



Albany-Dougherty
Economic
Development
Commission



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Carl Vinson
Institute of Government



ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY WORKS!

2020 | A Comprehensive Workforce Development Strategy for Albany-Dougherty County





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Project facilitation, data analysis, documentation, and strategic guidance were provided by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia: Greg Wilson, Rebecca McIver, Holly Lynde, Jan Coyne, and Emily Franklin. Editing and graphic design assistance were provided by Karen DeVivo and Jake Brower.

Project management was provided by Laura Russ of the Albany–Dougherty Economic Development Commission.

Photo Credits: ExploreGeorgia.org (p. 1 and p. 4); Dougherty County Schools (p. 2, 3, and 8); Albany State University (p. 6 and p. 11); Albany Technical College (p. 9); Phoebe Putney Health System; and Albany–Dougherty Economic Development Commission

LETTER FROM THE PROJECT LEADERS

Albany–Dougherty County Partners,

We are excited to present “Albany–Dougherty County Works!” A Comprehensive Workforce Development Strategy for Albany–Dougherty County. This workforce strategy will strengthen our community’s talent pool, create more opportunities for residents, and ensure Albany–Dougherty County remains economically competitive. The Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission and the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce joined forces in early 2019 to create the community’s first comprehensive workforce development strategy. Workforce development plays many important roles in our community, including creating opportunities for our residents, ensuring our employers have the talent they need to succeed, and helping to attract investment and new jobs to our community through economic development efforts. The goal of the Albany–Dougherty County Works! plan is to align our resources, assets, and partnerships toward fulfilling our community’s shared vision for workforce development.

The comprehensive planning process involved stakeholders from across our community. A steering committee composed of business, education, community, and government leaders was charged with analyzing data, setting priorities, and ultimately developing the Albany–Dougherty County Works! plan. This workforce strategy builds on the vast workforce development assets that we have in our community, including our existing workforce, a strong employer base, public and private K-12 systems, Albany State University, and Albany Technical College.

Successful implementation of this plan will involve sustained momentum by numerous partners over the next several years. We look forward to working with each of you to strengthen our workforce development efforts and increase opportunity in our community.



Bárbara Rivera Holmes
President and CEO
Albany Area Chamber of Commerce



Justin Strickland
President
Albany-Dougherty Economic
Development Commission

ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY WORKFORCE STRATEGY

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PROCESS

The availability of a skilled workforce is a key ingredient for attracting new jobs, supporting existing businesses, and strengthening the community. To that end, the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission and the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to create the community's first comprehensive workforce development strategy.

The workforce development strategy had four key goals:



Understanding the **current workforce development system** in the community and **identifying gaps**



Aligning **education and workforce** development efforts of educational institutions and employers



Building a stronger workforce in Albany-Dougherty County that will help the community **succeed in economic development, support student success, provide the necessary talent to businesses, and employ more citizens**



Creating a **multiyear plan** to enhance the community's workforce

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This workforce development strategy was developed through an inclusive planning process that involved key business, community, and education stakeholders. A steering committee composed of a diverse set of leaders from Albany–Dougherty County was convened to oversee and lead the strategy development process. See page 4 for a full list of steering committee members.

The workforce development strategy was informed by the input of many stakeholders from across the community. The steering committee charged the Institute of Government team with collecting and analyzing stakeholder input. Listening sessions were held with small business owners, large employers across multiple sectors, faith-based and nonprofit leaders, community leaders, and secondary and postsecondary students and faculty. A public forum was held to gather additional community input. The Institute team conducted interviews with job seekers, human resources managers, education leaders, employers, government officials, and numerous similar partners.

The steering committee met four times in fall 2019 to analyze data, listen to stakeholders, identify assets, create the vision, and develop an Albany–Dougherty County comprehensive workforce development strategy.

ALBANY–DOUGHERTY COUNTY WORKS! DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



STEERING COMMITTEE

Business, education, government, and community leaders were assembled to spearhead this effort to understand Albany–Dougherty County’s workforce development needs, identify assets, set priorities for future investments and initiatives, and ultimately develop a shared vision for workforce development in the community.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Joe Austin

Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital

David Castellano

Hamilton Relay

Dave Clifton

Marine Corps Logistics Command

Erwan de Saint Mars

Mars Wrigley Confectionery

Dr. Brian Dougherty

Sherwood Christian Academy

Kenneth Dyer

Dougherty County School System

Marion Fedrick

Albany State University

Chris Hatcher

Commodore Conyers College
& Career Academy

Bárbara Rivera Holmes

Albany Area Chamber of Commerce

Lynne Jones

Georgia Department of Labor

Chandu Kuntawala

Booz Allen Hamilton
Albany Area Chamber of Commerce
Education Committee

Michael McCoy

Dougherty County

Dr. Anthony Parker

Albany Technical College

Heather Sharpe

University of Georgia Small Business
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Justin Strickland

