

“Presenting the 2002 Report on the Future of the South”

June 9, 2002

1:30 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

Participants

- Moderator: Governor Bob Wise, West Virginia
- Governor Jim Hodges, South Carolina
- Governor Ronnie Musgrove, Mississippi
- Governor Bob Holden, Missouri

Panel Goals

Panelists will talk about how leaders might use the report, *The Mercedes and The Magnolia: Preparing the Southern Workforce for the Next Economy*, to support new and existing workforce development initiatives.

Panel Format

The moderator will lead the panelists in a discussion of the report’s goal statement and three recommendations. The panelists will be given the opportunity to talk about what is being done in their state to foster workforce development, and how *The Mercedes and The Magnolia* can help build on those efforts.

Questions

The moderator will briefly introduce the panelists and begin the discussion by asking each about the goal statement, and then move on to discuss the recommendations.

Goal Statement

The Board has just adopted the following goal into its Statement of Regional Objectives: *Create a talent pool capable of meeting current market needs as well as the opportunities of the emerging, knowledge-based economy.*

1. This goal statement suggests that market needs must drive our workforce development system, which means we must fully understand the implications of changes in the market—our transition to a knowledge economy. Does your state have a widely shared vision of the future, knowledge-based economy and what it means for workforce development? How can we involve the public so they can share in this vision?
2. The report defines the “workforce development system” as encompassing any service or institution that contributes to a client’s ability to function at increasing levels of technical complexity. As such, the workforce development system encompasses not only publicly funded education and

training services but all of the private sector investments in workforce development, and all the efforts of parents, social service organizations, and community role models who shape a person's character, attitudes, and career choices. What are the implications of this view for creating a more effective and accountable workforce development system?

Recommendation #1

Create seamless workforce systems that maximize client control over the outcomes.

1. This recommendation suggests that the way to get a more market-driven system is to give clients more control over the design and delivery of services. This is no small challenge. How might we accomplish this, and what are the implications for your state?
2. The report draws a parallel between shopping for groceries and shopping for knowledge, that acquiring skills in a seamless workforce development system should become analogous to visiting a supermarket—it's effortless, you select the items you want off the shelf, you can return at your own convenience, and you can pay with cash, credit or coupons. (Contrast this to the present system, which has more of the feel of shopping in a non-market economy with its legendary queues, shortages and odd surpluses). How can we achieve this level of seamlessness?
3. Program innovation will be key to delivering client-centered workforce development services. Yet respondents to Southern Growth's survey said there was only a modest level of innovation going on this area. What can we do to spur innovation in workforce programs?

Recommendation #2:

Identify and develop underutilized sources of workers and talent.

1. The report details how we may face a severe worker shortage in the coming decades, brought about by Baby Boom retirements and low birth rates. How can we get leaders and the general public to take this challenge seriously when right now we're faced with high unemployment?
2. Reaching out to underutilized sources of workers to remove the barriers to learning and work will involve partnerships between new stakeholders—not just cooperation among traditional workforce service providers, which is challenging in itself. How do we bring community groups, social services providers, and others to the table to identify and remove the barriers these special populations face?
3. The South's proportion of foreign-born residents is much smaller than that of the rest of the nation, but the rapid growth in immigration since 1995 in

the South has stretched public resources and introduced new ethnic dynamics and tensions. Yet immigrants—and their children—are critically important to our current and future workforce. How might we better manage the integration of immigrants into our communities and workforce?

Recommendation #3:

Create a self-directed workforce with the attitudes, learning habits, and decision tools necessary for making wise career choices throughout life.

1. Schools cannot force-feed learning, nor can government guarantee jobs. In the knowledge economy people must take more responsibility for preparing themselves for the world of work, and managing their transition to new jobs and careers. This means they will have to learn a lot more before venturing into work, and keep adding to their knowledge thereafter. How can we create a passion for learning as strong as, say, our passion for sports?
2. Choosing a career is infinitely more complicated in a knowledge economy where work is becoming more and more specialized, and when career-changes are much more common. The Internet provides a wealth of information, but little in the way of expert guidance. What can we do to help students, incumbent workers and dislocated workers chart a better course for themselves?

Concluding Questions

1. How might you use this report—its charts, model programs, and policy recommendations—to support your workforce development policies?
2. The Council for a New Economy Workforce is committed to developing the Southern Workforce Index. How might benchmarking help you, and what indicators might we include?
3. What should our other next steps be?