



DC JOBS COUNCIL

# Recommendations to the Transition Committee of Mayor-Elect Gray

11/30/2010

As the District of Columbia prepares to inaugurate a new Mayor, we face numerous and daunting challenges. We remain mired in dire financial straits, caused in large part by a recession that has been slow to recover nationwide. Citywide, nearly ten percent of us are unemployed; in some neighborhoods, especially East of the Anacostia River, that figure is tripled. More than one-third of us lack high school credentials, at the same time the Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce estimates that, by 2018, more than 70 percent of jobs will require at least one year of postsecondary education.<sup>1</sup> And more than 40 percent of our community's children are growing up in homes where no adult has full-time, year-round employment.<sup>2</sup>

But we are not without hope. We are preparing to inaugurate a new Mayor who has made jobs a centerpiece of his campaign. We have a clear, definable goal: to develop a plan to reduce unemployment in the District by three percent over five years. We finally have a nascent community college – for far too long a missing piece in the District's workforce development curriculum. And despite funding and other challenges, there is still a strong core of nonprofit, community-based workforce development service providers who have been preparing those District residents with the highest barriers for employment. Many are small, and therefore unable to train large number of students quickly, but they do good work and can demonstrate strong job placement and retention rates. They remain a critical link to those who face the longest journeys to finding and keeping good jobs, and to lifetime economic self-sufficiency.

The DC Jobs Council offers the following recommendations to the Labor and Workforce Mayoral Transition Subgroup.

1. Restructure the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) to operate independently from the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES), report directly to the City Administrator, and ensure the participation of all members, as mandated by federal and District law.
2. Create a coordinated, transparent, and responsive administrative structure to implement the city's workforce strategy by ensuring that the Executive Director of the WIC is provided with sufficient resources and authority to convene an ongoing interagency workgroup to address workforce development in a holistic manner.
3. Engage employers at both a citywide level and directly with job training providers to ensure DC residents are learning the skills employers require.
4. Launch a major and comprehensive overhaul of DOES to ensure the agency is structured to (1) meet the needs of District residents for access to jobs and the services to find and keep them, (2) manage federal and District grants using 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and methodologies, and (3) comply fully with federal and District laws and regulations.
5. Implement a data-driven oversight system, using outcome and performance data, coupled with ongoing surveys of employers, job training programs and job seekers, to ensure programs and services meet the self-sufficiency needs of DC's diverse communities.

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<sup>1</sup> [Center on Education and the Workforce -](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Home - District of Columbia - KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

6. Reconfigure the One-Stop system to include accessible satellite offices and central Career Centers offering comprehensive career counseling and assessments, along with referrals to qualified and effective agencies providing customers with services to meet their specific needs.
7. Focus local dollars on specific job readiness and training programs for adults and youth, particularly those residing in Wards 5, 7 and 8, on preparation for those jobs that will exist well into the future, and that offer steps on career ladders to self-sufficiency.
8. Provide direct access to support services (e. g, child care, housing, transportation) for those DC residents seeking jobs, as well as those whose wages are too low to pay for these services, in order to enable them to work without interruption.
9. Ensure services provided to the District's youth are relevant, focused on training for employment or actual employment, and appropriately evaluated.
10. Address and correct the mechanism for identifying, evaluating, and contracting with job training providers.
11. Link workforce and economic development strategies, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Community Benefit Agreements (CBA), and a Unified Development Budget (UDB), to ensure District residents benefit directly from jobs created by development projects

1. **Restructure the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) to operate independently from the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES), report directly to the City Administrator, and ensure the participation of all members, as mandated by federal and District law.**

To ensure effective and consistent cooperation by public and private entities, the District of Columbia needs an empowered Workforce Investment Council (WIC). In many cities the local workforce investment boards and their staff are the driving force of the overall workforce system. Their mandate extends beyond that authorized under the federal Workforce Investment Act and they have set ambitious goals for the overall workforce system.

The WIC will be most effective as a quasi-governmental entity, supported with local, federal and private funding. The Mayor and the Council must fully support and strengthen the WIC's role in shaping citywide policy and ensuring that the DC workforce system is aligned with the goals outlined by the Mayor and the local workforce investment laws. The WIC Executive Director, who occupies the agency's chief staff position, should be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the DC Council. To play its oversight role, the WIC and its staff should be housed independent of the DOES and outside of its administrative control, and supervised by a Deputy Mayor.