Albany-Dougherty Economic
Development Commission

Sharon Subadan

City of Albany

Alvita Swain

Strive2Thrive

Alex Willson

Sunnyland Farms

Brianna Wilson

Southern Point Staffing

Demetria Wright

Monroe Comprehensive High School

NEEDS ASSESSMENT THEMES

The steering committee was charged with reviewing numerous data sources (e.g., labor market data, educational trends, workforce asset inventories, stakeholder input summaries, employer presentations) to identify key themes. Though not a comprehensive list, this section presents the most salient themes identified during this process. These needs assessment themes were then used to develop the vision and priorities for the workforce development strategy.



Opportunity

There is a tremendous amount of opportunity for strengthening workforce development for Albany–Dougherty County. The community has numerous workforce development assets, including a strong small business and industrial base, a technical college, a comprehensive state university, a college and career academy, and quality public and private K-12 education options. An effective workforce development strategy must build on the community's assets.



Workforce and Skill Gaps

Employers reported challenges finding workers with the necessary skills and experience to fill open positions. The gaps included both technical skills and employability skills. Many employers reported success in partnering with local schools to prepare and recruit talent for their businesses.



Engage Young Adults

Young adults are Albany–Dougherty County's future workforce, but many of them are leaving the community. To meet future workforce needs and strengthen the community, Albany–Dougherty County must find ways to help young adults identify and connect to opportunities in the community.



Lack of Alignment

Albany–Dougherty County has numerous workforce development resources, assets, and partners. Each partner has been working to execute their programs and functions well, but alignment among institutions and programs has been lacking. Alignment means that the workforce partners operate as a system focused on meeting the community's needs.



Need for a Shared Vision

The steering committee identified the need for a shared vision among all workforce development partners. No one organization can accomplish the community's workforce development goals. It will take all partners coordinating and following a shared vision to meet our community's workforce development needs.

SHARED VISION FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

IN ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY

Based on the themes, data, and stakeholder input, the steering committee developed a shared vision for workforce development in Albany-Dougherty County:

Our community will engage and prepare all of its citizens to succeed in the new economy, resulting in greater well-being and positive community growth.



ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY

WORKFORCE PRIORITIES AND ACTION ITEMS

The availability of a skilled workforce is a key ingredient for attracting new jobs, supporting existing businesses, and strengthening the community. To that end, the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission and the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to create the community's first comprehensive workforce development strategy.



PRIORITY 1
**Community
Connection and
Coordination**



PRIORITY 2
**Youth Pipeline
Development**



PRIORITY 3
**Continued Adult
Preparation**





PRIORITY 1

COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND COORDINATION

The Albany–Dougherty County workforce development planning process brought together education leaders, employers, and other community members to share their needs and work together to create solutions. Through this process, the steering committee recognized the numerous resources that already exist in the community. With this priority, the steering committee seeks to increase efforts to connect and coordinate workforce development resources and services to better meet the needs of all citizens.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Complete a comprehensive inventory of existing resources, including government, education, nonprofit, and other community organizations that focus on workforce development.
- Develop a plan for a website that serves as a virtual one-stop community resource center for workforce development and other related needs, including wrap-around services.
- Form a sustainable community collaborative focused on workforce development to continue the open communication and efforts of the Workforce Development Strategic Plan steering committee.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Create a virtual and physical one-stop community resource center that will allow for streamlined services and more efficient connections between resources and the people who need them.
- Develop a communications and marketing plan to accompany the new one-stop community resource center. Provide materials to local organizations to promote the Albany–Dougherty County Works! partnership and increase the visibility of the resource center.





