



**ACC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT &
WORKFORCE SUPPORT TASK FORCE**

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Submitted June 26, 2024

BACKGROUND

1. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.
2. On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was signed into law. The \$1.9 trillion package was intended to combat the COVID-19 pandemic by stabilizing state and local government operations, households, and small businesses.
3. In mid-March 2021, ACCGov was granted \$57.6 million of ARPA Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) funding to allocate across defined categories by virtue of both state and city and a county.
4. On January 6, 2022, the U.S. Department of the Treasury released the Final Guidance for ARPA SLFRF.
5. On March 1, 2022, the Mayor & Commission (M&C) adopted ACCGov's Organizational Strategic Plan, which includes multiple strategies for internal and external workforce development support.
6. On March 1, 2022, the M&C approved a budget allocating ARPA SLFRF to various programs, including Business Development and Workforce Support. The M&C approved a Commission Defined Option (CDO) for Business Development and Workforce Support that outlined the role for a task force advisory group (Task Force):
They will be charged with identifying priority actions needed for connecting Athens residents with high wage employment, small business development, and worker empowerment, regardless of funding source. Special consideration should be given to addressing the needs of workers, including, for example, the following:
 - *the need for childcare support for low income families;*
 - *the development of co-operative and worker-owned businesses, including secondary cooperatives (a group of micro-business LLC's);*
 - *high quality labor standards (such as work at the living wage as identified by the MIT calculator, paid leave options, paid health care and other benefits, and just cause termination agreements); and*
 - *nonprofit programming designed to assist workers in labor organizing for improved working conditions and/or higher wages.*
7. In May 2023, the M&C established the composition of the Task Force. representatives from the following entities were asked to participate. *The names of the selected representatives who participated in the Task Force are noted next to their respective entities.*
 - Co-Chairs from the Commission – Commissioner Myers & Commissioner Taylor
 - Athens Community Career Academy or CCSD Superintendent's Designee – Wesley Mellina
 - ACCGov Department of Economic Development – Ilka McConnell
 - Minority Business and Nonprofit Corporation – Michele Pearson-Tucker
 - Northeast Georgia Black Chamber of Commerce – Shane Blackwell
 - Joint Development Authority of Athens-Clarke County and Winterville – Dodd Ferrelle
 - Athens Area Chamber of Commerce – David Bradley

- Economic Justice Coalition – Broderick Flanigan
- Athens Technical College – Marvin Nunnally
- Envision Athens – Sally Kimel-Sheppard
- Family Connection-Communities in Schools of Athens – Tim Johnson
- Cooperative Advocate – Matthew Epperson

8. On March 26, 2024, the Task Force met for the first time.

PROCESS

Lion Leadership was selected to facilitate the Task Force planning and recommendations process. Lion Leadership facilitated a multi-faceted approach to identifying problems, issues, gaps, potential solutions, and ultimately Task Force recommendations for bolstering small business development and workforce support in Athens Clarke County.

Full Task Force Meetings

- Initial full Task Force meetings, held on 4/15/2024 and 4/29/2024, provided opportunities for all members of the Task Force to discuss problems, issues, gaps, and potential solutions.
- During the meetings held on 5/13/2024, 5/20/2024, and 6/3/2024, the full Task Force convened as a full group at the beginning and end of the meeting for business purposes and spent the interim time engaged in sub-committee work.
- The full Task Force meeting held on 6/10/2024 allowed sub-committees to share and refine their recommendations.
- During the final full Task Force meeting, held on 6/17/2024, Task Force members individually evaluated recommendations using the following criteria and engaged in a subsequent discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the recommendations.
 - Addresses charge set forth in the CDO
 - Number of residents impacted
 - Positive impact on the community
 - How long the impact will last
 - Sustainability beyond seed money
 - If applicable, the named organization(s)' capacity to perform work
 - If applicable, the named organization(s)' capacity to manage public funds
 - Shelf readiness
 - Racial equity

Task Force Member Interviews

- Members of the Task Force engaged in 1:1 interviews with Lion Leadership. The interviews were designed to gather individual perspectives on the problems, issues, or gaps related to Small Business Development and Workforce Support in Athens Clarke County, as well as potential solutions for those problems, issues, and gaps. **See Appendix A for Task Force member interview guide.**
- Notes from the interviews were curated and distributed to all Task Force members to ensure that individual perspectives were shared across sub-committees.

