



2015-2016 COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

JANUARY 29, 2016

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LETTER TO GOVERNOR ROBERT BENTLEY

January 29, 2016

GOVERNOR ROBERT BENTLEY

Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

DEAR GOVERNOR BENTLEY:

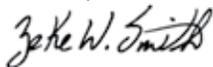
On behalf of the Alabama Workforce Council, we thank you for your commitment to creating high-wage, high-demand jobs in Alabama and for preparing future generations of Alabamians for careers in our state's many thriving industries. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and the people of Alabama to further the collective goal of strengthening our workforce and training programs to ensure Alabama's skilled labor force remains competitive.

Under your guidance, the State of Alabama has seen significant growth and investment in both our economy and workforce. Through your creation of the College and Career Readiness Task Force and then the establishment of the Alabama Workforce Council, the Council has been tasked with developing recommendations to support and enhance the state's efforts by fostering an open dialogue among education, business, and industry.

This report is the product of a year of hard work by the members of the Alabama Workforce Council. During this time, each member has been engaged in conversation, research, and deliberation among themselves and industry and education experts to develop recommendations with the goal of improving educational outcomes and promoting workforce and economic development.

We are pleased that some of the recommendations presented in last year's report have been adopted into law and present this report in an advisory capacity for your consideration. Again, we thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to serve on behalf of our state to ensure that all Alabamians are college and career ready and that our workforce development programs are meeting the state's most pressing needs.

Sincerely,



ZEKE SMITH
Chairman, Alabama Workforce Council



GEORGE CLARK
Vice-Chair, Alabama Workforce Council

CC:

Members of the Alabama Legislature
Members of the Alabama State Board of Education
Members of the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees
Members of the Alabama Council of College and University Presidents

**2015-2016
ALABAMA WORKFORCE
COUNCIL MEMBERS**

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ALABAMA POWER
Birmingham

VICE CHAIRMAN



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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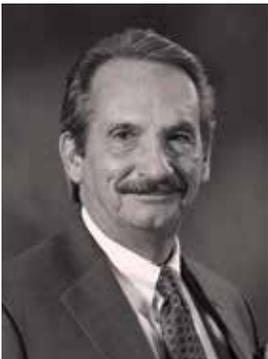
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INTERNATIONAL PAPER
Decatur



MAC BUTTRAM
FORMER STATE
REPRESENTATIVE
Cullman



ED CASTILE
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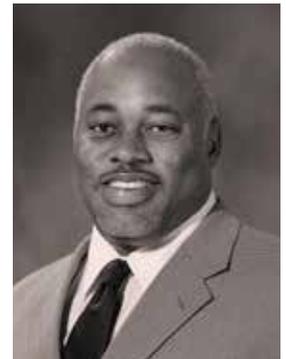
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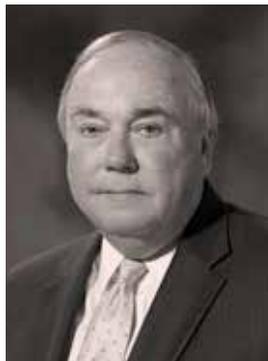
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LABOR

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TERRY WATERS

THE ASSOCIATION OF
EDISON ILLUMINATING
COMPANIES

Birmingham



KEITH WEIL

GOLDEN DRAGON COPPER
TUBING

Pine Hill

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Alabama Workforce Council is comprised of business executives from some of the most important industries and organizations in the state of Alabama. The Council's goal is to facilitate collaboration between government and industry to help Alabama develop a sustainable, top-notch workforce that is competitive on a global scale. Since its inception, the Council has been committed to analyzing important issues related to workforce development and making sound recommendations that will help to create more and better opportunities for all Alabamians.

In 2013, Governor Robert Bentley established the College and Career Task Force, which was comprised of leaders from education, industry, and government. One key recommendation by the Task Force was for the state to establish the Alabama Workforce Council.

In 2014, the Legislature created the Alabama Workforce Council and members were appointed. The Council was tasked with:

- ▶ Developing recommendations to support and enhance the state's economic and workforce development efforts by fostering an open dialogue among education, business, and industry.
- ▶ Advising and supporting the State Superintendent of Education, the Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, and the Presidents of Alabama's four-year institutions.
- ▶ Promoting coordination across pre-K through 12th-grade, two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and business and industry on the regional and state levels.

In January 2015, the Alabama Workforce Council presented its first set of recommendations to Governor Bentley, the Legislature, and others. Many of those recommendations were implemented into law during the 2015 Legislative Session. One recommendation resulted in the Council becoming an official government agency, which is housed in the new Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce.

The Council and its members remained highly engaged throughout 2015, working diligently with education, industry, and government stakeholders. The Council has a long-term view toward building a comprehensive structure that will transform Alabama's workforce and economy.

MISSION AND ADVISORY DUTIES

The Alabama Workforce Council concentrates its efforts on:

- ▶ Enhancing education and industry collaboration on an ongoing basis.
- ▶ Promoting access, articulation, and communication along the educational pipeline.
- ▶ Ensuring appropriate development of essential professional skills (also known as "soft skills" or "essential workplace skills").
- ▶ Raising awareness of and promoting access to "high potential" career pathways.

The advisory duties of the Council include:

- ▶ Reviewing ways to streamline and align the existing workforce development functions of the state.
- ▶ Evaluating the best ways to increase awareness of and educate students about available opportunities in industry.
- ▶ Considering ways to create a feedback loop for industry and education.
- ▶ Evaluating public/private partnerships to create industry-funded scholarships for community colleges, vocational programs, and dual enrollment programs.
- ▶ Assessing the value of increasing the marketing associated with career readiness and skilled craft trades.
- ▶ Evaluating the standards for membership and operation of the Regional Workforce Development Councils.
- ▶ Considering realignment of counties in each Regional Workforce Development Council to meet the needs of employers.



SUMMARY OF WORK

In January 2015, the Alabama Workforce Council approved its final 2014-2015 recommendations and submitted a formal report to the Governor and the Legislature. Immediately after the submission of its report, the Council shifted its focus to the implementation of those recommendations to further encourage the improvement of educational outcomes and the promotion of workforce and economic development. Many of these recommendations resulted in action by the Legislature during the 2015 Regular Session. The Council has been involved with the following activities during the past 12 months:

- ▶ Recommended additional funding for career coaches.

RESULTS:

- \$700,000 in additional funding was included in the FY 2016 Education Trust Fund budget to employ new career coaches. An additional \$500,000 was allocated as a conditional appropriation for the career coach program.
- The state increased the number of career coaches from 36 in 2014 to 68 in 2015.

- ▶ Recommended establishing a more streamlined, centralized, and accountable organizational structure for the coordination and management of workforce development programs. Also supported the efforts of the state's leadership to assess the structure of the Workforce Investment Boards.

RESULTS:

- Legislation was passed to consolidate the primary workforce development functions of the state into the Department of Commerce. This legislation created a "Workforce Development Division" within the Department of Commerce.
- The Workforce Investment Boards, Alabama Career Centers, Incumbent Worker Training program, Alabama Industrial Development Training, and the Alabama Workforce Council are now housed within this new division.
- The state's economic development and small business functions were transferred to the new "Business Development Division" within the Department of Commerce.
- Legislation was passed to create an independent governing board for the Alabama Community College System.

- ▶ Recommended the codification and funding of the Regional Workforce Development Councils.

RESULTS:

- Legislation was passed to codify the Regional Workforce Development Councils and to transfer them to the Workforce Development Division within the Department of Commerce. Background information about the Regional Workforce Development Councils is available in Appendix A.

- ▶ Recommended establishing a statewide longitudinal data system.

RESULTS:

- Governor Bentley issued Executive Order No. 6 on May 21, 2015 to establish the Alabama P-20W Longitudinal Data System and the Alabama Office of Education and Workforce Statistics, an independent office that is housed at the Department of Labor. The Office of Education and Workforce Statistics will be governed by an advisory board that will oversee the operations of the data system. The Office will be led by an appointed Chief Policy Officer.
- The Council continues to research and pursue additional steps for funding the establishment of the data system and the Office of Education and Workforce Statistics.

