

# **2008 – 2009 ALABAMA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The 2008-2009 Strategic Plan for Workforce Development is the blueprint for Alabama's workforce development system and the continued implementation of Governor Riley's Executive Order 36. The Strategic Plan contains the major strategies that Alabama's workforce development partners will implement to maximize efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness in providing services for job seekers and employers.

Contents of the Strategic Plan are driven by Executive Order 36; research by Auburn University at Montgomery and the University of Alabama; and recommendations by the Regional Workforce Development Committees of the Alabama Rural Action Commission. In addition, feedback was solicited from regional workforce development councils, one-stop career center professionals, Training for Business and Industry Program coordinators, state agency partners, and educators.

# GOALS, IMPERATIVES, AND STRATEGIES

## *Goals*

The goals of Alabama's workforce development system are for:

- Individuals to prosper by obtaining and retaining successful employment; and
- Employers to prosper by obtaining and retaining skilled employees.

## *Imperatives and Strategies*

To achieve its goals and provide a skilled workforce for the future, the Alabama workforce development system has identified the following imperatives and associated major strategies.

### *Imperative 1: Maximize efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of workforce development system at state and local levels.*

To achieve this imperative, Alabama's workforce development partners will:

- Maximize resources for direct services to job seekers and employers at the local level.
- Reduce state-level administrative costs to maximize available resources for direct services for job seekers and employers.
- Replace duplicative data collection, intake, referral, and reporting systems with a single system that meets needs of the workforce development partners.
- Implement an automated accounting system that captures balances of funding streams, thus facilitating coordinating planning, budgeting, and resource allocations by the SWPC.
- Implement procedures for funding workforce development activities through multiple funding streams coordinated by the SWPC.
- Assist Regional Workforce Development Councils and service providers to obtain funding from external sources.
- In collaboration with Regional Workforce Development Councils and industry and economic development leaders, inform legislators and other decision makers of resources needed.
- Consolidate fiscal and operations management and supervision of one-stop career center system under the GOWD, eliminate duplicative onsite management, and, where feasible, locate one-stop career centers or satellite centers on two-year college campuses.
- Implement a plan to ensure that one-stop career centers have a professional, welcoming, and client-friendly atmosphere.
- Cross train one-stop career center staff to provide multiple services for job seekers and employers, including those in professional fields, and develop, where needed, a directory of regional workforce development assets and resources; emphasize the "one-stop" feature of the centers.
- Utilize assistive technology and disability accommodation services in one-stop career centers; train staff in use of technology and services.
- Collocate work programs authorized under the Food Stamp Act and programs for TANF recipients in one-stop career centers where feasible.
- Expand the Food Stamp and Employment Training Program to provide additional services, improved access, and increased utilization of workforce development services by food stamp recipients.

- Develop a sliding scale for WIA Individual Training Account (ITA) values based on training program factors.
- Integrate the workforce development system into Alabama’s overall economic development strategies.
- Promote efforts of local economic development organizations and the Alabama Small Business Development Consortium to serve entrepreneurs and small business owners.

*Imperative 2: Ensure that workforce development programs and services are aligned with current and future skill needs.*

To achieve this imperative, Alabama’s workforce development partners will:

- Ensure that Regional Workforce Development Councils represent the diversity of businesses and communities within the region.
- Require that Regional Workforce Development Councils be co-applicants with service providers for funding requests and that the Councils certify that proposed activities address local workforce development priorities.
- Actively involve WIBs in establishing direction and leadership for WIA activities.
- Develop the Program Year 2009 Workforce Investment Act/Wagner-Pyser Act state plan based on documented priorities, best practices, and the Alabama Strategic Plan for Workforce Development.
- In collaboration with university deans of engineering, implement the Alabama STEM Initiative to increase enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and provide a seamless transition in engineering and industrial technologies curricula from secondary through university levels.
- Require that career and technical education program curricula are reviewed annually and revised, as warranted, by an industry program advisory committee.
- Target funds to address workforce development needs of areas impacted by the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission.
- Target funds to prepare individuals for high-wage employment in maritime, healthcare, aerospace, biotechnology, tourism, manufacturing, transportation, and industrial construction and maintenance.
- Increase participation of industry and economic development organizations in the annual Alabama Workforce Development Conference as a means of informing conference participants of skill needs.