2. **Create a coordinated, transparent, and responsive administrative structure to implement the city's workforce strategy by ensuring that the Executive Director of the WIC is provided with sufficient resources and authority to convene an ongoing interagency workgroup to address workforce development in a holistic manner.**

Although the WIC and DOES are largely responsible for the District's workforce development system, they are by no means the only agencies whose work has an impact. The Department of Human Services (DHS), for example, administers the TANF Employment and Training program. The inadequacies of this program are well documented, and are being addressed. The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) administers funding for adult education programs – programs which are critical to the workforce system. Other agencies, such as the DC Department of Energy (DOE) have access to workforce funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), although that funding will expire shortly. And many agencies have access to funding and/or offer services that can benefit job seekers and help address barriers they face; one strong example is the Department on Disability Services (DDS). We believe that better coordination among agencies with complementary missions will result in comprehensive and lasting solutions to problems.

We propose the creation of an interagency workgroup to address these issues holistically. To be effective, any such workgroup must have the backing of the Mayor, as well as sufficient resources to function. We believe that a WIC Executive Director with sufficient authority and resources could be responsible for convening such a workgroup on a regular basis, and ensuring its recommendations are well considered by District leaders at all levels.

3. **Engage employers at both a citywide level and directly with job training providers to ensure DC residents are learning the skills employers require.**

Employers are the linchpin in any effort to reduce unemployment in the District. Without jobs, all of the training in the world will be useless. To ensure employers are fully engaged at all

levels, we propose that the District launch a two-tier initiative. In the first tier, a revitalized and independent WIC will serve as the primary vehicle to engage employers in setting strategy for workforce development. In the second tier, employers will work directly with community-based service providers and the Community College of the District of Columbia to ensure job training programs provide trainees with the skills employers require.

4. **Launch a major and comprehensive overhaul of DOES to ensure the agency is structured to meet the needs of District residents for access to jobs and the services to find and keep them, to manage federal and District grants using 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and methodologies, and to comply fully with federal and District laws and regulations.**

DOES has suffered in recent years from a structures and systems that fail to support customer service and that discourage employees in forming a commitment to excellence. There are truly exceptional staff members and DOES, but they struggle against a structure that resists change. Many of the agency's processes fail to use readily-available (and inexpensive) technology, creating unnecessary backlogs in doing the agency's work. New leadership will help, but ensuring change in structures and systems will require a significant overhaul, followed by focused oversight by DOES leadership, the Mayor and the WIC. Improved service will require a commitment to putting customers first, to coordinating with other District agencies, and to modernizing and streamlining internal operations.

5. **Implement a data-driven oversight system, using outcome and performance data, coupled with ongoing surveys of employers, job training programs and job seekers, to ensure programs and services meet the self-sufficiency needs of DC's diverse communities.**

It is essential that decisions regarding the effectiveness of workforce development activities be based on verifiable data. Such data must include performance and outcome measures that track the effectiveness of programs funded in part or fully with public dollars. Programs must be analyzed against standards of effectiveness that include aggregated and disaggregated data along a variety of indices, outcome and performance data, demographic information, and measures of success of various programs tied to self-sufficiency. Any data collection and analysis system must be transparent to city government and the general public and should not unnecessarily increase DOES staff workload. We recommend that data be collected and analyzed on a regular schedule to provide current information.

Anecdotal information regarding the experience of One-Stop customers will provide information essential to ensuring the One-Stop centers provide services job seekers need, in a way that encourages, supports, and empowers those seeking employment or training opportunities.

The development and collection of any data will be facilitated by the hiring of a Director of Labor Market Information with all due speed. This critical position has remained unfilled by a permanent staff member for more than three years.