- ▶ Began research to create a statewide awareness, branding, and marketing strategy.
- ▶ Laid the groundwork to develop a “one-stop shop” online resource for Alabama workforce development information.
- ▶ Hosted a meeting at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance. During that meeting, Council members heard a report from the Region 3 Regional Workforce Development Council explaining the important role that regional councils play in the state’s workforce development system, as well as their successes creating an industry-driven regional solution for workforce needs.
- ▶ Formed a Strategic Implementation Committee to focus on the management and implementation of the Council’s recommendations. The Committee’s efforts included:



- Serving as a resource to the Department of Commerce in connection with the establishment of the Workforce Development Division.
- Assisting efforts to develop new workforce development resources.
- Creating a working group to form a career fair and trade show strategy.
- Providing advice in connection with the review of realignment options for the state’s Workforce Investment Boards.
- Meeting with industry experts to evaluate states with successful workforce development efforts.
- Collaborating with the Governor’s Steering Committee on Workforce Development.

RESULTS:

- The research and work of the Strategic Implementation Committee resulted in the Council voting to retain the IDEAS Group, a consultant based in Orlando, Florida that reviewed, analyzed, and made recommendations on moving Alabama’s workforce development system forward. IDEAS specializes in media and experience design and was formed through a management buyout of several Disney businesses, combining them, cutting costs, improving creativity, and extending capabilities.
- Over a three-month period, IDEAS conducted meetings, interviews, and informational sessions across the state that involved more

than 1,000 people from all aspects of the workforce spectrum and represented a diverse set of Alabamians.

- The IDEAS Group review included an analysis of Alabama’s interconnected providers of workforce services, including all of the governmental, educational, and private-sector components that train, prepare, and match job seekers with employers (collectively referred to in this section and the IDEAS Group Experience Design Plan as the “Alabama Workforce System”).
 - The IDEAS Group produced a plan based upon the information gathered from their work in Alabama. The Experience Design Plan was presented to the Council on January 20, 2016, and is included as part of this report.
- ▶ As a result of the Council’s work in 2015, and the involvement of the business community in the state’s workforce development initiatives, Alabama was one of two states featured in an August 2015 report by the National Workforce Development Quality Campaign (See Appendix B).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an overview of the recommendations that the Alabama Workforce Council is submitting to the Governor, the Legislature, the State Board of Education, the Alabama Council of College and University Presidents,



and the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees.

Members of the Council have reviewed and discussed the findings of the Experience Design Plan. The members believe the determinations made in the plan validate their recommendations and that there is an opportunity to further restructure, streamline, and clarify the Alabama Workforce System’s function. There is also an opportunity to create a brand that encompasses all of the state’s current disparate provider and program brands and is unique, relevant, respected, and easily understood.

The Experience Design Plan included in this report articulates the actions required, timelines for implementation, potential funding mechanisms, governance structures, and other relevant information for each recommendation listed below.

- ▶ The state should fund 12 additional career coaches, which would result in the state being at full capacity of 80 career coaches and would place one career coach in each high school at least one day per week.
- ▶ The new Alabama Workforce System must be driven by business and industry demand and criteria for skills and talent. A strong network of effective, funded, and empowered regional workforce entities (currently Regional Workforce Development Councils) should be tasked with the central role of bridging business needs with a “talent supply chain.” Each of these new entities should be led by a paid executive director who reports to a board of regional business, industry, and education leaders and be supported by the Department of Commerce.
- ▶ Consolidation of the Regional Workforce Development Councils and the alignment of those consolidated regions with the efforts of local community colleges is essential to eliminate redundancies, enhance ease of use, and assure accountability to the business community.
- ▶ An easy to navigate and comprehensive statewide education and training resource system should be developed to enable each “supply point” (including K-12, two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, Alabama Industrial Development

Training, Alabama Technology Network, career centers, and private training companies) to excel at meeting business needs.

- ▶ A new, online “one-stop” resource must be established to serve clear and focused needs while being accessible by business, government, education, and public users. A new global database is recommended as an analytical tool to benchmark performance and provide insight into users.
- ▶ A new, unified, and universal brand for the Alabama Workforce System should be created and implemented. The brand should encompass the state’s disparate provider and program brands and be complementary to co-branded partners.

CONCLUSION

The advisory recommendations in this report are the culmination of months of hard work on initiatives to help Alabamians develop their personal potential through an effective career pathway. The Council is proposing these recommendations to help grow the state’s economy, increase the availability of skilled labor, and prepare the next generation of students for successful careers in this state.

It is important to the Council that preparing for employment is a continuous journey for all Alabamians that begins at the pre-K level and never ends, assuring that all workers are properly equipped at all points along the career pathway. The Council members believe that the Regional Workforce Development Councils must play a central role in the overall workforce development system so that business and industry drives the system by articulating their workforce needs, and a regional effort allows business and industry partners to match their needs with best-fit training and education. The development and implementation of a statewide workforce development brand will provide the state (for the first time ever) with a clear, accurate, consistent, sustainable story that will embody the values of Alabama



and the message that must be shared with workers and other stakeholders.

A well-trained workforce is the future of business and industry in Alabama. Council members, as business leaders in this state, are recommending these actions to create a more sustainable workforce that will enable the state to provide more employment opportunities, higher educational achievement and skill attainment, and more dynamic economic growth. We believe in Alabama, its people, and its future, and we are pleased to submit these recommendations for your consideration.

ALABAMA WORKFORCE SYSTEM EXPERIENCE DESIGN PLAN

Alabama Workforce System Experience Design Plan

Presented January 20, 2016

Prepared by



Strategic Summary

IDEAS has conducted a review and analysis of Alabama's network of interconnected providers of workforce services, including all of the governmental, educational, and private sector components that train, prepare, and match job seekers with employers, which is collectively referred to herein as the "Alabama Workforce System."

Based upon our review of the Alabama Workforce System, we believe that there is an opportunity to restructure, streamline, and clarify the Alabama Workforce System's function and to improve performance for Alabama businesses and job seekers.

The following are the high level recommendations for creating an improved Alabama Workforce System based on the Culture Mapping, StoryJam™, and subsequent qualitative analytics completed by IDEAS. A legislative strategy is required to ensure that the new Alabama Workforce System is sustainable over time. The five key tenets of the new system are as follows:

1. The new Alabama Workforce System must be driven by business and industry demand and criteria for skills and talent. A strong network of effective, funded, and empowered regional workforce entities (currently Regional Workforce Development Councils) should be tasked with the central role in bridging business needs with a "talent supply chain." We recommend that these new entities report to boards comprised of regional business leaders and be supported by the Department of Commerce.
2. Consolidation of the Regional Workforce Development Councils and alignment of those consolidated regions with the efforts of community colleges is essential in order to eliminate redundancies, enhance ease of use, and assure accountability to the business community.
3. An easy to navigate and comprehensive statewide education and training resource system should be established to enable each "supply point" (including K-12, community colleges, colleges and universities, AIDT, ATN, career centers, and private training companies) to excel at meeting business needs effectively.
4. A new online "one-stop" resource must be designed to serve very clear and focused needs and must be accessible easily by business, government, education, and public users. In addition to this online environment, a new global database is recommended to provide an analytical tool in order to benchmark performance and provide insight into user needs.
5. A new, unified, and universal brand for the Alabama Workforce System should be created and implemented. The new brand must encompass all of the current disparate provider and program brands and be complementary to co-branding partners (*i.e.*, *Go Build Alabama* or *Made in Alabama*). The brand is an immediate priority and will require resources to create, develop, deploy, support, and enculturate.

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I Am ... The New Alabama Workforce System

(Compiled from StoryJam™ participant stories)

I am the new Alabama Workforce System.

I believe that everyone in Alabama should have the opportunity to fully develop their personal potential through an effective career pathway. I also believe that all of Alabama's employers should have easy, reliable access to a skilled, trained, and productive workforce. Preparing for employment starts at pre-K and never ends. It is a continuous journey with many twists and turns, so I must be prepared at all points along that pathway to provide support and bring to bear all of my resources.

A well-trained workforce is the future of business, industry, and the people of Alabama. I have been tasked to create the conditions necessary for every person who wants to work to have a meaningful career with a living wage to support their family, stimulate their community, and aid every business – no matter how large or small – to thrive and succeed in Alabama.

To do this, I have pulled together leaders, politicians, stakeholders, influencers, and supporters to create an integrated network of regional workforce entities, educational institutions, vocational programs, and funding sources to train and prepare young individuals entering the workforce for the first time, experienced workers needing to learn new skills, and employers needing specialized talent. Together, we break down the barriers of indifference, self-interest, and the status quo in order to support job seekers and employers that call Alabama home.