Subject Matter Interviews

- Members of the Task Force were asked to recommend subject matter authorities that would be beneficial to hear from as part of the process.
- Based on Task Force member recommendations, Lion Leadership conducted three subject matter interviews. *Note that Task Force members acknowledge subject matter authorities representing a broader range of demographics and additional areas of authority would have diversified perspectives and been beneficial to the process.* **See Appendix B for subject matter interview guide.**

- Dr. Kristen Douglas – Vice President for Academic Affairs, Athens Technical College – shared insights related to high wage employment
- Mackenzie Gallagher – Chief Marketing Officer, JOMA Construction – shared insights into transitioning to an employee owned company
- Dr. Rebecca Matthew – Associate Professor, University of Georgia School of Social Work – shared insights into cooperative childcare models

Focus Groups

- Members of the Task Force were asked to recommend additional stakeholders that would be beneficial to hear from as part of the process. Recommended stakeholders were invited to engage in either a Small Business Development focus group or a Worker Empowerment focus group. ***See Appendix C for focus group guide.***
- Lion Leadership conducted one Small Business Development focus group on 5/15/2024.
 - Representatives from the following entities were invited to participate.
 - Athens Clarke County Economic Development
 - Goodwill
 - Minority Business Nonprofit Association
 - Small Business Owner
 - Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
 - Synovus
 - UGA Innovation District
 - The following representatives participated in the focus group.
 - Athens Clarke County Economic Development – Myung Cogan
 - Minority Business Nonprofit Association – Michele Pearson-Tucker
 - Synovus – Evan Elder
 - UGA Innovation District – Daniel Geller
 - Small business – Broderick Flanigan
- Lion Leadership conducted two Worker Empowerment focus groups on 5/16/2024.
 - Representatives from the following entities were invited to participate.
 - ABB Motors & Mechanical
 - Accurus Aerospace
 - Athens Community Council on Aging
 - Divas Who Win
 - Evergreen Packaging
 - Integrity Foods
 - Peterson Springs
 - Pilgrim’s Pride
 - Sur Legal
 - The following representatives participated in the focus group.
 - ABB Motors & Mechanical - Shella Goodson
 - Accurus Aerospace – Cassie Pittman
 - Athens Community Council on Aging – Erin Beasley
 - Divas Who Win – Chanda Santana

Sub-Committee Working Groups

- In order to divide and focus efforts, the Task Force established sub-committees focused in three areas:
 - High wage employment

- Small business development
 - Worker empowerment
- Each sub-committee was charged with identifying up to 5 problems, issues, or gaps along with recommended goals and strategies to address the identified problems, issues, or gaps.
- Sub-committees were asked to review and revisit all work completed by the full Task Force, interview notes, focus group notes, and other relevant materials as they developed their recommendations.
- Sub-committee members engaged in independent work between meetings and met in their sub-committees on 5/13/2024, 5/20/2024, and 6/3/2024.
- Each sub-committee presented their recommendations during the 6/10/2024 full Task Force meeting.

Visitors

- All Task Force meetings were public open meetings.
- Task Force members agreed that visitors were permitted to participate in sub-committee working group meetings.
- Visitors that attended include:
 - Imani-Scott Blackwell
 - Joel Izlar
 - Pat Maddox
 - Beto Mendoza
 - Tamika Money
 - Linda Stephens
 - Jim Thompson
 - Commissioner Ovita Thornton

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL	PROBLEM(S) ADDRESSED	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	EXAMPLES
Develop an empowered local workforce	Working conditions and worker labor rights knowledge	Teach youth about worker labor rights and create apprenticeships for your on SPLOST & EPLOST projects with dept of labor standards	Develop curriculum and a train the trainer program that addresses topics of wage theft, discrimination, sexual harassment, FLSA, contractor vs. employee, FMLA, benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic Justice CoalitionGeorgia Commission on Equal Opportunity	https://gceo.georgia.gov/training/training-request-form
		Teach adults about worker labor rights and community benefits agreement	Develop curriculum and a train the trainer program that addresses program on topics of wage theft, discrimination, sexual harassment, FLSA, contractor vs. employee, FMLA, benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic Justice CoalitionGeorgia Commission on Equal Opportunity	https://gceo.georgia.gov/training/training-request-form
		Teach non-profit staff and leadership of worker labor rights, specifically how they are relevant to non-profits	Develop curriculum and a train the trainer program that addresses topics of wage theft, discrimination, sexual harassment, FLSA, contractor vs. employee, FMLA, benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic Justice CoalitionGeorgia Commission on Equal Opportunity	https://gceo.georgia.gov/training/training-request-form
Increase local worker/apprentice opportunity in local taxpayer-funded capital project construction projects	Workforce skill development	Train apprentices for jobs in the construction industry	Partner with training organization(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ACCGov Diversion CenterACTION, IncAthens Technical CollegeEconomic Development Division	https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/aasa-expanded-pathways-youth-apprenticeship-toolkit.pdf https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/georgia-high-school-construction-pilot-program-expands/85-a636d807-c25f-4b92-96ee-401cdb168f1f https://pix11.com/news/local-news/long-island-teens-learn-construction-as-part-of-trade-program-at-local-high-school/

