

Workforce Strategy Session Executive Summary November 17, 2006

Background

The Integrated Stakeholder Coalition for Workforce Development was formed in 2004 to create a culture of creative, skilled, technically engaged people through alignment of education, business and community resources. The Coalition consists of representatives from industry, K-12 and post-secondary education, federal agencies, community organizations, health and social services, and the media.

Research/Findings

In April 2006 the Coalition initiated a stakeholder engagement process using written and phone interviews in order to get a big-picture perspective on issues relevant to workforce strategy. Twenty-seven leaders from several stakeholder groups shared their insight and expertise to create a "picture" of workforce in the Huntsville/Madison County community. Results of this process are summarized at right. One skill set identified in the process pertains to globalization expert Thomas Friedman's *careers of the future*.¹

Strategy Diagram Process

Once the analysis was completed, the next step was to create a *systems diagram*² to show how the different pieces of the workforce system currently fit together and to locate places to intervene in the system with *high leverage* potential. Strategy diagrams are 30,000-foot views of the system that...

- Highlight important interrelationships and gaps between important systems
- Identify leverage points
- Anticipate unintended consequences of current/future policies
- Provide a coherent one-stop diagram to discuss/revise the entire strategy
- Facilitate the development of a dashboard/scorecard of indicators to monitor implementation

The diagramming process was facilitated by a system dynamics consultant who has done similar work with the World Bank and the state of Indiana, as well as several organizations (e.g. Hewlett-Packard, Boeing).

Interviews Summary of Findings

1. The *public* (even employers) lacks sufficient understanding of the **major impact BRAC** will have on **job vacancies**.
2. There is a **lack of coordination** among the many (many!) organizations involved in workforce development.
3. One key performance measure will be to monitor and build up the **Young STEM Workforce** (24-35 year olds).
4. There needs to be *greater involvement of the media*.
 - a. STEM is portrayed as not "sexy."
 - b. Use media to build greater public awareness of BRAC.
5. The community must engage stakeholders in conversation re: **dynamics of attractiveness**. To avoid "Utopia Syndrome," what will residents choose as less important community attributes in order to have more of what they'd really like?

¹ In his book *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman suggests that the future economy will be driven by organizations with the following competencies: Collaborators, Leveragers, Explainers, Localizers, Adapters, Personalizers, Sustainability ("anything green")

² Similar to the *Strategy Maps* of Kaplan and Norton's *Balanced Scorecard* method.

Strategy Diagram Recommendations

The systems diagramming process took three months, during which members of the Coalition worked closely with the consultant to continually improve the strategy diagram. The diagram is a “living document” which will be modified as situations in the community evolve. The current diagram highlights several important areas for consideration regarding workforce strategy (see box below).

Transition and Next Steps

The Coalition was initiated by Marshall Space Flight Center with the intention of transitioning it to the

community at an appropriate level of maturity. In October 2006 the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County created a Workforce Division and agreed to assume leadership of the Coalition. The Chamber is developing its workforce program, informed by the systems diagramming process. The Coalition will serve as the community’s workforce forum, creating subgroups to act on areas identified by the mapping process and working with other coalitions across the region to leverage resources around common goals.

Contact Information

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Systems Diagram

Areas for Consideration Regarding Workforce Strategy

1. Leading Edge organizations are the desired economic driver.
2. Innovation determines ability to be "leading edge."
3. Workforce capacity/skills stimulate innovation. Essential skills include...
 - a. STEM
 - b. Verbal
 - c. Thomas Friedman's *World is Flat* skill set. (Emotional and Social Intelligence – EQ)
4. Workforce capacity is a mix of "seasoned" and "young" (24-35 year olds) and their skills.
5. The community is faced with two upcoming issues...
 - a. Large influx BRAC of jobs to fill
 - b. Mass retiring of Baby Boomers
6. Hiring can occur at seasoned level or young. Hiring mostly seasoned will depress the attractiveness of Huntsville to the young.
7. Improving attractiveness to young requires focus on arts and singles scene amenities.
8. Improving attractiveness isn't enough! The community must change perceptions across the country. *Why would someone choose to move to Huntsville when they could go to Boston, San Francisco, even Austin?!*
9. Improving education will build skills of workforce *and* make Huntsville more attractive to seasoned. Will eliminate Brain Drain.
10. An important lever for the system is building EQ skills in adults...to lessen negative impacts on brain development. Reducing adult stress also important!
11. Also build EQ skills in children.