6. **Reconfigure the One-Stop system to include accessible satellite offices and central Career Centers offering comprehensive career counseling and assessments, along with referrals to qualified and effective agencies providing customers with services to meet their specific needs.**

- A. Codify self-sufficiency as primary benchmark, as stipulated in the DC Workforce Investment Act. Evaluations of services provided to clients will measure progress toward self-sufficiency.
- B. Apply to US Department of Labor (DOL) for waiver to modify sequence of services so the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES) can deliver services more effectively
- C. Continue to improve customer experience and effectiveness of services received
  - 1. Days and hours of operation should be congruent with needs of users (e.g., Saturday morning hours may be more useful than Tuesday morning hours)
  - 2. More locations, particularly in neighborhoods with greatest needs
  - 3. Better customer satisfaction with One-Stop experience
    - a. Investigate/implement universal learning design as a way to provide information to clients with reading or other challenges
    - b. Cultural competency training
  - 1. Better outcomes, determined by better measures
    - a. Encourage DOES to redefine metrics/performance measures beyond DOL requirement (e.g., number of people entering the door of a One-Stop, number turned away because of lack of identification, number referred elsewhere because of low literacy/poor computer skills, etc.)
    - b. All measures aggregated and disaggregated by ward, by barrier (e.g., returning offenders), by age, by gender, by race, by country of birth, and by other demographic measures.
- D. Ensure referrals to training partners who provide highest quality programs
  - 1. Training provider qualifications should be clearly communicated and germane to services provided
  - 2. Ensure the training provider application process is transparent and reasonable
- E. Ensure all services are accessible – language, disability, computer literacy, transportation, child care, etc.
  - 1. Partner with other District agencies
  - 2. Partner with CBOs to provide and/or refer to supportive services as necessary
  - 3. Consider implementation of mobile outreach teams
  - 4. Ensure assistive equipment (if necessary) is available and working, and that staff are trained to use it
  - 5. Train all staff in special needs of homeless job seekers
  - 6. Train staff and/or provide referrals to assistance with specific barriers (e.g., criminal backgrounds, child support arrearages)
- F. Provide one number/website/office where folks can get help
- G. Everyone counted, everyone assessed, everyone directed to appropriate help
- H. Provide labor market information on available jobs, jobs with prospects for growth, average wages, and training requirements
- I. Partner with other District agencies and CBOs
  - 1. Department of Human Services/Income Maintenance Administration (DHS/IMA)
  - 2. CBO to help client find documentation, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue identification
- J. Consider “boutique” One-Stops/offices within One-Stops
  - 1. Special projects, such as when a new employer opens new site and needs lots of jobs filled fairly quickly, or if a business is closing and needs to place employees in new jobs. Will offer one contact for all job seekers, and same contact for employer.

2. Professional-level One-Stops

K. Improve marketing strategies so potential clients know what One-Stops can provide

7. **Focus local dollars on specific job readiness and training programs for adults and youth, particularly those residing in Wards 5, 7 and 8, on preparation for those jobs that will exist well into the future, and that offer steps on career ladders to self-sufficiency.**

In far too many cases recently, funding for job training has been deployed in areas with limited utility. Because so much money was available to the District for training for “green” jobs such as weatherization, many programs were launched to offer very short-term programs that focused on a small range of skills. Unfortunately, demand for workers with those narrowly-defined skills has not kept pace with the number trained (this has been the case in other jurisdictions as well). The result is a group of DC residents who are expressing strong frustration that the training they received has not led to employment.

Local funding for training offers flexibility that federal funds do not. We can determine how local funds are spent. By using labor market data and the voluminous research available from universities, think tanks, and others, we can better focus job training funding on those career areas where employment is more likely.

8. **Provide direct access to support services (e. g, child care, housing, transportation) for those DC residents seeking jobs, as well as those whose wages are too low to pay for these services, in order to enable them to work without interruption.**

Many DC residents face great difficulty finding and/or keeping jobs because of the unavailability of core complementary services including child care, transportation, affordable housing, and health care. These services are essential to meet the goal of full participation in the workforce. The city must foster strong cooperation among a number of city agencies, providers, and the private sector to make work supports more readily available. Training programs, nonprofit organizations, and DOES staff must identify barriers before job placement and assist clients in acquiring basic housing, transportation, childcare, uniforms, and work-related supplies before job placement. Further, case managers must act proactively to ensure clients not only have access to services, but, in fact, use them.