*Imperative 3: Increase the number of skilled workers in labor pool.*

To achieve this imperative, Alabama’s workforce development partners will:

- Expand career and technical education dual enrollment, course-to-course articulation, high school apprenticeship programs, and Department of Labor registered apprenticeships as a workforce training option.
- Expand the GED concurrent enrollment program.
- Provide completers of the Ready-to-Work Program and GED recipients six credit hours of tuition-free instruction in high-demand, high-wage technical education courses.

- Provide a referral system for retirees to re-enter employment and volunteer opportunities through the Mature Worker Taskforce.
- Promote employer awareness of the talent pool of qualified individuals with disabilities and assistance available to employers who hire individuals with disabilities through such organizations as the Alabama Business Leadership Employment Network.
- Develop a referral system so that unsuccessful job applicants may be referred to one-stop career centers for additional assistance in obtaining employment.
- Coordinate inmate education and training with the Department of Corrections to ensure uninterrupted training and support objectives of the Governor’s Community Partnership for Recovery and Re-Entry program.
- Institute Career Readiness Credential in prison education programs.
- Target funding for Ready-to-Work programs in areas of labor demand and high numbers of unemployed individuals with limited preparation for work.

*Imperative 4: Assist employees and employers to maximize retention and productivity.*

To achieve this imperative, Alabama’s workforce development partners will:

- Implement statewide the Operations Management and Continuous Improvement Program that assists existing businesses in increasing profits through greater efficiency.
- Develop and implement an Alabama WIA Incumbent Worker Training Model based on best practices for administering and managing WIA incumbent worker training funds.
- Provide assistance to employers through Vocational Rehabilitation’s Retain A Valued Employee (RAVE) program.
- Implement a professional development program for TEBI personnel at two-year colleges.
- Expand the Career Ready Alabama initiative, including ACT WorkKeys job profiles for employers.

*Imperative 5: Ensure that Alabamians are aware of career opportunities, skill requirements, and education and training options.*

To achieve this imperative, Alabama’s workforce development partners will:

- Implement marketing and public relations activities that inform citizens of job opportunities and potential earnings in Alabama’s new economy, skills required, training providers, and services available through the state’s workforce development system.
- Expand the Vocational Rehabilitation School-to-Career program to educate students with disabilities about career opportunities in Alabama.
- Maximize use of virtual guidance websites to include education plans supporting career choices at the secondary, postsecondary, and higher education levels; and information on financial aid, employment opportunities, career information, and training opportunities.
- Enhance career development and exploration experiences for K-12 students.
- Establish a toll-free number for Alabama job seekers and employers to access information and assistance.

Imperative 6: Demonstrate accountability.

To achieve this imperative, Alabama's workforce development partners will:

- Implement a transparent and participatory system for evaluating funding proposals and awarding workforce development grants.
- Incorporate accountability requirements into grant agreements.
- Ensure through direct quality assurance monitoring that funded programs and services are addressing workforce development needs and that funds are used appropriately.
- Rescind funds from workforce development projects making inadequate progress toward achieving objectives.
- Inform Regional Workforce Development Councils of one-stop career center performance and engage Councils in implementing continuous improvement practices for the Career Center System.
- Implement a formal communications protocol with the GOWD as the clearinghouse and repository for workforce development system information, policies, procedures, and directives.
- Post an annual performance report on the workforce development system and a listing of funded activities on the GOWD website.

# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

**Foundation:**

Executive Order 36

**Rationale:**

Assessment of Resources

Assessment of Operations

Alabama Workforce and Economic Projections

Alabama Rural Action Commission Recommendations

**Structure:**

Alabama's Workforce Development System

Workforce Development Partner Agencies

**Strategic Plan Development:**

Contributors

## FOUNDATION

### *Executive Order 36*

WHEREAS, on December 30, 2003, and again on February 19, 2004, Executive Orders were issued creating the Office of Workforce Development. Subsequently, the requirements for the most effective and efficient operation of this office, and of this function, have changed, causing the need to amend the current structure of this office. Therefore, I hereby rescind both versions of Executive Order Number 17 and replaced them with a new Executive Order.

WHEREAS, improving Alabama's system of workforce development is a primary goal of State government; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of existing executive agencies directly responsible to the Governor that have rights, powers, duties and responsibilities that involve, in significant part, employment training and development. Streamlining and consolidating the functions of certain of these agencies into a single agency that offers the opportunity to realize significant cost savings, eliminate redundancy and simplify the organizational structure of the Executive Branch, improve accessibility and accountability, provide more efficient use of specialized expertise and facilities, reduce administrative support, and promote more effective sharing of best practices and state of the art technology, among other things; and

WHEREAS, strengthening Alabama's system of workforce and economic development to build a highly skilled and globally competitive workforce throughout the State is a primary goal of State government; and

WHEREAS, State government must continue to improve the effective utilization of existing resources in support of workforce and economic development to significantly reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts.

NOW THEREFORE, based upon those considerations, and for other good and valid reasons which relate thereto, I, Bob Riley, Governor of the State of Alabama, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama, do hereby direct the consolidation of the administration of federal and state workforce development activities by creating the Office of Workforce Development. This Executive Order replaces both versions of Executive Order No. 17, dated December 30, 2003 and February 19, 2004.

BE IT ORDERED that the Governor shall appoint the Director of Workforce Development for the state's two-year college system to serve as the Director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development. The Director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development shall serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the Governor. The State Workforce Planning Council shall develop, administer and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive State Plan for Workforce Development to be approved by the Governor with input from the State Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Board. The Council shall be composed of the following members or their respective designees:

- the Director of the Office of Workforce Development;
- the Chancellor of The Alabama College System;
- the Director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs;
- the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations;
- the Director of the Alabama Development Office;

the Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources;  
the Commissioner of the Department of Senior Services;  
the Director of the Alabama Industrial Training Institute; and  
the State Superintendent of Education.

Three at-large members shall be appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be the president of an Alabama public two-year college and the other two representing Alabama business and industry. The chairperson of the Planning Council shall be the Chancellor of The Alabama College System and the Co-chairperson shall be the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that all the powers, duties, rights and responsibilities related to workforce development vested in the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs with respect to the administration of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and any subsequent re-authorization and all liabilities arising therefrom are transferred to the Office of Workforce Development.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that all the workforce development powers, duties, rights and responsibilities of other units of State government and programs under the direction of the Governor whose responsibility is to provide workforce development and/or training within the State including, but not limited to those not vested in statute, and all liabilities arising therefrom are transferred to the Office of Workforce Development.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that personnel in the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and other units of State government who are assigned directly or indirectly to programs transferred by this Executive Order shall continue their service within the Office of Workforce Development. While such transferred employees shall receive no change in grade or pay, their roles and responsibilities may change subject to the discretion of the Director.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that, whenever any provision of an Executive Order or any Act or section thereof transferred by this Executive Order provides for membership on any council, commission, board or other entity, the Director of the Office of Workforce Development or his/her designee(s) shall serve in that place. If more than one such commissioner/director is required by law to serve on any council, commission, board or other entity, an equivalent number of representatives of the Office of Workforce Development shall so serve.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that all unexpended balances of appropriations, grants, and contracts, including federal, state, and other funds or allocations for the past program years ending June 30, 2007 and past fiscal years ending September 30, 2007 of the programs transferred by this Executive Order from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and other units of State government and programs effected by this Executive Order to the Office of Workforce Development shall be transferred to the Office of Workforce Development. All funds, including federal, state and other funds appropriated, granted, or contracted to Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and other units of State government and programs effected by this Executive Order for the program years beginning July 1, 2007 and fiscal years beginning October 1, 2007 shall be transferred to the Office of Workforce Development for its use under the same terms and conditions as specified by any act, grant or contract, or as otherwise specified by law. All books, records, papers, documents, property (real and personal), and pending business pertaining to the rights, powers and duties transferred by this Executive Order from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and other units of State government and programs effected by this Executive Order to the Office of Workforce Development, including but not limited to material in electronic or magnetic format and necessary computer hardware