I have set high expectations for myself and the outcomes I must achieve, and this has inspired others to strive just as high for themselves and those they serve. I am the face of a strong public-private partnership that shares in the responsibility of ensuring our collective success and holding each other individually accountable.

I share the story of Alabama's dynamic, growing economy with everyone I meet. It starts with an enthusiastic population confident in their future prosperity and fully aware of the opportunities available to them to achieve it. It includes our true customers—the businesses of Alabama—that rely on us to provide them the key ingredient to their success: a well-trained workforce. And it stars the parents, families, and neighbors across our state that look with pride upon the breadwinners we encourage and support throughout the duration of their careers.

I am the Alabama Workforce System, and that's what I do.

Experience Design Plan

IDEAS, a media and experience design firm in Orlando, was engaged to help develop a statewide workforce development, training, and retraining plan for the State of Alabama, with systemic, process, policy, technology, and branding recommendations. Following recommendations from the Alabama Workforce Council, IDEAS' objective is to streamline and align the Alabama Workforce System's programs and initiatives in order to deliver the nation's most effective system of job creation, talent readiness, training, and connectivity.

IDEAS engaged in a 3 phase approach to completing this task:

Phase 1 – Culture Mapping (the “actuals”)

The purpose of Culture Mapping is to inform Alabama Workforce System design and brand development by exploring the “stories, myths, and legends” that predominate from a broad spectrum of “thought leaders” at all levels of business, industry, government, and education and understand how changes to the system are perceived.

To that end, IDEAS fielded statewide Culture Mapping sessions conducted between November 3 and November 18, 2015 in Montgomery, Birmingham, Decatur, and Gulf Shores. This included eight 90-minute interview sessions involving more than 80 total participants representing all ten regions and 12 one-on-one interviews with key leaders from across the Alabama Workforce System.

The Culture Mapping sessions included a diverse mix of participants spanning the breadth of the Alabama Workforce System, with representation from education, industry, and economic development agencies across all regions of the state. The sessions were designed to elicit stories to help us better understand current perspectives on how the system (1) functions, (2) brands itself, and (3) operates. By harvesting these cultural stories and participating in constructive narrative dialogue with these small groups, we were able to build a cognitive “map” of the current cultural dynamics around these three key components of the AWS. This information comprises the “actuals” (the current state of the system) and provides us with “cultural myths” (stories that explain how things get done and what rules of behavior are) and “legends” (stories that point to brand “heroics” as exemplars). These “actuals” are the benchmark from which the Alabama Workforce System and brand design work must proceed.

Prior to our visit, IDEAS briefed the Alabama Workforce Council on the scope and process for IDEAS Culture Mapping. Invitations were sent via the Governor's Office to individuals across the system who have or should have a stake in the development decisions on how the Alabama Workforce System should be developed. IDEAS also asked for attendees who were considered to be “thought leaders” in their organizations and communities. The term “thought leaders” refers to people who others follow because it is natural to do so, not only because they are executives or have a specific span-of-control organizationally. IDEAS requested that among these groups there be a diverse mixture of (1) tenure within an organization or the Alabama Workforce System, (2) roles, and (3) involvement with the plan to re-design the Alabama Workforce System.

The objectives of IDEAS Culture Mapping sessions were as follows:

- To gather input/research/ideas about how the current Alabama Workforce System works;
- To ascertain perceptions regarding the potential to change the Alabama Workforce System by involving both those who might help lead the effort and those thought leaders who might take a contrarian's position;
- To help clarify the cultural and operational differences and commonalities between the different regions (program silos, urban/rural, etc.) to inform the design process;
- To learn how various cultural archetypes and personas interact in the existing stories around the Alabama Workforce System and to glean insight as to the hierarchical changes and other organizational strategies built into the current system; and
- To garner enough information to help prepare a slate of action recommendations for inclusion in this Experience Design Plan.

During the sessions, we explained to the participants that we were not there to try to “fix” anything or to advocate for or against any particular position. We were there to learn about how the Alabama Workforce System works from their personal points of view. We asked the participants to share their stories with us candidly as a way to understand how the system functions or doesn't right now. We were clear that our task in the sessions was not to influence but to understand. All sessions included a briefing on who IDEAS is, what the goal of the Culture Mapping is, and what the other steps in the process were going to be.

Online Survey:

To ensure broad statewide representation, an online survey was conducted to gather input regarding the Alabama Workforce System. 1,000 surveys were fielded with a response rate of 10%. This response rate is higher by a factor of 3 than typical results, indicating a high level of interest in the issue. The survey responses and open-ended answers were highly aligned with the opinions expressed in the IDEAS Culture Mapping sessions.

Respondents primarily self-identified as business (47%) or as part of the Alabama Workforce System (37%). The remainder was spread between “other” and small subsets.

When asked for affiliation, the breakout was 11% Alabama Workforce Council, 41% Regional Workforce Development Councils, and 48% not a member of either. Distribution across the 10 Regional Workforce Development Council regions was well balanced.

Phase 2 – StoryJam™ (the “optimals”)

StoryJam is a design-thinking process employed to develop an informed, innovative iteration of the Alabama Workforce System in its ideal future state in order to create the



guiding narrative and action plan for achieving the objectives as an adaptable, efficient, and effective system. The StoryJam clarifies the message, creates a strong group of advocates, and provides the inputs for the experience design and enculturation work.

On November 19, 2015, a group of 31 stakeholders gathered in Montgomery, representing expert and objective points of view from across the Alabama Workforce System, including employers, job seekers, government, and educators, along with a team of creative story specialists from IDEAS. The objectives for the session focused around defining a new system structure for the Alabama Workforce System, delineating roles and responsibilities for the various system nodes, and developing elements supporting a brand charter for this new system structure.

The team accomplished the following:

- *Defined **experiential parameters*** for the new Alabama Workforce System.
- *Looked through **multiple perspectives*** at what makes the new Alabama Workforce System effective and impressive.
- *Identified what **motivates constituencies*** to get on board with the new Alabama Workforce System.
- *Created a **personality*** for the new Alabama Workforce System brand.
- *Unleashed **unrestricted ideas*** for innovating big results.
- *Confronted **obstacles and failure drivers*** to achieving success.
- *Declared the new Alabama Workforce System **mission and purpose**.*
- *Explored the **journey of transition*** in reaching our objectives.
- *Described the new **Alabama Workforce System experience*** in its optimized future state.

Phase 3 – Experience Design Plan (the “actions”)

This Experience Design Plan presents a summary of systemic, programmatic, and brand guidelines to direct and inform specifications for changes to the Alabama Workforce System. It includes a high level summary of strategic recommendations, a definitive narrative describing the future Alabama Workforce System, specific action recommendations, and a suggested brand charter with key messages.

In this document, there are a number of key points for consideration in guiding next steps, brand/message deployment, and program development. A future state narrative is also included to describe the **vision** of the Alabama Workforce System of tomorrow.

In summary, the Alabama Workforce System has an opportunity to restructure how it leverages existing programs and partners to provide a continuum of talent sourcing, skills training, job placement, and career change support for Alabama’s employers, job seekers, government, and educators built upon a proven and rejuvenated brand that is positioned to meet the needs of today’s employers and job seekers, as well as adapt to tomorrow’s changing workforce requirements in order to attract new business and industries to Alabama.

Key Findings

Voices

There are three prominent “voices” or points of view across the state with respect to the Alabama Workforce System. These three “voices” do not represent fixed sets of *individuals*. People often move freely between all three voices, using different and often contradictory stories that vary *across* topics, *within* a topic, and even within a *single comment*. All three voices are distributed across all of the regions, among different disciplines, across organizational rank, and across seniority within the system. In general, all three voices express a clear and universal desire for change.

Go!

Ready to stand up a dynamic and innovative Alabama Workforce System and want to know why it isn't done yet!

- They are courageous and can be perceived as aggressive to their more cautious peers.
- They see the new Alabama Workforce System as a “no brainer”; it’s how they’ve always hoped they could work – even when things have prevented them from realizing it in practice.
- Their primary cultural story is “a passion for performance” and a willingness to abandon “how we’ve always done it.”
- They take some risks and prove that the future is not only radically different, but also more productive, more profitable, and more sustainable for business and the citizens of Alabama.

Try.

Steeped in the mission component of the Alabama Workforce System cultural storyline.