		Incentivize apprenticeships in publicly funded projects	Incorporate apprenticeships for local residents into the RFP evaluation process for community benefits agreements (CBAs) and/or publicly funded projects		https://www.energy.gov/justice/community-benefit-agreement-cba-toolkit
		Ensure fair labor practices in publicly funded projects	Implement a standards compliance program		https://www.dca.ga.gov/safe-affordable-housing/rental-housing-development/compliance-monitoring
		Educate the community about community benefits agreements	Work with local agencies to develop and implement training	• Goodwill Athens	https://www.energy.gov/justice/community-benefit-agreement-cba-toolkit https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/project-labor-agreement-resource-guide
Increase capacity of childcare providers	Safe and stable childcare	Provide funding to childcare providers to purchase one-time infrastructure and professional development needs	Establish grant fund and program	• Quality Care for Children	Alexandria, VA - https://www.actforalexandria.org/initiatives/t/alexandria-childcare-workforce-stabilization-grant-program/ Seattle, WA - https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/about/government-affairs/fair-start-for-kids-act/stabilization-grant
		Provide small business training specific to childcare providers	Develop curriculum and facilitate training program - QCC already has established curriculum and offers training	• Quality Care for Children • GA Dept of Early Care and Learning	Moline, IL - https://moline.il.us/1587/ARPA-ChildcareWorkforce-Infrastructure-F Boston, MA - https://www.boston.gov/departments/early-childhood/childcare-entrepreneur-fund

Expand access to capital for "impact businesses"	Small business access to capital and local need for impact jobs (what are "impact jobs"?)	Identify "impact businesses"	Establish definition and parameters for "impact businesses"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Development Authority of the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County and the City of Winterville 	<p>Berkely, CA - https://www.theselc.org/berkeley_just_made_its_small_business_revolving_loan_fund_work_for_worker_cooperatives</p> <p>Minneapolis, MN - https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/business-services/business-assistance/business-technical-assistance/cooperatives-help/co-op-creation-fund/</p>
		Expand existing revolving loan fund	Allocate additional funding to the revolving loan fund for businesses identified as "impact businesses"		
		Create new impact business grant program	Allocate funding to a grant for new businesses identified as "impact businesses"		
Increase employee owned businesses through succession planning	Worker empowerment, aging workforce, small business development	Establish business succession through employee ownership training program	Work with community organizations to identify high priority businesses to target and lending programs to promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA Center for Employee Ownership? Chamber of Commerce Small Business Development Center Local small business lenders 	<p>Colorado - https://oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-employee-ownership-office</p> <p>Iowa - https://advanceiowa.com/IA-CEO</p> <p>San Francisco - https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Prop-J-Initiative-to-preserve-longtime-6609193.php</p> <p>Ingham County, MI - https://www.purelansing.com/wp-content/uploads/04.-Flyer-Leave-a-Legacy-Business-Succession-Program.pdf</p>
			Hire a consultant to develop and deliver employee-owned business succession training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Center for Employee Ownership 	

Increase purchasing and marketing power for small businesses	Small business expenses and growth	Establish a business purchasing and marketing co-op outreach and training program, with special preference for minority-, women-, veteran-, and other special certification-owned businesses	Work with Chamber and certifying organizations to identify minority-, women-, veteran-, and other special certification-owned businesses to target for establishing a co-op	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Cooperative Development Center 	USDA - https://resources.uwcc.wisc.edu/Shared%20Services/DevtPurchasingCoops.pdf Chicago, IL - https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/sites/community-wealth-building/pdfs/OERJ_CWB_Report.pdf NCBA - https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/co-op-sectors/purchasing-co-ops/
			Hire consultant to develop and deliver a business purchasing and marketing co-op training and outreach program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Cooperative Development Center 	
Develop a workforce for in-demand sectors	Living wage jobs and workforce gaps	Provide funding for organizations to maintain/expand training and upskilling for the 18+ population in high demand sectors with job openings, living wages, and opportunities for advancement	Establish or expand existing grant fund program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACTION, Inc Athens Community Career Academy Athens Technical College Foundation Goodwill Athens Innovative Healthcare Institute 	
		Facilitate opportunities to connect employers and trained potential employees	Collaborate with employers, engage in marketing efforts, and host job fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Department of Labor Goodwill Athens 	

Members of the Task Force advocate for inclusive practices in the development and implementation of all aforementioned recommendations, with particular attention to accessible opportunities for people of all abilities and language inclusion for the community's Spanish speaking population.