and software, shall be delivered to the Office of Workforce Development pursuant to the direction of the Director of the Office of Workforce Development.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the rights, powers and duties transferred to the Office of Workforce Development by this Executive Order shall be vested in and shall be exercised by the Office of Workforce Development. Each act done in exercise of such rights, powers and duties shall have the same legal effect as if done by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, or other affected units of State government and programs, their officers or employees thereof as it pertains to the programs transferred by this Executive Order.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that this Executive Order shall not affect any act done, ratified or canceled or any right occurring or established or any action or proceeding had or commenced in an administrative, civil or criminal cause regarding a unit of State government effected by this Executive Order as it pertains to the programs transferred before this Executive Order takes effect, but such actions or proceedings may be prosecuted and continued by the Office of Workforce Development.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that, as soon as practicable hereafter, the Office of Workforce Development shall revise and clarify the rules transferred to it under this Executive Order to reflect the reorganization of rights, power and duties affected by this Order. The parent state agency of the Office of Workforce Development may propose and adopt such other rules of the reorganized agencies that will now be administered by the Office of Workforce Development and approved by the Legislative Council where applicable.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the Office of Workforce Development shall operate in full cooperation with the Department of Postsecondary Education which shall be the primary, but not sole, provider of workforce education and training.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that, if any provision of this Executive Order or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, this invalidity does not affect any other provision or application of this Executive Order which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application. To achieve this purpose, the provisions of this Executive Order are declared to be severable.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that this Executive Order shall become effective immediately upon its execution and shall remain in effect until amended or modified by the Governor.

DONE AND ORDERED this 5th day of October, 2007.

Bob Riley, Governor

## RATIONALE

### *Assessment of Resources*

In the first of two studies commissioned by the State Workforce Planning Council (SWPC), Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) Center for Government researchers assessed the current status of workforce development and made recommendations for leveraging resources and for improving service delivery. Following is a summary of the major findings and recommendations from the study.

### Findings

1. The term “workforce development” is defined many ways, thus creating confusion and providing a rationale for some agencies to omit employment and training activities associated with significant funding sources.
2. The Department of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Postsecondary Education, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and Department of Industrial Relations collectively manage more than 80% of all workforce development revenue.
3. More than 20% of all workforce development funds are spent on general and administrative functions, which do not involve direct programmatic contact between State personnel and the system’s clients.
4. By and large, a wider degree of flexibility and latitude can be exercised with respect to state funding sources. Opportunities exist to coordinate discretionary resources to address priority workforce development needs.
5. Workforce development programs operate on different program years and receive funding at different points in time. Compliance requirements vary significantly depending upon the source and purpose of the funding.
6. The financial management system is fragmented and disparate. Opportunities to consolidate financial management functions exist. Accounting systems, procedures, and practices vary significantly by organization resulting in reporting complications of workforce development funds. Dissimilar platforms and software applications that must share, exchange, and transfer data contribute heavily to data integrity concerns.

### Recommendations

1. Centralize financial management. The SWPC should ensure the various accounting programs utilized throughout the system are linked to a data capturing system that automates as much of the consolidation process as possible for “real-time” reporting purposes. Additionally, the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development (GOWD) should issue guidance regarding the minimal reporting requirements.
2. Consolidate the financial operations and management of the three skills training consortia. Consolidating the work of staff and financial services, including budgeting, into one office eliminates duplication of effort, administrative overlap, and improves the quality and timeliness of financial information required for decision-making purposes.