- They have a personal relationship with the job seekers they serve.
- They do what it takes to keep opportunities coming.
- A reality-based view, primarily informed by past experience, tempers their approach.
- They WANT the Alabama Workforce System to be all it can be, and they support it.
- They NEED to be led a bit and will take care not to jeopardize their ability to stay on mission by appearing to be too quick to jump.
- They are good soldiers, big believers, and great at implementing.
- Their voice skews slightly more rural/institutional.

Maybe...

A more cautious view.

- The idea of more collaboration, greater effectiveness, and a different kind of workforce system (structurally and culturally) is appealing, but...
- They cite evidence of failed attempts in the past with what, to them, were serious repercussions.
- “I’ve seen things like this come and go with leadership changes. Besides, what will happen to me if we change things too much?”

- The three powerful cultural stories for this voice are built around (1) “the Alabama Community College System,” (2) “Montgomery,” and (3) “lack of funding for anything” as constraints to innovation.
- “I won’t do anything to slow this down, but I need to have my tail covered. I will not get too aligned with this change because it may not come to fruition/become real, or I might back the wrong horse.”

System Design

- There is a universal appetite for making the system more streamlined and easier to use.
- The new Alabama Workforce System will be driven by business and industry demand and criteria.
- There is general conflation of the “Alabama Workforce System” with the K-12 & Alabama Community College System.
- There is a wide range in perceptions about the performance of the Alabama Community College System.
- With the exception of Regions 3 and 9, the Regional Workforce Development Councils are not always perceived to be performing well today, with lack of funded staff cited as the main limiting factor. Consolidation of the Regional Workforce Development Councils and alignment of those consolidated regions with the efforts of local community colleges is often cited as part of a systemic solution. If funded, given authority to execute, and provided role clarity, the Regional Workforce Development Councils are seen as the key link between business and talent in the Alabama Workforce System.
- There is very little, if any, coordination across the system, although there are “hero” best practice legends.

Education Mission

- There is tension between the push to make the community colleges pure technical training centers and the desire to not only be responsive to industry, but also continue to offer a degree-earning academic track.
- Taking college “off the table” is a non-starter with parents and it is not necessary to achieve an effective Alabama Workforce System.
- A very important brand message will be that Alabama offers a “full spectrum” of learning, with “on- and off-ramps” throughout a person’s career from pre-K through K-12 and graduate education.
- The K-12 system has embraced workforce preparedness, but it is not perceived as being fully unified.
- There are exemplary tech-prep programs, with models that can be built upon.
- Apprenticeships, job-shadowing, summer programs, and other experiential learning models are getting results.
- Full integration of the Alabama Career Planning System (KUDER) in the K-12 Career and Technical Education program will help.
- Streamlined funding channels for training, with clear performance metrics and accountabilities, are needed.
- An easy to navigate statewide education and training resource system should be established to enable each supply point (K-12, community colleges, colleges and

universities, AIDT, ATN, career centers, and private training companies) to excel at meeting business needs effectively.

- The Alabama Community College System should be aligned and consolidated with regional and industry-driven needs.

Solutions Needed

- A solution for drug use as a barrier to employment and remediation of non-cognitive “soft skills” will need to be included in any future Alabama Workforce System solution.
- “Work Ready Communities” (ACT WorkKeys) could be valuable if universally implemented, particularly for rural regions.
- AIDT is seen as extremely valuable and an exemplar for successful workforce development.
- There is general confusion as to how the WIOA system now functions since it has been moved to the Department of Commerce. There are additional questions about the best use and structure of Workforce Investment Boards and their role in the Alabama Workforce System going forward.
- “Montgomery” is not highly trusted. Particularly in the rural counties, there is a perceived need for legislative action to ensure that the Alabama Workforce System changes can survive a change of administration.
- Career centers are housed within the Department of Labor and may not align with employer requirements or interface effectively with the rest of the Alabama Workforce System. Career centers are seen as “good and getting better” but are under-leveraged and not well understood.

Brand

- An audit of competitive brands perceived to be reasonably comparable to the Alabama Workforce System was conducted. The primary purpose of the audit was to examine commonalities and differences among others’ claims, to understand positioning space that is clearly taken, and identify possible areas of opportunity or benchmarking.
- There is no perceived brand today for the Alabama Workforce System (see the [Creating a Brand](#) section and recommended [brand charter](#)).
- A new, unified, and universal brand should be created, and it needs to encompass all of the current disparate provider and program brands.
- The brand marketing program must be directed to employers, students/job seekers, AND parents.
- There may be an opportunity to create an endorsed or co-branded relationship with *Made in Alabama* and/or *Go Build Alabama*.
- The brand will require resources to create, develop, deploy, support, and enculturate.

Performance Metrics and Accountability to Benchmark Progress

- Employers should report more awareness of the Alabama Workforce System and responsiveness to their talent needs, as well as increased ease of accessing qualified employees on a timely basis.

- The consolidated Regional Workforce Development Councils should report that their access to funding, both operational and programmatic, as well as operational effectiveness, have improved.
- Students, families, and job seekers should report better awareness and ease of identifying and using Alabama Workforce System resources.
- Marketing and communication efforts should be more efficient and effective based on valid market research.
- Relevance and awareness of the new Alabama Workforce System brand to both job seekers and employers should be high.
- The system changes and brand program should enhance local ability to match programmatic offerings to regional business and population needs.
- The new brand should facilitate effective leverage of current regional and partner brand equities.
- The system and brand redesign should not overburden the regions with the cost of rollout and implementation.

Tactical Action Steps

The following are important changes that should be considered for implementation at the local and/or departmental level to position the Alabama Workforce System for both near-term improvement and long-term success.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Ensure that the Regional Workforce Development Councils are empowered to identify regional workforce needs and provide access to training resources.
2. Align the Alabama Community College System with the Regional Workforce Development Councils so that information gathered from employers is used to develop accurate training needs.
3. Institute a “bottom-up” decision-making policy that gives local/regional Alabama Workforce System leaders the ability to respond/act decisively.
4. Insert systemic, timely, accountability standards in place that tie funds to outcomes.

TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS

5. Assure that the online “one-stop” resource to be developed is the “Kayak.com” of job posting sites/resume search engines. It should be a comprehensive aggregator of information with a streamlined communication system to connect jobseekers, business and industry, and service providers.
6. Fund the establishment of a P-20W statewide longitudinal data system to deepen understanding of how people are using the Alabama Workforce System and completing job training programs from K-12 and post-secondary to employment.

JOB SEEKER SUPPORT

7. Provide additional support to students to develop a career plan in 8th grade as part of entering high school.
8. Create an online funding matrix to show people what options are available to them to pay for training/education.
9. Embed soft-skills training into all Alabama Workforce System-certified or supported training and education programs.
10. Ease the transition from 12th grade into college, vocational training, apprenticeship, or job prep.
11. Ensure all graduating students are job-ready and prepare a resume/online CV form.
12. Develop a distinct strategy for rural areas that includes overcoming transportation, childcare, and communication issues.
13. Fully fund the remaining 12 of 80 career coaches so that a coach can be present in each high school at least one day per week to help develop career plans with students and inform and advise parents about opportunities for their child.

BRANDING, MARKETING & OUTREACH

14. Create and share non-traditional career pathway stories to show what is possible across the Alabama Workforce System.
15. Create marketing campaigns with dedicated messages/micro campaigns targeting key audiences (employers, parents, educators, students, employees, politicians, etc.) that explain the “win-win-win” rationale of the Alabama Workforce System.
16. Re-brand the Department of Labor career centers as part of the new Alabama Workforce System so they are no longer perceived as “unemployment centers” but instead as the local “on-ramp” to access the Alabama Workforce System.
17. Develop a trade show strategy, with hiring and job fair events hosted by each Regional Workforce Development Council.
18. Create an “Alabama Workforce System success story” badge/pin to display on storefront, desk, or bumper.
19. Increase awareness among employers and educators about opportunities to offer students ages 16 and 17 qualifying work-study or apprenticeship experiences that meet the exceptions to the law that otherwise prohibits students from working in certain occupations before reaching age 18.

ENCULTURATION & DEVELOPMENT

20. Train partners on the Alabama Workforce System plan, their roles, and measurable performance indicators.

21. Create Regional Workforce Development Council leader/liaison training to inform and instruct the new role.

A Vision for the New Alabama Workforce System

Alabama is ready to start firing on all cylinders!

