



Moderator's Guide

Building the Next Workforce: Making Choices for Your Community

What should your community do to build a competitive workforce for the future? This discussion guide is designed to stimulate thinking on the question and to help you choose a path to the future for your community. The guide does not advocate a specific solution or point of view. Rather, it is intended to inspire thoughtful examination of differing points of view and a movement towards common ground around which the community can plan for its future.

Equipment/Supplies Needed

- *Building the Next Workforce* discussion guide for each participant
- Pre-Forum and Post-Forum Questionnaires for each participant
- Pencils/pens for completing the questionnaires
- Flip chart and markers
- Ground rules poster (optional)

Free copies of the discussion guide and questionnaires can be obtained from the Southern Growth Policies Board. The materials can be downloaded and copied from Southern Growth's Web site, at www.southern.org/forums.shtml. A fax-back form is also available on the website if you would like Southern Growth to copy and mail you the materials. Please contact Paula Baker at (919) 941-5145 or pbaker@southern.org with any questions regarding forum materials.

Suggested Format for a Two-Hour Forum

Welcome (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and tell participants about the organization(s) convening the forum. Stress the co-sponsorship if several organizations are involved.

Give a brief introduction about the importance of workforce development, noting the importance of a highly skilled workforce in order to compete in today's global economy. Emphasize that a high school education is no longer enough. Eighty percent of the nation's 30 fastest growing jobs – including computer software engineers, forensic

science technicians, and dental hygienists – require at least some postsecondary education. Over the next ten years, some 36 percent of new jobs are expected to be filled by those with at least a bachelor’s degree. Even in traditional industries such as manufacturing, entry level skills have become more sophisticated says the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), noting a need for more education and training to “get to the first rung.” According to NAM, more than 80 percent of manufacturers say they are having trouble finding qualified employees.

Explain that the results of the forum will be shared with Southern leaders through the Southern Growth Policies Board, by saying something such as the following:

This booklet was prepared by the Southern Growth Policies Board. Southern Growth is a public-private partnership of 14 states, including our own. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies. It provides a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic- and community-development sectors.

Participating in this forum means that many Southern leaders will hear your views. Southern Growth plans to prepare a report on forum results that will be presented to the governors and other Southern leaders at the 2007 Conference on the Future of the South, scheduled for June 3-5, 2007 in St. Louis, Missouri. You are also invited to attend the conference to hear what others are saying about future directions for workforce development in the South.

Pre-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Ask participants to complete the Pre-Forum Questionnaire. Explain to participants that the Pre-Forum Questionnaire is a way to get everyone focused on the issue and a way for each participant to take inventory of their initial feelings on the issue. Tell them that there will be another questionnaire for them at the end of the forum.

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Review ground rules with participants before beginning the discussion. Make clear that the forum is not a debate. Stress that there is work to do (this is not just a free flowing discussion with no purpose), and the work is to move toward making plans for the community’s future. The work will be done through deliberation.

The moderator should guide the discussion yet remain neutral. Make sure that:

- Everyone understands that this is not a debate.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- No one or two individuals dominate.
- Every approach is considered fairly and fully.
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of alternatives is maintained.
- Participants listen to each other.

The moderator should ask the group if they agree with these rules and invite them to suggest others to add to the list.

Moderators can call the Kettering Foundation at (800) 433-7834 to request a free poster that outlines these ground rules.

Personal Stake (15 minutes)

Connect the issues to people's lives and concerns by getting participants to talk about their personal experiences with the issue. This makes the issue human rather than abstract. Some questions you might ask include:

- How has your work changed over the course of your work life? Have you found a need to update your skills?
- Have you taken any classes or training since you completed your initial schooling? Why? How did you find out about the training? Is continuing education convenient and affordable in the community?
- Have you ever used career counseling services in the community? How helpful were they?
- Do you think the schools in your community are adequately preparing young people for today's jobs?
- If you are a business person, how satisfied are you with the available workforce skills in the community?
- Did you ever lose a job because your company or industry was affected by foreign competition? Did you have any difficulty finding a new job? How did you go about doing so?

Reviewing Possible Approaches (45 minutes)

The next step is to review and deliberate each approach, one-by-one, roughly 15 minutes each. Deliberation requires weighing the "pros" and "cons" of different approaches so it is important to be sure that both are fully aired. Questions to help ensure a fair and balanced examination of each approach include:

- What makes this approach a good idea? What do you find most appealing about it?
- What are the costs or consequences associated with this approach? Is there a downside to this approach?
- How might others see this approach?
- What would someone who favors this approach be likely to say?
- If we followed this approach, what would be the effects on your life?
- How might your concerns differ if you were poor? Lacked a high school education? Were a business owner?