3. Coordinate resources and streamline access to services. Significant financial resources are not being actively coordinated; thereby, failing to fully embody the intent of the Workforce Investment Act and/or emerging trends within other states. For example, a major intent of the Workforce Investment Act is to encourage a greater degree of coordination and facilitate long-term planning of multiple workforce development funding streams. Therefore, the following resources should be incorporated into the one-stop delivery system and collocated, where appropriate. If this is not feasible, at a minimum, the resources should be tracked and coordinated by the SWPC to support workforce development activities:
  - Work programs authorized under the Food Stamp Act;
  - National and Community Service Act programs;
  - Activities designed to assist Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in obtaining employment;
  - Other appropriate federal, state, or local programs, such as the Registered Apprenticeship, Veterans Assistance, Prisoner Reentry Initiative, and Community Corrections programs.
4. Direct funds based on strategic needs. Workforce development funds should be distributed on a rational and coordinated basis, which may involve channeling certain proposals through the regional workforce development councils. In addition, to ensure that the resources are being utilized in accordance with their permissible uses, funds should be directed to address priority workforce development needs established during the strategic planning process.

### *Assessment of Operations*

In the second study, AUM researchers assessed workforce development operations and service delivery and made recommendations on improving responsiveness to customer needs. Following is a summary of the major findings and recommendations of the study.

### *Findings*

1. Coordination of services between One-Stop Partner Agencies is disjointed at best. Operations tend to be funding-stream oriented rather than client-centric oriented. Lack of program coordination is evidenced in the duplication of service offerings; multiple paper application forms with duplicative information required from the client; disjointed data collection systems that do not share information between partners; and lack of a structured system to refer clients to additional services for which they may be qualified.
2. Executive Order 36 requires the GOWD to streamline and consolidate functions to improve accessibility to information and promote more effective sharing of best practices and other relevant information. However, communication is lacking between partner agencies from the executive level down to the one-stop career center level.
3. A disconnect between the workforce development system, job seekers, and the state's businesses and industries is preventing efficient and effective use of the one-stop service delivery system.
4. To fulfill requirements of Executive Order 36, the GOWD and the SWPC have the authority and the responsibility to engage in strategic planning and budgeting activities. State agencies engaged in workforce development suffer from classic effects of information asymmetry (e.g., the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing). State, local, and not-for-profit operational plans are not centralized in the GOWD which leads to potential redundancies in the

administration of services. While agencies have adopted budgeting frameworks to fulfill Federal and State obligations, the SWPC has not adopted formal budgeting procedures. Moreover, existing systems are inadequate in capturing information required for effective resource allocation planning, particularly to address local needs. Only limited capacities exist to strategically leverage resources across multiple funding streams.

