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GREENVILLE WORKS LAUNCHES; FOCUSES ON DEVELOPING NEXT-GENERATION WORKFORCE, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC SUCCESS FOR COUNTY

Twelve organizations collaborate on strategic workforce development plan for County

GREENVILLE COUNTY, SC, July 28, 2009 — Twelve leading public and private non-profit organizations have come together as one to ensure that Greenville County is primed and positioned to enjoy long-term economic success and per capita income growth by developing and implementing a next-generation workforce development strategy, organizers announced today.

Greenville Works, a collaborative of public and private sector non-profits spanning education, workforce development, economic development and public policy entities, officially unveiled their plans and vision to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to next-generation workforce development in the County.

The **Greenville Works** strategy is to focus on four primary areas of improvement:

- maintaining and refining feedback from the business community to understand needs as they relate to workforce, competitiveness, and other issues
- using that feedback to work with secondary and higher education systems to develop curriculum and programs that prepare the workforce to meet the needs of business
- providing the best delivery possible of career related information to youth and adult populations to ensure their understanding of requirements, opportunities, and paths for a range of career options, and
- building strong sector-based workforce development programs to ensure a solid pool of skills available within target sectors.

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“We operate in a globally competitive environment today, one in which workforce requirements are continuously being raised,” said Hank Hyatt, chairman of **Greenville Works** and Vice President of Economic Development of the Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce. “To thrive, we need a better, more productive workforce geared to the demands of business today and tomorrow. **Greenville Works** provides us the focus and platform to accomplish just that in Greenville County.”

Impetus for **Greenville Works** came from the *Greenville Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP)*, launched in mid-2007, which called on manufacturers, headquarters and major service providers to better understand their opportunities, issues, needs, and concerns. Based on feedback provided from the companies, the eight partners in that initiative responded in coordinated fashion to address specific business issues.

From the outset, the program produced a wealth of insight from companies small and large on topics including regulatory concerns, taxes, expansion incentives, cost of healthcare, supply chain needs – and workforce challenges. From more than 300 company visits conducted since 2007, workforce issues were most prevalent, and dramatically impacted the businesses on a daily basis.

“While concerns varied — readiness of entry level workers, scarcity of skilled labor in some disciplines, lack of some professional skills locally, fear over skill losses due to retirement by an aging workforce – workforce concerns impacted their ability to compete globally, to achieve superior quality and productivity, and impacted ability to compete for internal capital and adapt to changing market demands,” noted John Baker, Director for **Greenville Works** and lead consultant who interviewed many of the BREP companies. “Without a long-term workforce strategy, many of the foundational industry segments will continue to erode, and emerging technology segments will flow to areas where the highest productivity and product or service quality can be obtained.”

Enter **Greenville Works**. Because workforce development and quality is closely linked to sustainable economic growth and influenced by educational systems, a collaborative of the major providers of these services in Greenville County came together and committed to a strategic planning process to jointly

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address the needs of workforce development in the county. Members of the group include educational systems (Greenville County Schools, Greenville Tech, and University Center of Greenville); workforce development organizations (Greenville County Workforce Investment Board, SC Employment Security Commission, Personal Pathways to Success, readySC and United Way of Greenville County); and economic development and public policy organizations (Greenville Area Development Corporation, Greenville Chamber, and the City of Greenville).

“To launch **Greenville Works** with sufficient resources to achieve its goals, each partner committed to provide funding and/or in-kind resources to operate the program,” noted Hyatt. “These commitments came in the midst of a difficult economic times, and underscore the importance that each partner places on a unified approach to workforce development in Greenville County.”

“All partner organizations comprising **Greenville Works** will maintain the responsibilities for which they are chartered,” added Hyatt. “**Greenville Works**’ purpose is to reach beyond these individual charters to implement approaches that no single partner organization can achieve on its own.”

Organizers noted that while workforce availability is less of an issue due to the current economic slowdown, the strategy of **Greenville Works** focuses on long-term progress in workforce development, while addressing identified shortages of workforce talent in areas still flourishing.

“There is an opportunity to look at undertrained and unemployed or underemployed individuals who can benefit long-term by upgrading their skills to meet future demand in identified areas,” added Baker.

Task forces have been established to execute primary objectives of the strategic plan, which focus on:

- Information systems for workforce development
- Entry level and life-long learning improvement
- Improved career decision-making data and systems
- Certification and apprenticeship program improvements
- Industry cluster effectiveness

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The groups began meeting in April and have identified needed actions to spark improvement in the workforce development system.

“At the end of the day, the broad goal is to create a pull system to ensure that employers can draw on qualified resources and talent with the skills and training necessary to meet and exceed market demands,” said Hyatt. “**Greenville Works**, and our participating organizations, will measure our success through employer evaluation of labor force attributes, capital investment and job creation from new and existing industry, and ultimately by positive impact on per capita income. Our efforts are entirely geared towards strengthening the workforce and growing business so that Greenville County enjoys better jobs and a brighter future for generations to come.

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***Greenville Works** is a partnership of local, state and federal organizations working together to help new and existing businesses in Greenville County meet their workforce and business growth needs -- and to enhance the economic growth and development of Greenville County. For additional information, visit them on the web at www.GreenvilleWorks.com or call (864) 335-9198.*