

Workforce+Education=Future

Workforce Development & Education Summit Follow-up

Minutes from June 10, 2008

**Hosted by Innovation Valley, Inc.
Sponsored by EdFinancial Services and South College**

June 10, 2008

Background

On March 24, 2008 nearly six hundred people from across the area came together to discuss the challenges facing the Knoxville region regarding workforce development. The event began with Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale speaking to the significance of a strong workforce on increased economic development. Following Mayor Ragsdale, Dr. Matt Murray, Associate Director of the UT Center of Business and Economic Research apprised the attendees of the current state of our workforce pipeline. Knoxville Mayor Bill Haslam then facilitated discussion on education with a panel composed of members of the Superintendent Coalition¹. Following the panel discussion, all attendees adjourned to breakout sessions on various topics² pertaining to workforce development and education. During the event on March 24, 2008, it was determined that a follow-up meeting was needed to begin developing action items to move forward in the process of having a prepared workforce.

June 10: General Session

On March 24th, many participants identified programs and ideas that would be helpful in breaking down the barriers that exist in developing a world-class workforce, such as mentoring and providing more opportunities for internships. The first thirty minutes of this two-hour event began with an exhibition of organizations and programs that currently exist and strive to improve our education and workforce development system. There were twenty participants from business, education, non-profit and government sectors who displayed their programs and provided an opportunity for the community to learn about what is already going on in the region.

Following this exhibition, Mayor Ragsdale welcomed the participants to the event, including fifteen students from area high schools. Mayor Ragsdale then facilitated a question-and-answer session with a panel of various stakeholder groups about their perspectives on education and the development of our future workforce³. For instance, the student featured on this panel, a rising senior at Gibbs High School, clearly articulated students' need to understand the "why" of learning. Representatives from Energy Solutions spoke to the need for more communication between business and higher education institutions regarding essential skill sets.