

APPENDIX K. CASE STUDY ON THE COBB WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP



of their organizations and to analyze the current and emerging workforce needs in each industry.

More than 30 businesses participated in the initial needs assessment process, providing information about job skills and competencies needed for hard-to-fill and high-demand jobs.

Companies and Organizations that Participated in the CWP Needs Assessment Process:



Education and Government Partners that Participated in the CWP Needs Assessment Process:



To ensure that this community collaborative would be successful, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce hired a talent development manager to handle the project's logistics. As a part of the chamber's economic development team, this individual is dedicated to managing the relationships, ensuring productive meeting facilitation and documentation, and monitoring and checking progress against the project milestones and measures of success. The position has a number of general duties:

- Meet with businesses and encourage them to participate in the project.
- Confirm and follow up with business leaders. Coach them on their role and gather data from the business for the project.
- Meet with education partners and help them build bridges and connections with business partners. Some translation is often needed between "business

Getting Started

The Cobb Workforce Partnership (CWP) was created to allow industry to inform and improve the workforce educational supply chain (programs, curricula, training, and resources) in Cobb County. Businesses in Cobb County, Georgia, and across the nation have repeatedly stated that recruiting and retaining a qualified, trained, and reliable workforce is one of their greatest challenges. Similarly, the Governor's High Demand Career Initiative, which the Cobb Workforce Partnership was modeled after, identified gaps between the workforce supply and industry demand.

Participants and Partnerships

Workforce development was the top priority of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce board chair, and the creation of the partnership was initiated by the business community. To get the planning process started, the Cobb Chamber facilitated meetings with leaders from two major employers in the county and the county's education leaders. Together, the parties agreed to move forward with a workforce development project to improve the talent pipeline. Because the Cobb Chamber of Commerce plays an integral role in local economic development efforts, it was effective in convening the education and business leaders in the county.

The project was led by a steering committee made up of business, education, workforce development, community, and economic development leaders from Cobb County. The committee's role in conducting the needs assessment was to represent the educational and workforce interests

“speak and incentives” and “education speak and incentives.”

- Organize and run meetings, including arranging for agendas, notes, RSVPs, refreshments, name tags, and handouts.
- Coordinate and plan meetings with the committee chairs and facilitator.
- Network and coordinate with other workforce development professionals on efforts in the region and state.
- Serve on Cobb County’s local workforce board, CobbWorks, enhancing the coordination between the chamber’s efforts and the efforts of the federally funded workforce development program.

THE WORK OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The Cobb Workforce Partnership is a regional workforce development strategy with multiple defined sector partnerships. The CWP has done its work in three distinct phases.

1. Organize and build the collaborative
2. Conduct a needs assessment
3. Implement changes through sector partnerships and cross-cutting issue work groups

Organize and Build the Collaborative

The amount of time spent planning and securing buy-in from all of the education, business, economic development, and community partners was significant. The Cobb Chamber staff worked with key business leaders, education leaders, state partners, and local elected officials to develop a vision for the economic development team, this individual is dedicated to managing the relationships, ensuring productive meeting facilitation and documentation, and monitoring and checking progress against the project milestones and measures of success. The position has a number of general duties:

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Conduct a Needs Assessment

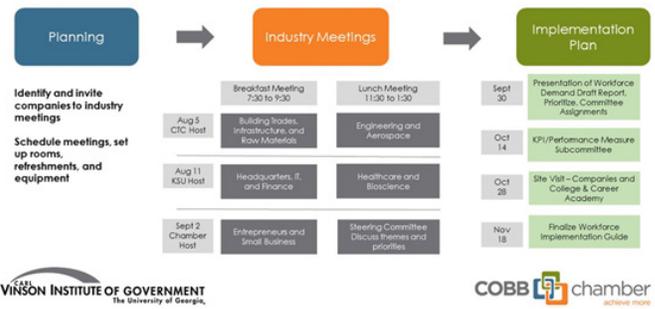
To understand the workforce needs of the local employers,

five sessions were held with representatives from five different industry sectors:

1. Construction and trades
2. Engineering and aerospace
3. Health care and bioscience
4. Headquarters, IT, and finance
5. Entrepreneurship and small business

Cobb Workforce Partnership Needs Assessment Schedule

Cobb Workforce Partnership Project



As shown in the chart above, the industry needs assessment meetings were strategically held at the Chattahoochee Technical College, Kennesaw State University, and the Cobb Chamber offices. This was done to better acquaint the various partners with these organizations. To minimize the time commitment of the partners, six meetings were held over three days. Two-hour breakfast and two-hour lunch meetings provided sufficient time to hear from industry leaders while also allowing time for reflections by the steering committee.

In addition to hearing from industry representatives, the steering committee analyzed labor market data provided by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and Hire Dynamics.

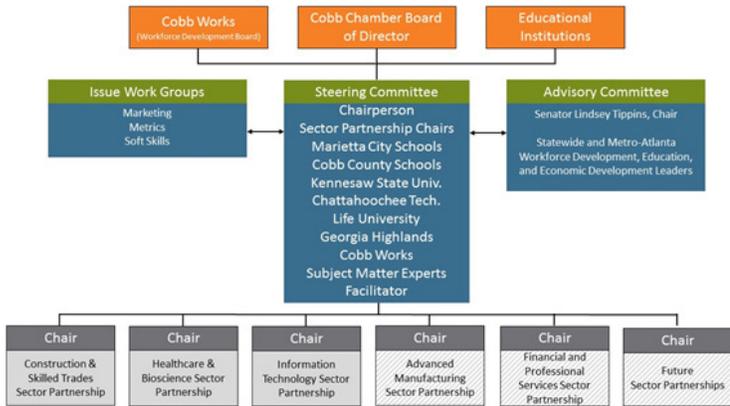
Once the needs assessment was completed, the chamber held a facilitated discussion with the steering committee to identify common themes across the sectors, refining the short-term and long-term priorities for the overall effort for each of the industry sectors. In identifying priorities, the education partners shared their successes, explained what programs were already in place, and discussed opportunities for better aligning the education programs with industry needs. One of the consistent themes during the assessment process was the need to better inform parents, teachers, students, and administrators about the variety of job opportunities and the programs already in place to meet those needs.

Implementation through Sector Partnerships and Special Taskforces

To act on the findings from the industry needs assessment, the steering committee established a governance structure to manage the project going forward. A steering committee comprising the workforce development, education, business, and community leaders, led by co-chairs representing an employer and an education organization, manage the partnership work. The CWP talent development manager from the chamber provides

support and assists the chairs in planning meetings and setting agendas. The figure below shows the CWP's organizational structure.

Cobb Workforce Partnership Governance Structure



Three sector partnerships were organized around health care, information technology, and construction. Employer leaders chair the sector partnerships. Chamber staff and facilitators from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government assist the sector partnership chairs. The sector partnerships are focused on closing skills gaps in hard-to-fill and in-demand jobs. In Cobb County, the partnerships are developing strategies to increase internships, on-the-job training, and teacher externships; building and promoting career pathways; marketing career opportunities to parents and students; and making changes to curricula and training programs. Company representatives meet with education providers and develop specific plans to help train students and underemployed adults in the skills they need to be competitive. Sector partnerships are focused on building both short-term and long-term skill-development plans that have implementation components at the high school, college, and professional education and training levels.

As the sector partnerships in the Cobb Workforce Partnership continue to identify training needs, they are working with the local workforce board, Cobb Works, to identify ways that WIOA funds can be used to meet some of those training needs and help serve WIOA-eligible populations.