### Recommendations

1. The SWPC should develop a strategic plan that encompasses state-wide workforce development operations and service delivery to ensure that all one-stop partner agencies are working together at the executive level to provide seamless service. This process should be facilitated by the GOWD, and responsibility for managing and supervising programs and services of the one-stop career center system should be shifted to GOWD as required by Executive Order 36. In addition, a multi-agency team should be developed and functionally supervised and coordinated by GOWD to ensure efficient implementation of all workforce development initiatives and services.
2. Operations within the one-stop career centers should be consolidated under a functional career center management structure. Cross-training should also be offered to all career center employees to encourage staff to assist clients with any need. By moving to a functional, client-centric operation, seamless service can be enhanced in the career center office, eliminating the “my job – your job” mentality that is found within the current funding-stream orientation.
3. Service delivery of work readiness activities for Department of Human Resources (DHR) clients should be consolidated with current one-stop career center services. Co-locating (TANF) activities in the career center would ensure that clients are aware of services provided by career center staff and encourage their use of the services. In addition, a formal referral process should be implemented to ensure adequate and appropriate services are provided to all DHR clients who may benefit from additional services.
4. One-stop career centers should create an inviting client-centric environment that encourages interaction between career center staff and clients. Emphasis should be placed on creating a professional atmosphere and avoiding characteristics in interior layout and delivery structure that perpetuate the feel of a “social service” environment.
5. One-stop partner agencies should identify training services that have been duplicated or contracted out, and consolidate these services to ensure efficient use of resources. Cross-awareness training for one-stop partner agency staff can also serve to increase staff’s knowledge of services provided by other partners, encouraging referrals to available services within the one-stop system rather than to outside vendors.
6. An information sharing system should be implemented for use by all agencies to lessen the need for duplicative client information and enhance the perception of a seamless delivery system. This recommendation can be completed in two phases. First, One-Stop Partner Agencies should implement a common intake system as soon as possible. Alabama JobLink should be used as the consolidated intake system based on its current use by several states for both WIA and Wagner-Peyser activities and the fact that the state has already purchased the system. For future information sharing, the AUM Center for Government encourages the implementation of Camellia II technology that is currently being designed for the State’s Health and Human Services agencies. Camellia II will allow data collection and form completion across all partner agencies while not impacting each partner’s current database system.

7. Implement a seamless referral system that enhances the information provided to the client and to the referred agency. A standard referral form should be created that provides all necessary information needed by the client or referred agency.
8. Develop and implement a communication plan, facilitated by the GOWD, to ensure clear and accurate communication of policies, procedures, and best practices. The plan should include communication at all levels, such as state agency to state agency and state agency to local entity. This communication plan should:
  - clearly identify lines of communication and the role of each partner agency;
  - name the GOWD as a clearinghouse for generating and communicating policy and procedural information; and
  - use the GOWD website as a local repository for relevant memoranda and directives.
9. Increase marketing to job seekers to attract a more diversified group of applicants and increase the number of résumés available through Alabama JobLink. Marketing should promote services that relate to the professional job seeker as well as to the entry-level applicant. Marketing to job seekers can be accomplished by using one or more of the following methods:
  - Provide an orientation program to all new clients in individual or group sessions.
  - Distribute paper materials by asking partner agencies to display them on bulletin boards, handing out information at job fairs and school events, and making them available in the resource area of the career center.
  - Advertise services available in the local media using public service announcements to save costs.
  - Host awareness classes for employees and volunteers of community- and faith-based organizations, and career and technical education teachers to provide information to other professionals who work with job seekers on services available.
10. Increase marketing targeted to business and industry leaders and encourage their feedback and use of services provided. Marketing to business and industry can be accomplished using one or more of the following methods:
  - Conduct focus groups and feedback roundtables to give business and industry leaders a chance to express their needs and opinions.
  - Conduct needs analysis and customer satisfaction surveys to test the effectiveness of services offered.
  - Hold open house sessions and job fairs targeted to business and industry leaders to educate them on services provided.
  - Increase partnerships with local economic development agencies to take part in discussions of local business needs and workforce development requirements.
11. Increase the number and quality of partnerships with business and industry in the workforce development regions. Encourage employers to take a bigger role in the workforce development process and educate them on services currently provided. Additionally, partnerships with community-based and faith-based organizations are becoming more important as funds decline. One-stop centers should host cross-awareness training with these community- and faith-based organizations to increase their knowledge of services provided.

12. Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) should be restructured to increase the use of local labor market information and should be engaged in a more meaningful way in decisions regarding workforce development priorities of services and funding decisions. In the Alabama Workforce Investment Area (AWIA), the Regional Workforce Development Councils should be used to advise the AWIA WIB on business and industry needs, and representatives of the regional councils should be included in the membership of the AWIA WIB. On the State WIB, representation from each of the local areas should be included to ensure regional priorities are addressed.
13. GOWD should facilitate the development of a strategic resource allocation system to identify long-range goals and priorities using local and partner agency input. To develop this system, the following strategies are advised:
  - Develop formal budget procedures that are compatible with the SMART Planning Procedures.
  - Implement a performance-based budget model and apply a best-practice budgeting approach, such as the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting's (NACSLB) Four Principles of Budgeting.
  - Designate staff or design an automated system to collect financial and performance information from organizations.
  - Engage Regional Workforce Development Councils and WIBs in the development of their own strategic plans and operating budgets.
  - Centralize partner agencies' operational plans.
  - Prepare a strategic plan for SWPC's consideration.