APPENDIX A: TASK FORCE MEMBER INTERVIEW GUIDE



ACC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & WORKFORCE SUPPORT TASK FORCE

TASK FORCE MEMBER INTERVIEW GUIDE

- I. Interview Purpose
 - Gather perspectives of all task force members
 - Ensure those perspectives are shared across all sub-committees
- II. Interview Overview
 - Will start broad and then talk through perspectives related to each sub-committee area
- III. Potential Questions/Prompts
 - From your perspective, what is the biggest issue, need, gap, or potential solution that the task force should address?
 - If interviewee poses an issue/need/gap, ask for ideas on how to address the issue/need/gap
 - If interviewee poses a potential solution and does not share the issue/need/gap that it will address, inquire about the issue/need/gap
 - For each of the focus areas – High Wage Employment, Small Business Development, Worker Empowerment
 - What issues, needs, or gaps do you see?
 - What ideas do you have to address those issues, needs, or gaps?
 - What additional information does the task force need to gather to make recommendations?
 - Are there other individuals or organizations that you recommend we connect with?
 - What, if any, concerns do you have about the overall work of the task force or the process for developing recommendations?
 - Is there anything I haven't asked about that you'd like to share?

APPENDIX B: SUBJECT MATTER INTERVIEW GUIDE



ACC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & WORKFORCE SUPPORT TASK FORCE

SUBJECT MATTER INTERVIEW GUIDE

- I. Task Force Overview
 - Task Force established by the Mayor & Commission in conjunction with American Rescue Plan Act Funds
 - Charged with identifying priority actions needed for connecting Athens residents with high wage employment, small business development, and worker empowerment
 - Began work this spring with recommendations due to Mayor & Commission by late June
- II. Interview Purpose
 - One of the task force members recommended we reach out to learn about your perspectives related to **insert based on interviewee**
 - Dr. Rebecca Matthew
 - 1. Childcare cooperatives
 - Mackenzie Gallagher
 - 1. Converting to an employee owned business
 - Dr. Kristen Douglas
 - 1. Needs, issues, gaps, and potential solutions related to high wage employment in Athens Clarke County
- III. Interview Overview
 - Will ask broad questions to get started with follow-up questions based on what you share
- IV. Potential Questions/Prompts
 - Please share a little about your background
 - **Insert questions/prompts based on interviewee**
 - Dr. Kristen Douglas
 - 1. Ilka McConnell recommended we contact you based on your experiences working at West Georgia Technical College and now at Athens Technical College. She shared that you may have some great insights into the issues, gaps, and needs that Athens Clarke County faces in relation to high wage employment. With that in mind, what

do you see as the issues, gaps, or needs in our community from both the employee and the employer perspectives?

2. How do you think the community should be addressing those issues, gaps, or needs?
3. Are there any models for addressing challenges related to high wage employment that you're aware of that the task force should look into?

- Mackenzie Gallagher

1. Matthew Epperson recommended that we learn a bit from you about the experience of converting JOMA into an employee owned business. Can you share what prompted the conversion?
2. What were some of the challenges you encountered along the way?
3. What, if any, impact have you seen on the company and the employees since the conversion occurred?
4. How, if it all, do you think Athens Clarke County could benefit from having more employee owned businesses?

- Dr. Rebecca Matthew

1. Matthew Epperson shared that you've conducted research on cooperative models specifically related to childcare. Can you share a bit about those models?
2. How do you see those models working in Athens Clarke County?
3. What are the barriers to enacting those models in Athens Clarke County?

- Is there anything else you'd like to share that I haven't asked you about?

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE



ACC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & WORKFORCE SUPPORT TASK FORCE

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

- I. Task Force Overview
 - Task Force established by the Mayor & Commission in conjunction with American Rescue Plan Act Funds
 - Charged with identifying priority actions needed for connecting Athens residents with high wage employment, small business development, and worker empowerment
 - Began work in March with recommendations due to Mayor & Commission by late June
- II. Focus Group Purpose
 - Members of the task force identified individuals and organizations that could help the group better understand the issues, needs, and gaps and who may have creative solutions to consider
 - Instead of 1:1 interviews, decided on focus groups to see what could emerge when we put people from different perspectives and organizations together
 - Notes from this focus group will be shared with the task force as they continue their work and move toward recommendations
- III. Focus Group Overview
 - Want to share what the task force has uncovered so far
 - Will ask for your additional input
 - Will wrap with a final question about the one big thing you think should be addressed or enacted
 - May be something you're coming to the table with, but may be something new sparked by today's conversation
- IV. Potential Questions/Prompts
 - What do you see as the issues, needs, or gaps Athens Clarke County is facing related to (small business development OR worker empowerment)?
 - What are the potential solutions to addressed those issues, needs, or gaps?
 - Why haven't those solutions been enacted, or successfully enacted, in the past?
 - What do you foresee as the benefits to enacting the solutions?
 - What do you foresee as the barriers or challenges to enacting the solutions?
 - Round robin – What's the one big thing you think should be addressed or enacted?