With the Governor's leadership and the Legislature's action, the Alabama Workforce System can be reinvented to realign and streamline Alabama's Regional Workforce Development Councils with nearby community colleges to better meet the needs of business by providing the necessary job skills training and secondary education programs that Alabama's employers have been demanding.

Students will soon graduate not only with desirable skills resulting in immediate employment, but also with valuable experience earned while still in high school through vocational training, dual enrollment that earns them college credit, and apprenticeship programs in their chosen career field. In the new Alabama Workforce System, a comprehensive data aggregation and online communication system will connect jobseekers, employers, and service providers, making it easy to source talent to the right job opening.

All stakeholders will finally understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting Alabama's "talent supply chain," from pre-K educators, to high school career coaches, to parents, to career center staff and college administrators. This bottom-up buy in will be possible through leadership communicating a clear vision for the future using a single and powerful brand that says "business is our end-customer, and quality talent, be it students right out of school or experienced workers fresh from new skills training, are our product."

Specific performance metrics will provide the accountability necessary to support changes that will be needed at all levels, especially once funds are tied to outcomes. Parents and students will understand that "choice" is a permanent option now that a life-long learning continuum will be available, and employers will have the confidence to increase investment in Alabama now that their talent needs have attentive ears and a proven turn-around cycle that will move at the pace of business, not bureaucracy or academia. Trust and credibility will become the new currency of a booming state economy.

People will have access to child care and transportation that ensures they can complete their training and start working at the job that is waiting for them once they do. Rural communities will enjoy a dynamic surge of opportunity, living wages, and families establishing next generation roots of prosperity, happiness, and hope. Alabama will achieve one of the lowest dropout rates in the country, increase enrollment in career tech-prep training programs, improve graduation rates for both high school and secondary education, and recruit new employers to the state in record numbers. All students will identify a career path by the end of the 8th grade and work with a career coach to help them achieve it.

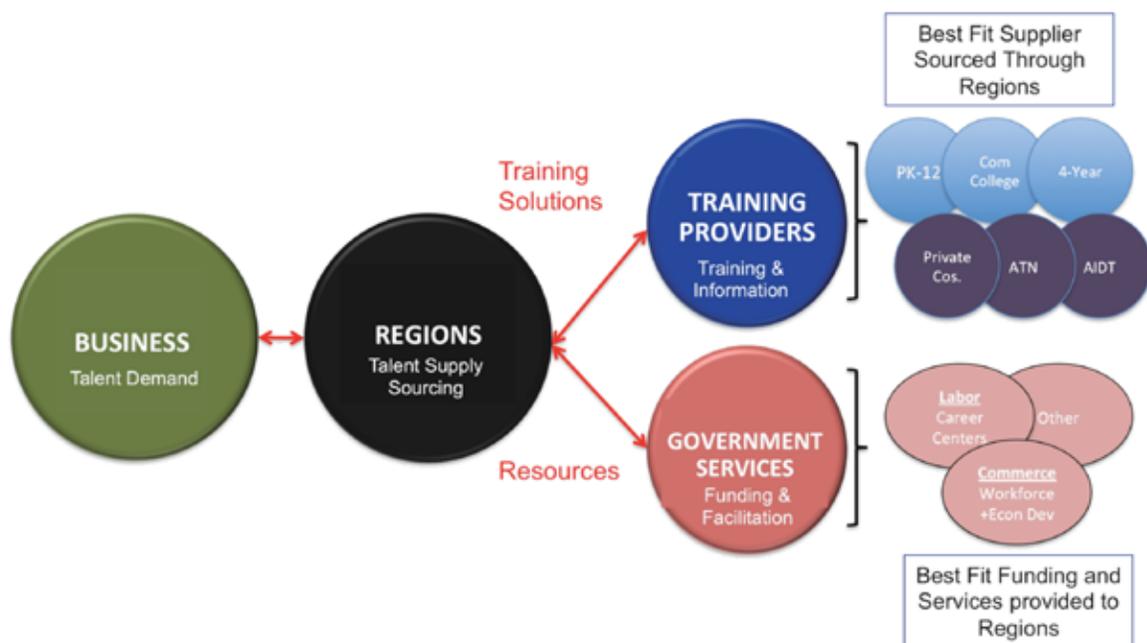
Tax revenue will increase, unemployment will drop, and the state of Alabama will continue to attract major economic development projects because of a ready, able, and willing workforce. Existing businesses will expand, while new industries will choose to come to Alabama at an unprecedented rate. Bottom line: our economy will be thriving and our people succeeding. The Alabama Workforce System will be made right here in Alabama and help make Alabama work better than ever.

A Functional Model of the New Alabama Workforce System

This model is a schematic system diagram of the Alabama Workforce System as it is envisioned. *Business* drives the system by clearly articulating their need and standards of qualification for employees. The linchpin in the new system is a statewide network of staffed and funded Regional Workforce Development Councils, tasked with owning the relationship with their regional business and industry partners and matching their needs to the best-fit training, education, government services, and funding providers throughout the state.

Regional Workforce Development Council boards will be comprised of regional business, industry, and education leaders, with a paid executive director reporting to the regional board and supported by the Department of Commerce.

The Alabama Workforce Council and the various industry-specific support organizations would provide guidance and facilitate legislative support.



Creating a Brand

This work will nourish all forms of marketing and communication and keep it focused and easy to understand. Brands create the perception that there is no other product or service in the world quite like yours. They attract people because they are narrow in scope, distinguishable, and easily understood. They allow you to command a premium, and they store market value, insulating you in times of turmoil. A great brand ensures that you have a **clear, accurate, consistent, sustainable story** regardless of who is telling it. Your brand system, once it is fully developed, will create a roadmap with positioning “on-ramps and off-ramps” as you evolve, and the brand ultimately embodies and multiplies the value you are creating for your stakeholders.



- MARKETING** - *The Leaves*
Change with the season
- BRAND** - *The Trunk*
A strong, timeless structure
- STORY** - *The Roots*
Nourishment for the tree

Brands Answer Key Questions.



- Action
- Planning
- Logical
- Emotional
- Spiritual

Why should people consider your brand? What makes it different? How do we talk about a new Alabama Workforce System structure in the marketplace and, more importantly, what do our different audiences want to hear from us? Can we do what we say we can, and who else has done it? Why is a decision right for us? Most importantly, what is the brand’s charter?

An integrated brand charter is critical because delivering products and services from the tip of the arrow in this model offers an experience of authentic work—the “flow state” of effortless excellence. Removing any component moves your enterprise away from this high-performance position *toward* increasing stress. Some of these answers are developed in this material, and some will be the subject of additional work you will need to do. The fundamentals are contained within the brand charter definitions. They will certainly be massaged as you live with them, but the body of work in the StoryJam™ material is rich with additional material to try.

All strong brands must be built upon four distinct quality pairs:

- Uniqueness / Differentiation
- Relevance / Appropriateness
- Esteem / Respect
- Knowledge / Ease of understanding

Successful brands are more than trendy logos or clever slogans. Brands create a preference through *actions and behaviors* as well as communications. Next generation *Experiential* brands look beyond the traditional features and benefits of a given product catalogue or service set and lock onto the single-minded thought that can be owned in the mind and heart of your customer. They capture loyalty factors and unlock emotional equities to create and deliver branded experiences rather than check boxes on a schedule of attributes.

Brand Provenance

To achieve the success to which the new Alabama Workforce System aspires, it is important to create an experiential brand moving audience perceptions from being:

- *Attribute-driven* (unemployment rate, training programs);
- *Product-focused* (job placement);
- *Demographically defined* (age, gender, regional affiliation);
- *Functional* (providing a way to connect employers with job seekers); and
- *Importing customers* (advertising, promotions, outreach);



To a higher-order brand that is:

- *Brand-driven* (changing lives);
- *Experience-focused* (the transformation of self and society);
- *Psychographically inclusive* (desire for opportunity, prosperity, and growth);
- *Emotionally satisfying* (sharing the stability of employment, the excitement of a fulfilling career, and the confidence of a talented workforce); and
- *Exported* (creating brand ambassadors, helping Alabama succeed).

Brand Process

Now that the StoryJam™ has created the required narrative assets, a good brand development program includes the following steps:

1. Analyze other strong brands to find both excellent practices and market gaps;
2. Develop a focused charter and strategy; and
3. THEN drive the nomenclature, sensory identity, and messaging.