Comprehensive case management and work support systems should be available during training and post employment placement to help those employees who are not earning self-sufficient wages upon job placement. The city can identify vendors to provide ready access to necessary goods and services, including transportation and childcare assistance, work uniforms, tools, health exams, eyeglasses, and furniture. Contracts to provide such goods and services should be provided to vendors who have demonstrated ability to provide them.

9. **Ensure services provided to the District’s youth are relevant, focused on training for employment or actual employment, and appropriately evaluated.**

We recommend that the District consider its youth-related workforce activities as year-round activities, enhanced by the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). To that end, it is important to consider how to increase year-round opportunities for young people, even in a time of economic difficulty.

Although SYEP serves young people with a wide range of needs and skills, SYEP insists on continuing a one-size-fits-all approach to programming. Instead, DOES should institute an approach that would organize its participants into tiers, ranging from first-time participants in need of targeted soft skill training all the way up to more experienced youth who are ready to successfully take on the responsibilities of a job. DOES should improve its placement processes to allow youth to select their areas of interest and/or to rank host-sites in order of preference. In addition, DOES must continue to expand and diversify the types of employment opportunities for young people. DOES may have better success in attracting host sites from the private sector if they are able to ensure the placement of more experienced youth employees through a tiered system.

With scarce resources available, it is more important than ever to ensure critical analysis of how SYEP funds are spent. SYEP evaluations must include detailed calculations of program costs (after accounting for youth salaries) and money lost due to non-qualified participants and payment/timesheet errors.

10. **Address and correct the mechanism for identifying, evaluating, and contracting with job training providers.**

Contractors provide various kinds and levels of service to clients. Individual Training Account contractors, for example, provide service to clients who receive ITA vouchers through DOES. The contractor is reimbursed for each ITA client served. Other vendors – generally more appropriate for hard-to-serve clients – provide service on a contractual basis to DOES; the vendor develops a basic set of services and a curriculum that is available, with a clearly identified goal and a definite starting and ending time. These contractors typically offer case management services. Finally, other entities offer career counseling, job development, resume assistance, and work readiness services, generally to clients needing fewer or less complex services. In order to best serve those seeking jobs, it is necessary to identify and classify contractors according to the audiences they are best equipped to assist.

The current process for certifying and accepting contractors to provide job training and related services is burdensome and often ineffective. While the WIC is charged with developing credentials for potential contractors, the implementation is undertaken by the DC Office of Contracts and Procurement (OCP) with minimal involvement by the DOES. In some instances, inappropriate contractors are certified, while otherwise competent providers are excluded because of their inability to meet the kinds of credentials usually required of educational institutions. We recommend that any organization wishing to provide services to DC residents must not only be approved by OCP, but also assessed by DOES as to its qualifications to provide effective assistance. Further, we recommend periodic reviews of contractors, during which they will be required to provide data-supported evidence of success.

11. **Link workforce and economic development strategies, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Community Benefit Agreements (CBA), and a Unified Development Budget (UDB), to ensure District residents benefit directly from jobs created by development projects**

A. Pass Tax Increment Financing (TIF) legislation. Such legislation will require TIF applicants to identify specific jobs to be created, along with wages and benefits. It also will allow TIFs to be

used only in disadvantaged areas. Finally, legislation must ensure the adoption of clawbacks to recapture subsidies when job creation goals are not met.

B. Establish a Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) structure. CBAs are negotiated between community groups and developers to ensure city residents benefit from development. CBAs include provisions for first source hiring, living wages, job quality standards, affordable housing assistance, environmental standards, and open space allowances, among other details. In many cases, they also address community priorities, such as building child care centers, library branches, and/or health clinics. CBAs are attached to developers' agreements with the District, giving a CBA the force of law.

