. During the strategic planning process, representatives of both Boards created a set of strategies and actions to effect community change through engagement. Following is the plan:

Strategies:

1. Create a campaign for change
2. Develop marketing presentations
3. Place articles in newspapers and periodicals
4. Meet with community leaders one-on-one

Actions:

1. Publish the *state of the workforce report* with an Executive Summary to all stakeholder groups and place on website of the Boards for general access by the public
2. Gather group of stakeholders and present the findings of the report

Measurements:

- By the end of 2005, we will accomplish the stated actions above

Resources Required

1. Cities and counties grants (funding)
2. Volunteers to serve on Boards Adhoc committees
3. Marketing dollars from WIA

Our Preferred Future Over Time

It is important that we identify and track the critical measures of success based on the goals listed above. We will review and update our goals periodically as economic and workforce conditions change. The outcomes of our collaborative work will result in achieving the critical success factors important to our region. We must look toward our neighboring workforce development boards in surrounding regions to begin talks on regionalism.

Conclusions

Seizing the Opportunity to Lead

We have a unique opportunity for the Boards and other community partners to come together in conversations about the pressing challenges in the regions. We must implement strategies over time that will make a difference in our region. The need for action is made clear if we look at the consequences our communities might face if we don't begin to change our current workforce and economic landscape:

- There is a risk of significant labor shortages if we don't attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- If wages are not impacted, poverty will continue to have adverse influences on educational attainment, quality of life, the health of our citizens, the health of our economy, and the viability of our communities. We will create a large divide between the "haves" and the "have not's".
- We will continue to have difficulty in attracting diverse high wage/high growth employers. We will begin to lose our existing industries to other states and localities.
- We will continue to lose those talented young people with leadership potential that the region will need in the future.
- Our public schools will not improve, nor will the students in those schools.

The Boards will seek to provide a base of leadership in the regions for workforce, education and economic development solutions.

As we refine our goals and strategies, and develop goal implementation methods, we will reach out to the communities to form partnerships to leverage resources and expertise.