

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education #4: Use the soon-to-be-established Office of Workforce Development as a catalyst to strengthen relationships between employers and the Metro-York workforce.

### **Why is this a recommendation?**

Metro-York participants saw a need to include a recommendation that would complement Education #3 – immediately attacking concentration of poverty and lack of opportunity in the workforce, not just the classroom.

When both those speaking for employers and those speaking for the workforce during the Metro-York experience noted a “disconnect” between the two groups, it was not a surprise. Workforce development has been a topic of discussion at YorkCounts for years. In 2004, YorkCounts put forth 30 “ready solutions,” or community improvement ideas upon which other entities could choose to build. Since then, the York County Economic Development Corporation (YCEDC) has, in fact, built off the recommendation that an Office of Workforce Development be established. The YCEDC is in the process of hiring a director for such an Office, so now was the natural time to highlight this critical improvement.

### **How did Metro-York reach the decision to include it?**

Three years ago, the dialogue wasn’t about the details. Now, at a turning point for the region on this issue, there’s an urgency to make sure that the new Office be attuned – from the beginning – to the real needs of the community.

Except for Education #3 and Education #4, the Metro-York ideas are crafted for the medium and long term. But participants in this process insisted that neither our current elementary, middle and high school students... *nor* those who are in their 20s and 30s and are struggling to find work... could be left behind.

### **What else can you tell us about it?**

The Office of Workforce Development was a component of the York County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) produced by the YCEDC and YorkCounts.<sup>1</sup>

### **Where else is it being tried?**

Business leaders and workforce advocates have been making it a priority to create and expand workforce development initiatives in Pennsylvania. The commonwealth has an office that offers background on the field,<sup>2</sup> and economic development corporations have taken proactive steps in this area from Clarion County to Schuylkill County.<sup>3,4</sup>

### **What happens next?**

The YCEDC will coordinate with the champions of this recommendation. The current plan is to seek the formation of a community advisory committee to the new Office, once it’s established.

### **What are, realistically, some obstacles this idea faces?**

Three years ago, the main obstacle was the lack of an Office of Workforce Development. That will no longer be a problem! Still, this is a field of activity where all parties will have to work hard to institutionalize the mutual values of trust and cooperation.

1. York County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report available at <http://www.yorkcounts.org/act/ceds.html>.
2. Pennsylvania Workforce Development. <http://www.paworkforce.state.pa.us/about/site/default.asp> and available via [yorkcounts.org/metro](http://yorkcounts.org/metro).
3. Clarion County Economic Development Corporation. <http://www.callclarionpa.com/> and available via [yorkcounts.org/metro](http://yorkcounts.org/metro).
4. Schuylkill Workforce Partnership. <http://www.schuylkillworkforce.com/> and available via [yorkcounts.org/metro](http://yorkcounts.org/metro).