### ***Alabama Workforce and Economic Projections***

The University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research conducted a study as a follow-up to previous research on economic, occupational, labor force, and demographic projections with implications for workforce development. Following are implications and recommendations of the study:

1. Alabama's labor force must grow faster to meet workforce demand either by increasing the participation rate, growing the population, or both.
2. Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries. The state economy needs to be diversified and strengthened by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage-providing industries.
3. A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. In developing this asset, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other more complex skills as well as enhancing basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for workforce training as they can help identify future skill needs and existing gaps.
4. Investment in education/training and skills development is crucial. All but one of the 50 highest-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees. An associate degree is the minimum requirement for 60% of the fastest-growing occupations; 46% require a bachelor's degree or higher. Most high-demand jobs require as a minimum a high school diploma or GED.

Postsecondary education/training with demonstrable skills will be the future minimum requirement for most jobs.

5. High-earning and fast-growing jobs in the state require more critical thinking, science, mathematics, complex problem solving, and systems skills. These skills require longer training periods and postsecondary education.
6. Fast-growing occupations in the state require more technical skills than the high-demand and high-earning occupations.
7. Individuals, the public, and legislators should continuously be educated on the benefits of education/training and skills development so as to encourage individuals to raise their own educational attainment level, and also promote public and legislative support for education and workforce development.
8. For economic development purposes, the state's workforce development efforts must consider both P-20 and other programs (e.g., adult education worker retraining) as one system.
9. Flexibility is essential as workforce needs change over time and demand different priorities.
10. Funding issues may require tax reform at both state and local levels.

### ***Alabama Rural Action Commission Recommendations***

On October 1, 2007, the Regional Workforce Development Committees of the Alabama Rural Action Commission released recommendations for restructuring and improving the state's workforce development system. The recommendations were based on a study of best practices in other states.

#### *Recommendations*

1. Vision, policy, and overall direction for a comprehensive workforce development system should be established at the state level.
2. The organizational structure should provide for clear reporting relationships and accountability for results with meaningful performance measures.
3. One agency should be primarily accountable for directing and coordinating the state's workforce development system. Efforts should be comprehensive and integrated; redundancy should be eliminated.
4. Business leaders from key employment sectors should make up the majority of boards and councils and must be inclusive of other stakeholders, thus ensuring that the workforce development system is employer and business directed. Councils must be inclusive of other stakeholders. Members should have decision-making authority.
5. Regional councils should be established to ensure that workforce development needs unique to each region are effectively addressed and conveyed to the state's workforce development organization.

6. The organizational structure and associated roles and responsibilities should ensure that both short and long-range strategic planning are properly coordinated among all state and regional workforce development providers.
7. Workforce development needs for new and existing employers should be addressed by the workforce development system.
8. All workforce development funds should be allocated based on identified regional priorities, managed in a fiscally-responsible manner, and audited to ensure that tangible results are achieved based on approved strategic plans.
9. Coordinated efforts should be made to maximize the infusion of federal workforce development funds into the state's regional workforce development system.
10. Strategy and forecasting should be data-driven and demand-based; and a comprehensive statewide, web-delivered database should be established to provide foundational information for decision-making by all entities.
11. The Workforce Development Plan should be clearly defined, branded, and communicated effectively to employers, and marketed throughout the state.
11. The program should be developed to recruit workers with specific skill sets that are not available within the state to meet identified demands.
12. Effective, user-friendly communication systems should be deployed to link the needs of employers with the skills of job seekers and to the resources available to support employers' workforce development needs.
13. Education and training should be aligned with the most critical occupational needs identified in the strategic planning process and with economic development strategies through forecasting, ACT WorkKeys, etc., both at the state and regional levels.
14. Education should include expanded career counseling, apprenticeships, internships, career readiness certification, and cooperative education programs.
15. Collaboration among public and private sectors should be encouraged to achieve training in critical areas.
16. The state's workforce development system should be inclusive of all job seekers and include specific workforce development programs tailored for mature workers, disadvantaged youth, citizens with disabilities, veterans returning to civilian life, parolees, welfare recipients, etc.
17. Additional research is needed to identify criteria that would provide for a logical alignment of the workforce development regions.
18. The state's workforce development system should include initiatives to provide for retraining of dislocated and/or other workers in identified critical skill sets.