Review of Approach One: Educational Achievement

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

Skill requirements for jobs are rising across the board. A high school degree is no longer a ticket to success. We need to focus on raising educational achievement and promoting postsecondary education for everyone.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- Does your community have a problem with students dropping out of school? What are the main reasons for students dropping out of school in your community? What impact do you think it would have on your community if the dropout rate was significantly reduced?
- What percentage of young people in your community go on to post-secondary education at a community college or college or university after completing high school? For those who don't go on, what are the barriers? How might your community help to overcome these barriers?
- Do high school students in your community have the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school, such as through dual enrollment programs with a local community college? If not, are there opportunities for linkages that might be explored?
- How well do public schools in your community prepare students for college-level work?

Review of Approach Two: Focus on Serving Industry

Businesses create most of the jobs in the region, so we should focus on serving their needs. Workforce skills need to match workplace needs. What good does it do to get a degree if you don't have the right skills to get a job?

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above and/or some of the following:

- How would you describe your community in terms of its support for businesses? How might the community be more supportive?
- How knowledgeable do you think businesses in your community are about programs that might help them with worker training or other workforce needs?

- Does your state or community have programs that certify that students have mastered skills needed by a particular industry? Do businesses in your community look for these certifications in making hiring and/or promotion decisions?
- Do high schools in your community have career academies or other school-to-career programs?
- Does your community work with other communities in your region on workforce development programs?

Review of Approach Three: Focus on Workforce Traits

Technological advances and global competition have increased the pace of change for today's businesses. As a result, workers can expect to change jobs – and even careers – many times throughout their work life. The best preparation is the development of a good work ethic, a value for lifelong learning, and transferable skills such as flexibility, teamwork and self-initiative.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- Is continuing education convenient and affordable in the community? What are the barriers, if any?
- Do you think that parents in the community are fairly knowledgeable about future career opportunities for their children and related educational requirements? What impact do you think it would have on the community if parents were more informed and involved in helping their children make future career decisions?
- Do schools in your community include ethics education and soft skills, such as communication and team building, in the school curriculum?
- Do schools in your community teach entrepreneurial skills and encourage entrepreneurial attitudes?

Working through tensions or conflicts (15 minutes)

Help participants see and work through the tensions or conflicts between the approaches by asking some of the following types of questions:

- What do you see as the tensions between the approaches?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?

Moving towards a shared sense of purpose (15 minutes)

Remind people that the objective is to work toward a decision. Test to see where the group is going by asking questions such as:

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- What values appear to be in conflict?
- What trade-offs are we willing (or unwilling) to accept?
- What are we willing to do as individuals or a community to solve this problem?
- Should communities focus on promoting postsecondary education for everyone, EVEN IF it means raising taxes?
- Should communities focus on serving industry, EVEN IF it means a difficult and time-consuming overhaul of public education?
- Should communities focus on developing transferable workforce traits, EVEN IF it means that the community's workforce is less prepared technically?

Ending the Forum (15 minutes)

Before ending a forum, take a few minutes to reflect on what has been accomplished. Questions like the following have been useful:

Individual Reflections

- Did you hear anything that surprised you?
- Has your thinking about the issue changed?
- Has your thinking about other people's views changed?
- How has your perspective changed as a result of what you've heard in this forum?

Group Reflections

- What remains unsolved for this group?
- Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
- What trade-offs are we, or are we not, willing to make to move in a shared direction?

Next Steps

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?
- Do we want to meet again?

Post-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Ask participants to complete the Post-Forum Questionnaire. Please collect both pre- and post-forum questionnaires and return them along with a *Moderator Summary Sheet* (See next page) to:

Paula Baker
Southern Growth Policies Board
P.O. Box 12293
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

This information will be used to help inform Southern leaders about citizens' views on this issue.

Moderator Summary Sheet

Building the Next Workforce: Making Choices for Your Community

After the forum, please complete this brief response sheet and return it with the questionnaires from the forum. Use additional paper, if needed. Your response will help ensure that your community is recognized in our final report to regional leaders.

Moderator's Name _____

Title _____

Division/Dept. _____

Company/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Phone _____ **Fax** _____ **Email** _____

Date of Forum _____ **Number of Participants** _____

Location of Forum _____ **(City)** _____ **(State)**

1. What key concerns about workforce development emerged from the discussion?

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