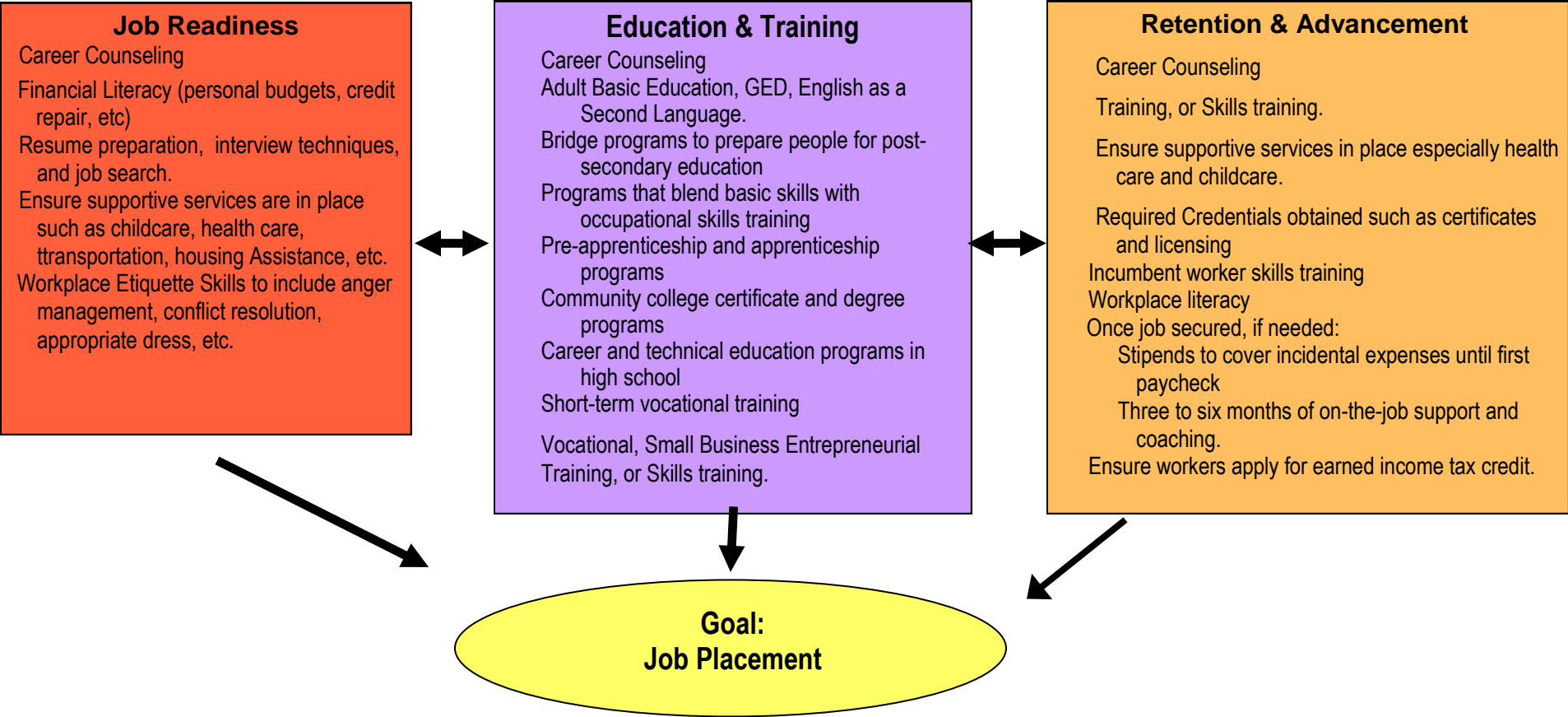
C. Strengthen the District's workforce regulation enforcement function based on data. It is well known that no business has ever been sanctioned for violating a First Source agreement. Other laws, regulations and contractual clauses that require equity in employing fairly according to gender, race, ethnicity, or other status are similarly ignored. This is largely a function of enforcement failure. It is essential to strengthen the enforcement of workforce regulations to ensure they have "teeth" if they are to achieve their goals.

D. Create a Unified Development Budget (UDB). In many jurisdictions, a UDB reveals not only appropriations to support development projects but also foregone tax revenues from developers resulting from various tax breaks. By adopting a UDB, the District can ensure a more transparent picture of the impact of development projects on the city.

**DC Jobs Council  
Workforce Development Continuum\***

**Advocacy and Policy:**

Engage employers and workers, general workforce development education, action research and dissemination, WIC, WIA



**Program Funding Sources Include:**

Local government, federal government (WIA Title I, WIA Title II, TANF, etc), foundations, corporate.

*\*Potential workers can enter the continuum at any box.*