## THE STRUCTURE

### *Alabama's Workforce Development System*

Alabama defines workforce development as:

*Planned and coordinated actions to eliminate barriers to employment for job seekers and to meet employers' current and future workforce needs.*

Workforce development in Alabama is lead by the SWPC, comprised of industry and two-year college representatives and state agency heads. Workforce development activities are coordinated by the GOWD in response to priorities established by the SWPC and business-led Regional Workforce Development Councils, and are carried out by partner agencies and their associated local entities. Alabama is taking a comprehensive approach to workforce development to ensure that job seekers and employers, regardless of their needs, are served. For example:

- Individuals seeking employment, including dislocated workers, are provided a wide array of services including direct connection to employers with job openings as well as career counseling and assessments.
- Individuals in need of education and training have available a variety of services to meet their needs including career counseling and assessments, adult education and GED preparation programs, short-term training, and career and technical education.
- Individuals seeking employment or training, but who are also in need of supportive services such as tuition, disability services, child care, food, and clothing assistance are connected by one-stop career center staff to services from state agencies as well as community- and faith-based organizations.
- New and expanding businesses are served by the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT).
- Existing businesses and incumbent workers are served through the Training for Existing Business and Industry (TEBI) Program and the Alabama Technology Network (ATN).
- Employers seeking qualified workers may post job openings and interview applicants through the one-stop career center system.
- Entrepreneurs and small business owners are assisted through local and regional economic development organizations and the Alabama Small Business Consortium.

### *Workforce Development Partner Agencies*

Several state agencies provide workforce development services. Each service is an essential partner so that, when combined, the result is a complete and comprehensive workforce development system. Alabama's workforce development partners include the following state agencies and their local entities.

- Alabama Development Office
- Alabama Department of Industrial Relations
- Alabama Department of Senior Services
- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- Alabama State Department of Education
- Alabama Department of Rehabilitative Services
- Alabama Department of Human Resources
- Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education

## STATÉGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Following are individuals who contributed to developing the Alabama Strategic Plan for Workforce Development.

### ***State Workforce Planning Council***

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Tom Surtees, Director, Department of Industrial Relations (Council Co-Chair)  
Dr. Matthew Hughes, Director GOWD and Workforce Development Division of DPE  
Neal Wade, Director, Alabama Development Office  
Dr. Page Walley, Commissioner, Department of Human Resources  
Dr. Joe Morton, Superintendent, Department of Education  
Bill Johnson, Director, Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs  
Steve Shivers, Commissioner, Department of Rehabilitation Services  
Irene Collins, Director, Department of Senior Services  
Ed Castile, Director, Alabama Industrial Development Training  
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### ***Governor's Office of Workforce Development***

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### ***Regional Workforce Development Council Chairs***

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Ronnie Boles, Region 2  
Terry Waters, Region 3  
Linda Lewis, Region 4  
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John C. Riggs, Region 6  
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***Career Center Council***

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Pam Cutchens  
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***Training for Existing Business and Industry Network***

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Amy Brabham	John Reutter
Brad James	John Rohlfs
Bret McGill	Julie Cohen
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Charles Murray	Mike Witt
Charles Porter	Nury Becerra
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