The Alabama Workforce System Brand Charter

Brand Charter is comprised of seven components that together create a sound foundation upon which to create messaging. These are the navigational chart and compass for the new Alabama Workforce System brand, messages, and design.

Values: The unswerving core principles and foundation of the organization. Values answer the question: *“What does the Alabama Workforce System stand for?”*

Opportunity

- More than choice or chance, the Alabama Workforce System creates meaningful opportunities for individuals and businesses that generate lasting value over the long term.

Foresight

- The Alabama Workforce System is always preparing for the future as it meets the needs of today. It is sensible in how it leverages resources, wise in how it manages and maintains partnerships, and effective in how it clearly communicates the big picture and bottom line to all stakeholders.

Courage

- Fearless, bold, and daring, the Alabama Workforce Systems is courageous in how it helps advance individuals, support the needs of business, and grow the economy of Alabama. In heeding the call to provide a demand-driven talent supply chain, Alabama Workforce System is an innovator in how it develops the programs, unifies stakeholders, and generates the right outcomes.

Trust

- Reliable and dependable throughout the entire lifecycle of your career or business, the Alabama Workforce System is always there when you need it. It is unwavering in its commitment to be proactive and responsive, helping develop and support prosperous communities across the state.

Commentary:

These values are easy to understand and embrace, and they confer a sense of purpose beyond “the unemployment numbers.” They are crystal clear, they won’t “blow in the wind” over time, and they won’t ever wear out.

Vision: A simple, clear description of your compelling aspiration; a “to be” statement for you and the world. Vision answers the question: “Why the Alabama Workforce System?”

- A better future for Alabama in which communities, business, and industry are supported in a collaborative process to build a prosperous and successful life through the opportunity of meaningful work and a growing economy.

Commentary:

The Brand Vision must be aspirational, high reaching, and reflective of a goal not only for the Alabama Workforce System, but also for everyone who it touches. This is what will happen if the Alabama Workforce System achieves its Mission and lives by its Values. The vision is inspiring. It makes the brand meaningful, and it potentiates your long-term evolution. The Vision should motivate every brand decision.

Mission: A succinct description of the work you will do to achieve the vision. Mission answers the question “What does the Alabama Workforce System do?”

- The Alabama Workforce System drives economic growth and personal prosperity by developing and providing easy access to the skilled talent necessary to meet the dynamic needs of growing business. By leveraging all available resources and partnership opportunities in a user-friendly system, the Alabama Workforce System prepares new job seekers entering the workforce, retrains experienced talent needing new skills, and proactively adapts to identify, embrace, and meet the business needs of tomorrow.

Commentary:

While Vision is always a “To Be” statement, Mission is always a “To Do” statement. This is what everyone who is part of the Alabama Workforce System “gets up every day thinking about.” It directly informs the structure, processes, and design of the system and is the most visible to the market. If the Alabama Workforce System contemplates an action, it should be clearly enacting this mission.

Essence: What you want your audience to feel about you, voiced in the AUDIENCE first person. Brand essence answers the question “How do I feel about the Alabama Workforce System?”

- “The Alabama Workforce System is a vital partner, helping me to see and seize the opportunity to make the best future I can imagine ... right here in Alabama!”

Commentary:

Brand Essence is the emotional component of the brand. It is the gut feeling we want people to have when they think of the Alabama Workforce System, whether it is a parent, a veteran seeking re-training, or a business looking to expand. Essence is very hard to put in language, but is always best expressed in the voice of a customer.

Positioning: What you want said about you on the tip of the tongue. Positioning answers the question “What is the Alabama Workforce System?”

- The Alabama Workforce System is the most effective business-driven talent supply system in the U.S. It is the new international benchmark for sustainable workforce development practices to meet the changing needs of business and industry and is the catalyst for personal prosperity and economic growth.

Commentary:

This position is clear, fully supportable, and unambiguously defines specific territory. It both plays to the facts of the world today and challenges anyone in the market who wants to occupy the same space to achieve a high standard of proof and performance, whether as a competitor or a partner.

Promise: The implicit contract between the Alabama Workforce System and the job seeker, employer, educator, and parent. The promise answers the question “*What do I get from the Alabama Workforce System?*”

- The Alabama Workforce System identifies, develops, and unleashes the talent potential and career opportunities within every person to energize the state's economy and create a sustainable climate of prosperity and growth for business and industry.

Commentary:

Brand Promise is usually overdone and too wordy. To be useful, it has to be something concise and clear that we can deliver with distinction, and it has to be unique to the Alabama Workforce System. At each key decision point, the Alabama Workforce System should ask: “Does this (action, product, statement, strategy) deliver on our promise?”

Personality: The profile of your brand as stated in its own **first-person voice**. Brand personality answers the question “*Who is the Alabama Workforce System?*”

- “Whether you’re a business, a student, or a professional, I am the springboard to your new future! I have many ways to help you get to where you want to go – from figuring out a plan, to finding the funds to make it happen, to connecting you with a waiting employer or the critical new talent you need to grow. I’m a good listener, I respond quickly and decisively, and I’m a master at bringing resources and building partnerships. I am immensely proud of Alabama, our economy, and our future potential. Together, we will achieve incredible things!”

Commentary:

Brand Personality is a qualitative expression of the attitude, style, and voice of a brand. The Alabama Workforce System is confident and energetic. It makes big claims because it stands on the bedrock of a clear mandate to succeed. This brand says, “Alabama is on its way to somewhere exciting, and I know how to get us there.”

The brand charter provides a framework to focus Alabama's messaging internally and externally. It will evolve, as it is refined through the developmental process. In order to be fully executed, the brand charter is supported by the brand architecture laying out deployment specifications and a sensory identity, allowing the brand to be expressed across multiple platforms.

Brand Architecture

Brand architecture is a clear, organized system of brands that arrange offerings in a simple, logical hierarchy, organized by types, levels, and relationships. Brand architecture guides how/whether brands are retained, eliminated, developed, grouped, extended, co-branded, or endorsed.

You will likely deploy a variety of brand relationships across a variety of strategies, services, and partners. As in the examples below, these relationships can be *endorsed relationships*, *dominant relationships*, *subordinate relationships*, *shared relationships* and *co-branded relationships*. There may also be occasions where you will venture into *invisible brand relationships*. Use the brand charter as a filter to:

- Prevent dilution and fragmentation of the parent brand;
- Help customers identify, understand, and navigate new products and services easily;
- Simplify decision-making;
- Reduce proliferation of brand names that can create confusion; and
- Reduce cost/time spent on naming, process, and brand management.

- Dominant



- Shared



- Endorsed



- Co-brand



- Invisible



Placement of a new product, service, affiliated brand, or concept within a brand strategy is based on understanding the following:

Business issues

- Do you own/control/significantly influence the branded entity?
- Are there regulatory/legal/industry obstacles?
- Is the commitment to the branded entity long term?

Industry issues

- What is the perceived value of the entity, both existing and potential?
- What is the prospect of whole ownership?

Identity issues

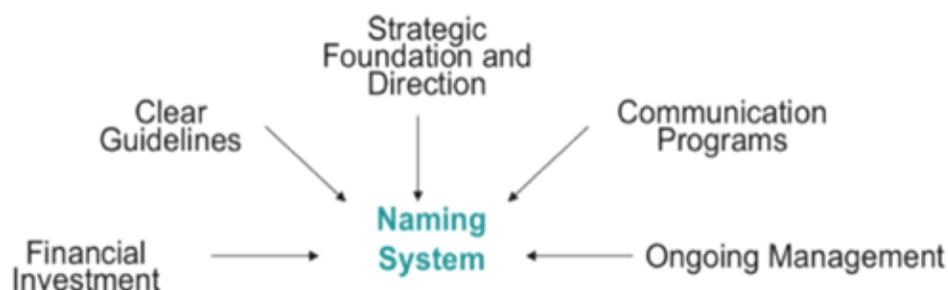
- Does the branded entity have existing or potential equity?
- What are the impacts of linkage to the parent brand?

Brand Architecture creates and maintains consistency, so offerings and their relationships can be easily identified and understood within competencies and product lines, as well as across the organization's entire range of offerings.

Nomenclature

Naming can be difficult, subjective, and uncomfortable. Good names begin with clearly-defined objectives and require a strategic process in order to be successful. Key objectives in naming include the following:

- The name must be coherent and consistent.
- The name must provide focus for customers, employees, and stakeholders.
- The fewer the number of names, the better.
- The simpler the approach, the more poignant the message to the market.
- All naming decisions should be made from a target market perspective, not a "*the creative department or the board likes it*" perspective.
- Brand charter and structure should provide direction for development of the naming system.
- The relationship of naming elements should be easy to understand at key decision points.
- Ongoing commitment and monitoring are required to be efficient and effective.