PRIORITY 2

YOUTH PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

The steering committee recognized the important role that young adults will play in the future of Albany–Dougherty County, beyond just workforce development. Young adults must be connected to hands-on learning and employment opportunities in the community. This will strengthen the pipeline of young adults with the skills and interest to fill key jobs in the community. The community must provide additional opportunities for students of all ages (secondary and postsecondary) to envision a future in Albany–Dougherty County.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Establish a value proposition for our graduates and the community so that there is a common set of expectations across employees, employers, students, and educators.
- Convene youth and adults to gather information and data that will help inform additional youth pipeline development strategies.
- Increase parent engagement opportunities so that they understand the numerous opportunities available for students and how to help their children succeed. The steering committee believes that to be impactful, parent engagement should be tied to opportunities for students.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Work to create additional opportunities for youth jobs and first jobs within the community so that students can develop employability skills early on.
- Increase opportunities for co-ops, internships, and apprenticeships. The needs assessment process revealed that many youth in Albany–Dougherty County do not recognize employment opportunities available within the community after graduation. Increasing students' exposure and connection to local employers while still in school may help increase the number of students who choose to stay.
- Integrate the K-12 system and higher education institutions through exposure activities such as campus visits for elementary and middle school students.
- Align educational programs in Albany–Dougherty County through increased communication between institutions. This will require dedicated staff or resources to ensure optimal implementation.





PRIORITY 3

CONTINUED ADULT PREPARATION

As jobs change and the economy continues to grow, it is important to continue working with the existing workforce to upskill them or help them find new ways to reconnect with the labor force. Albany–Dougherty County’s adults are the heart of the community’s workforce; we must continually find ways to support and strengthen our talent base. While workers’ needs may vary greatly, there are action items the community can take to understand and better serve the adults that live and work in Albany–Dougherty County.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Study the needs of the existing adult workforce in the community to inform additional resources and programs.
- Develop materials to support additional employer training and workplace supports for employees who may be facing barriers to work or difficulties maintaining employment.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Create career roadmaps with realistic goals for adults. Roadmaps should include educational and occupational milestones to get adults from their starting place to their desired career goal.





CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Effective and coordinated workforce development efforts can have sizeable impacts on numerous facets of a community, including economic development, supporting existing businesses, student success, and family prosperity. The Albany–Dougherty County Works! plan will serve as a roadmap for all organizations as they seek to enhance their workforce development offerings and coordinate efforts with other partners in Albany–Dougherty County.

Through the comprehensive workforce development planning process, the steering committee identified three priorities for initial focus: (1) community connection and coordination, (2) youth pipeline development, and (3) continued adult preparation. While workforce development is a long-term proposition, successfully tackling these three priorities over the next few years will have a marked impact on the community's ability to meet current needs and future growth.

The successful implementation of the Albany–Dougherty County Works! strategy will require all partners – education, business, government, and community – to remain actively engaged in the implementation process, adopt the shared vision, and prioritize workforce development investments and strategies. Project leaders will need to continue to convene the steering committee to oversee the project. It will also be important to establish working groups to actively implement the short-term and long-term strategies for each priority. No single organization can accomplish the Albany–Dougherty County Works! vision and priorities alone; it will take the entire community aligning their efforts and strategies to fulfill the goals.

APPENDIX ALBANY–DOUGHERTY COUNTY WORKS! WORKFORCE STRATEGY DRIVING DATA POINTS

In support of the workforce development plan, the steering committee identified a series of data points to help track the progress and impact of the workforce development efforts. The five driving data points are aligned to the overall plan and the specific priorities. When the Albany–Dougherty County Works! strategy is fully implemented, it should positively impact each of the driving data points. These driving data points will serve as an accountability and planning tool for the workforce plan going forward.

Driving Data Point #1: Labor Force Participation Among Adults (Ages 25–64)

Data source	US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates
What it measures	The percentage of adults of “prime” working age who are participating in the labor market
What it means	This is an indicator of overall participation in the labor market. A positive trend indicates that more individuals have been re-engaged in the labor force.

Driving Data Point #2: High School Graduation

Data source	Georgia Department of Education
What it measures	The number of public high school students in the cohort that graduated on time (four years)
What it means	High school graduation is a proxy for many measures such as literacy, preparation for the workforce, and postsecondary readiness.

Driving Data Point #3: Completion of Postsecondary Credential within Five Years

Data source	Governor’s Office of Student Achievement
What it measures	The number of students from a high school graduating class that have earned <u>any</u> kind of postsecondary credential
What it means	Many jobs now require some kind of postsecondary credential. This metric shows how many students are completing a traditional pathway after high school graduation.

Driving Data Point #4: Educational Attainment, Population Ages 25+

Data source	US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates
What it measures	The highest level of education attained by adults ages 25+
What it means	Many jobs now require some kind of postsecondary credential. This metric shows the level of education of adults in the community.

Driving Data Point #5: Disengaged Youth

Data source	Opportunity Index
What it measures	Percentage of youth ages 16–24 who are disengaged from the workforce: not working, going to school, or seeking work
What it means	This is a key period of transition from education to career. Being disengaged as a youth can have long-lasting impacts on employment prospects, income, homeownership, and health.

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