A name alone is an empty vessel and can never communicate all key messages!

Other branding elements help to communicate the mission, position, and values to key target audiences. Important questions must be asked in developing naming recommendations:

- Does the name support business strategy and vision?
- Does it support the brand charter?
- Is the name differentiating?
- Is the name culturally appropriate?
- Can we own or buy the name?
- Will the name let us tell our story?
- Is a change in name moving us away from negative brand equity and/or toward positive brand equity?

Naming Conventions

There are three principle types of names, each with strengths and weaknesses. We'll use the example of a *florist* to explore them. Remember that there is no single "right" naming convention, and the correct answer is a blend of analysis and intuition. We do recommend market testing names and marks from a short list of likely candidates before execution if changes are being made.

Descriptive names: "Dave's Flower Shop"

- Easiest to communicate to key audiences
- Have direct association to the product or service
- Most difficult to protect legally
- Can be limiting if you expand or change focus

Associative names: "*Petal Lovers!*"

- May require more communication support
- Work by associating the brand with a desired benefit or attribute
- Can make strong trademarks
- Are of moderate difficulty to protect legally

Abstract names: "*Driftwind*"

- Require the most effort to communicate and support
- Have no obvious association with the product or its benefits or attributes
- Make the most distinctive and protectable trademarks
- Are easier to protect legally

Brand Development Recommendations

The Alabama Workforce System should immediately contract with a brand development partner to perform the following tasks:

1. Choose a leadership sub-group comprised of representatives from the Regional Workforce Development Councils, the Alabama Workforce Council, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor, and the K-12 and Community College systems to review, refine, and adopt the brand charter.
2. Develop, test, and produce naming and visual identity. An appropriate quantitative market test of a short-list of names and logos is essential to the process.
3. Codify the new brand in a brand standards manual and style guide.
4. Develop, budget, and oversee a brand rollout.
5. Design and create a brand enculturation program, including training and communication tools to be consistently adopted across the Alabama Workforce System.
6. Design, produce, and deploy a new portfolio of marketing and communication tools.
7. Perform a needs analysis, create specifications for, and commission the development and production of a new Alabama Workforce System online “one-stop” resource and a back-end data management system.

Key Messaging

The following are key messages distilled from the StoryJam™ session work:

- **To Families**
“Alabama offers every person a full spectrum of lifelong learning and development.”
- **To Parents**
“There is strong, positive community impact when students stay home and lay down roots”
- **To Job Seekers**
“You can have a great career and build a prosperous future right here in Alabama.”
- **To Industry**
“The Alabama Workforce System is YOUR effective, business-driven talent supply chain.”
- **To Educators and Trainers**
“Business and industry are your customers, and well prepared students are your product.”
- **To Alabama Workforce System Stakeholders**
“We are a unified and branded system for workforce development and talent supply chain management. We are the key to achieving Alabama’s long-term economic goals.”

APPENDIX A

REGIONAL WORKFORCE COUNCIL INFORMATION SHEET

RWC INFO SHEET

What is a Regional Workforce Council (RWC)?

- Established formally in 2015 by the Alabama state legislature (Act 2015-450)
- Transferred to the Alabama Department of Commerce, as a key part of a comprehensive Workforce Development (WFD) plan
- Business-driven and Business-led
- Maintains a regional strategic plan to support the Accelerate Alabama economic development plan
- Establishes a feedback loop for critical WFD information to the Alabama Workforce Council
- Monitors Business & Industry (B&I) satisfaction with Federal & State funded projects, and are the change agent if not satisfied



What is the Value of a RWC?

- Creates a collaborative atmosphere of workforce partners for Business & Industry (B&I), Postsecondary, K-12, DOL, Career Centers, Non-Profits, Economic Developers and local municipal governments
- Provides rapid response to short-term training and job placement needs of Alabama Business & Industry (B&I)
- Provides long-term solutions for closing skills gaps - by listening to local B&I leaders and delivering solutions
- Ensures high quality training services are provided in the Region
- Ensures Federal & State fiscal resources are wisely allocated for WFD activities

That Sounds Great! What is the Cost?

- The outcomes will be much higher than the cost of investment!
- The model would be phased in, **IF** the region meets pre-set accountability metrics:

Year 1 - Program Development

(Includes: Salary and Benefits for a RWC Director,
Basic operational funds: Rent, Phone, PC)



\$100,000
x 10 Regions
\$1,000,000

Year 2 - Program Development

(Includes: Salary and Benefits for a RWC Director
IF metrics are met, add the Salary for Case
Manager, additional operating funds)



\$175,000
x 10 Regions
\$1,750,000

Year 3 - Program Development

(Salary and Benefits for a RWC Director & Case Manager
IF metrics are met, add a Part-Time Admin Assistant)



\$200,000
x 10 Regions
\$2,000,000

What's the ROI of a RWC?

- Improves response time to B&I immediate workforce needs
- Employability (Soft) Skills training will be the cornerstone of their efforts
- B&I will be able to hire a well trained and skilled workforce
- Skilled workforce = An improved bottom line for businesses
 - ▶ Increases production
 - ▶ Reduces layoffs
 - ▶ Precipitates job creation through expansion
- Makes Alabama more attractive for industry recruitment
- Helps Alabama citizens earn a livable wage and increases quality of life
- Reports of outcomes and ROI provided routinely



Examples of what can Result by Wisely Investing in the RWC Model



REGION 3

- West Alabama Works, Tuscaloosa area, has 200+ companies engaged in their workforce model
- Received an urgent request from the tier suppliers of Mercedes-Benz for the immediate need of 400 employees to meet production demand
 - ▶ Responded by planning and hosting an “Automotive Hiring Fair”
 - ▶ 10 companies interviewed 2,100 people in one day! Result: 610 job offers made
- Received an urgent request from Bama Dining needing 200 employees
 - ▶ Planned and hosted a Hiring Fair, Interviewed 600 people! Result: 200 placed in jobs
- Developed a mobile Ready-To-Work Unit taking soft-skills training to rural communities
- Since 2014, navigated 2,600+ jobseekers and placed 1,300+ in meaningful employment

REGION 9

- Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC), Mobile area, serves their industry partners via the 4 major Industry Cluster model: Aviation, Healthcare, Construction/Manufacturing, and Maritime
- These clusters represent 67 companies and nearly 100,000 employees
- Services include project management, case management, and tracking
- Convenes key stakeholders, and provides constant attention to their workforce needs
- Since 2011, SAWDC has served:
 - ▶ 1,339 jobseekers - of those they have managed 925 into targeted industry jobs
 - ▶ 181 incumbent workers – all received wage increase upon completion of training
 - ▶ A documented 90% retention rate for 24 months of the incumbent workers trained
- Just completed its 6th annual “Worlds of Opportunity”
 - ▶ This is a hands-on career expo for 8th grade students (a critical year for career pathways) of the eight counties of Southwest Alabama spotlighting the numerous career choices they have
 - ▶ The event saw over 9,300 students, 930 teachers, counselors and parents
 - ▶ The event exposes students to local careers available in Aerospace, Automotive, IT, Construction, Energy, Engineering, Healthcare, Manufacturing, and more



There are many other examples! For more information, contact:

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APPENDIX B

WORKFORCE DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN, AUGUST 2015 RESEARCH



TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Employer Engagement in Workforce Data

By Michelle Massie
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WORKFORCE
DATA QUALITY
CAMPAIGN

Introduction

In order to keep pace with rapid economic and technological changes, business leaders need more systematic information about education pipelines, career pathways, and workers' credentials to assess whether regions can provide workers with the skills their companies need now and into the future. Employers can use quality data to make more informed decisions when managing their businesses, and also strategically engage with their communities and local leaders to improve workforce development.

For two years, Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC) has worked to engage all stakeholders in efforts to create, maintain, and use data systems that will help business leaders, workers, policymakers, educators, and students make better decisions about future investments, career choices, and education and training opportunities.

A number of states have made progress

in their creation and governance of state longitudinal data systems (SLDS). Some systems have matured as states use data to create consumer information tools, work with economic development agencies to attract industry and jobs to their states, and provide information to policymakers that assure public confidence in education and workforce investments.

Many state advances have been supported by federal grants. The U.S. Department of Education awards SLDS grants to empower states, districts, schools, educators, and other stakeholders to make data-informed decisions to improve student learning and outcomes; as well as to facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps.¹ The U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant program funds development of state workforce longitudinal databases to provide a comprehensive picture of

workers' skill development and earnings throughout their careers.²

Even with significant state progress, more could be done. In particular, employers and business communities often seem to be missing from the conversation around development, governance, and use of these state data systems. These unique stakeholders could help create engagement strategies to ensure workforce data outcomes are being considered and elevated as state data systems evolve.

Business leaders play a role in the P-20W continuum because they need workers with up-to-date skills to fill open positions and keep pace with changes in their industries. Many employers are struggling to find qualified workers and they are unsure of whether education and training providers are preparing enough people with the right skills to meet current and future industry needs.

If business leaders are armed with data on education pipelines, credentials, and career pathways, they will know where skills gaps exist or are likely to emerge.



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation explored how employers can make better use of their own data in its recent report, “Analyzing Talent Flow: Identifying Opportunities for Improvement.” In addition to data they collect through their human resource offices, businesses have long relied on publically-funded data sets to make decisions.

An informal survey conducted by WDQC asked more than two dozen employers from Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships (BLU) to report on their usage of public data sources, and found that more than half of these employers turned to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data when determining where to locate or expand a business or make future investments. Likewise, a 2014 survey by BLS suggests that hundreds of industry associations and private businesses use its data.³ State data systems could be another important source of information.

If business leaders are armed with data on education pipelines, credentials, and career pathways, they will know where skills gaps exist or are likely to emerge. They can advise colleges, universities, and training providers about the types of courses and competencies that students will need in order to be hired.

Through varied engagement strategies, employers can become part of an active process to help cultivate talent within their states. Business leaders can thus be confident that state systems are doing more than just collecting data; they are helping regions and states to make informed decisions about education and workforce planning, and can eventually strengthen economic development.

This paper demonstrates two states where employers have been leaders in state data systems. In Mississippi, a business leader is active in data governance. In Alabama, a group of business leaders were strong advocates for the development of a longitudinal data system.

YOKOHAMA TIRE CORPORATION

Mississippi uses its SLDS, commonly known as **LifeTracks**, as a marketing tool for the expansion of jobs in the state. For example, the Yokohama Tire Corporation built a new manufacturing plant in West Point, Mississippi that could provide up to 2,000 jobs. When the company was searching for a site, executives had questions about whether the region had a workforce with the skills they needed. The National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University, which manages LifeTracks, was able to provide answers. Researchers used longitudinal data to make projections about numbers of high school career and technical education students who could take courses at area community colleges to prepare them for new jobs. They also looked at the number of current workers in the region with the necessary credentials. The data helped to assure Yokohama that they would be able to find qualified employees for the new facility.⁸

Governance in the Magnolia State

Mississippi began to establish its state data system in 1999. From the beginning, Mississippi recognized that for data to be used effectively, the state needed to accomplish three important goals. First, it had to clearly articulate the scope and vision of data use. Second, the state needed to address threats to confidentiality and privacy associated with data sharing and use. Third, Mississippi had to create the structural, technical, and scientific capacity to handle large volumes of data.⁴

Building the data system

As the system partners began to articulate the scope and vision for data use in the state, a central theme emerged: any investment in education and workforce development should be geared toward creating more and better jobs. With this belief

at its core, system partners developed four research questions that would guide the growth of Mississippi's SLDS:

- 1) Do people get jobs?
- 2) Do people remain attached to the labor market with opportunities for a career?
- 3) Do people get jobs that pay livable wages?
- 4) Are the investments meeting the demands of the business community?

It took three years to develop the scope and vision, and to settle on the four questions. During this time, a series of meetings, forums, and workshops were held across the state with a diverse set of stakeholders to focus on how data should help address these questions.

The state began establishing memorandums of understanding (MOU) with each stakeholder that saw the benefit of participating in data sharing. Stakeholders included state agencies and entities such

Using solid data that have been verified is a key to working with the business community and creating an economic development engine.



as: Mississippi Department of Education, State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi Department of Employment Security, State Early Childhood Advisory Council, Mississippi Department of Human Services, and State Workforce Investment Boards. Once all the data contributors were on board, the state formalized the data system through legislation that created the SLDS Governing Board. The board was established in July 2013 and charged with developing and disseminating rules and regulations for the use and safeguarding of data.⁵

Engaging business leaders

Mississippi recognized the importance of taking legislative action to fuel the success of its SLDS, branded as Mississippi LifeTracks. State legislation mandates that the head of the state's workforce investment board, who is a business leader, also chairs the LifeTracks governing board.⁶

The current chair is Jay Moon, Chief Execu-

tive Officer and President of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association. He is currently the only private sector representative on the data system's governing board.

"Employers are interested in workforce development. We have a stake in it because we are the group that is going to supply employment for these graduates," Moon said. "Having a skilled, qualified workforce is absolutely essential. By having me on the board to represent the private sector interest, it added a dimension that was missing."⁷

Moon said the idea was always to link SLDS to workforce in an effort to understand the impact of programs on individuals and how they thrive in the workforce. "With employers you always have to talk about the end game," he added. "The private sector is about results. You have to show employers the value proposition."⁸

As part of the state's economic development efforts, LifeTracks is used regularly to respond to requests for information from

prospective businesses and developers. If the businesses express additional interest, the team at nSPARC will use real-time information available through Mississippi Works, an interactive web tool that brings together job postings, jobseeker resumes, and labor market information.

Using solid data that have been verified is a key to working with the business community and creating an economic development engine. According to Moon, LifeTracks is a model that appears to be working for the state.

A strong governance structure to support the SLDS will ensure long-term growth and support for the system. Moon said that the governing board spent a lot of time creating policies and procedures, and that they continue to make improvements with input from a variety of stakeholders that represent the public sector, private sector, and research community.

Eventually, Mississippi hopes to fine tune LifeTracks so it can perform analysis for pol-

icymakers in real time, to help them make policy determinations for appropriations and other matters.

LifeTracks is operated by the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University and serves as the state data clearinghouse. The nSPARC provides the scientific and technical expertise necessary to manage the SLDS under the direction of the Governing Board.

Advocacy in the Heart of Dixie

Coming out of the national recession, leaders in Alabama realized that the state will continue to face economic changes as the baby boom population retires and demand rises for a more skilled workforce. Consistently experiencing a high unemployment rate, despite the availability of certain skilled positions, the state is anticipating significant challenges ahead.¹⁰

Those were the conditions cited in a report by the “College and Career Ready Task Force,” which was established by Governor Robert Bentley in 2013 to bring together leaders from business, education, and government to formulate recommendations to “leverage the strengths of education and industry to improve educational outcomes and to promote workforce and economic development in the state.”¹¹

Promoting data improvements

The Task Force led to the creation of a permanent statewide business advisory group which has championed better workforce data. The Governor created the Alabama Workforce Council (“the Council”) in 2014 to foster dialogue and create actionable connections between the state’s education and business entities.

The Council recently presented specific recommendations for the creation of a SLDS with the capacity to link data from early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, and

The Council said a centralized system would not increase the amount of data being collected by agencies, but would instead connect existing information.

workforce programs. The state currently has a K-12 longitudinal data system, but limited ability to link it with other data sets. (Alabama is one of only three states that have not received SLDS funding from the U.S. Department of Education.)

The SLDS would collect data from state education agencies, the state’s Department of Labor, industry, and other parties to evaluate education and workforce trends. The purpose of the system is to provide better information to key stakeholders, such as: “businesses currently operating or considering expansion in the state, potential businesses considering moving to the state, economic developers, and state and local education leaders so that the state can be more competitive in the overall education arena and business marketplace.”¹²

The Council’s report says that the collection of data could serve as a driver to improve the state’s educational outcomes, assist with education and workforce development marketing efforts, assess the efficiency of current programs, and align funding with programs that have proven results. The SLDS would not be focused on the progress of individual students, and no individual level information would be made publically available. Instead, the data system would provide insight into how effectively Alabama is providing critical education and workforce skills on an aggregate level.¹³

The Council said a centralized system would not increase the amount of data being collected by agencies, but would instead connect existing information.



Source: Jamie Martin, Office of Governor Robert Bentley

ENDNOTES

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