



## RECAP: December 2014 MAX Workforce Forum Summary of Polling and Table Discussions

On December 2, 2014, more than 170 people came to be part of the launch of the **Metro Atlanta eXchange for Workforce Solutions (MAX)**. MAX was created to strengthen connections and promote information sharing among workforce development stakeholders in the 10-county metro Atlanta region. MAX is a catalyst to improve the competitiveness of the metro Atlanta workforce, sustaining and growing a robust economy throughout the region by linking together the resources that build human capital.

The gathering of workforce development training and service providers and other stakeholders initiated a community dialogue to identify the most critical challenges and opportunities facing job seekers and employers in the region. Using live audience polling and interactive discussions, MAX facilitators gathered feedback on important areas of focus that will lead to next steps to continue to galvanize the momentum of the Metro Atlanta eXchange for Workforce Solutions.

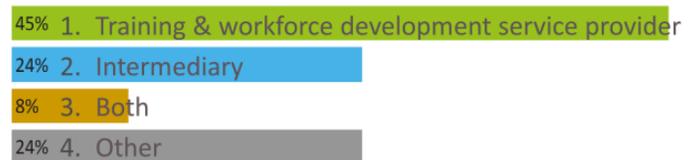
### Participants in the community dialogue

Of the participants that attended the forum, the largest group represented non-profit organizations that provide training and workforce development services. Employers, government agencies, academic institutions, and funders were also well represented.

#### What best describes your organization type?



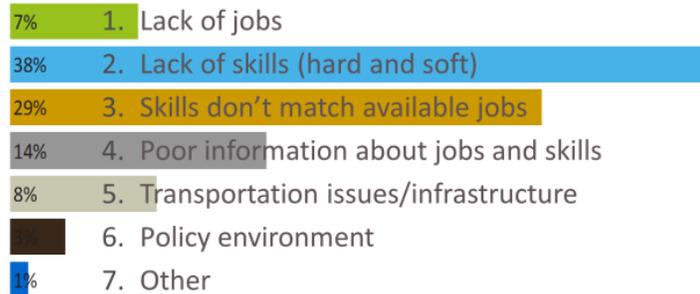
#### Which category best describes the organization you represent?



## Challenges facing job seekers

From the live polling, **Lack of skills (hard and soft)** and **Skills don't match available jobs** were identified as the most critical challenges facing job seekers by 67% of the respondents. During further discussions at each table, **Transportation access** and **Lack of soft skills** emerged as major themes.

## In your opinion, what is the most critical challenge facing job seekers in metro Atlanta?



## Aspirations to foster connectivity amongst workforce development stakeholders

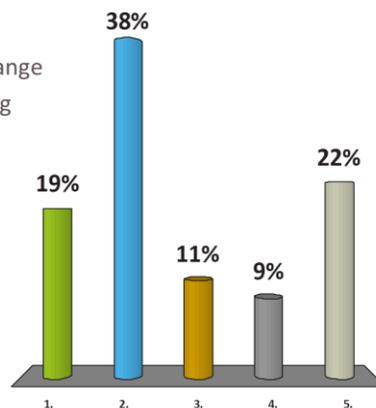
The polling generally showed that there was a strong preference to promote **partnerships**, **information sharing**, and **communication**. More specifically, attendees were asked to rank the aspirations for MAX. Polling results indicated that the highest priority aspiration for MAX should be to **Foster greater alignment among players**. The table discussions affirmed **alignment** as the top priority, but there were others that followed close behind:

- **Be one voice to advocate for policies that will enhance workforce development;**
- **Help foster greater effectiveness through data, information, and tools;** and
- **Build business partnerships/employer connections.**

## MAX has identified several aspirations in order to meet its vision and mission.

Please refer to handouts on your table that detail the aspirations and vote for the two highest priority aspirations.

1. **Aspiration 1:** Provide opportunities for exchange
2. **Aspiration 2:** Foster greater alignment among players
3. **Aspiration 3:** Serve as platform for policy advocacy
4. **Aspiration 4:** Create opportunities for continuous learning
5. **Aspiration 5:** Provide data, information, and tools





## Identifying next steps to reach the aspirations

Participants were also asked if there are specific **tasks** and programmatic **goals** that should be prioritized. The top two responses were:

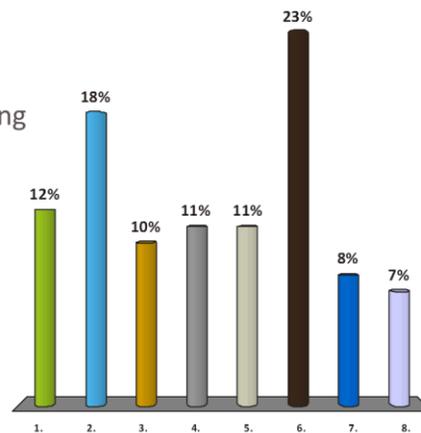
- **Coordinate regular regional convening events** and
- **Create the connecting place to have the “hard conversations” about what employers really need and want.**

When participants were asked to vote on which initiatives would be most helpful to their work, **Opportunities for partnerships** received 23% of the votes, followed by **Regional workforce development forums** with 18% of the votes.

The table discussions affirmed that **Opportunities for partnerships** would be most helpful to their work. Following close behind was **An effective online database with information related to workforce development services**.

## Which two of the following would be most helpful to your work?

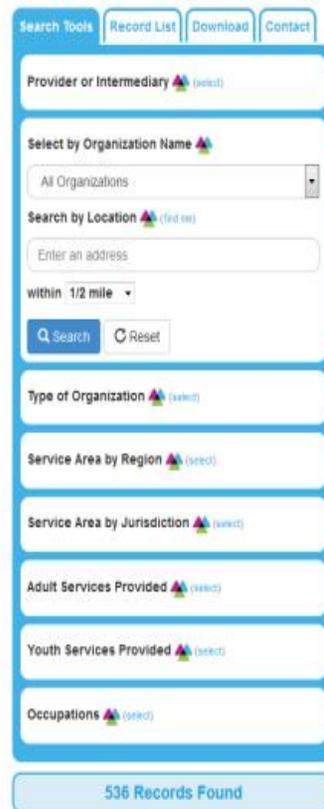
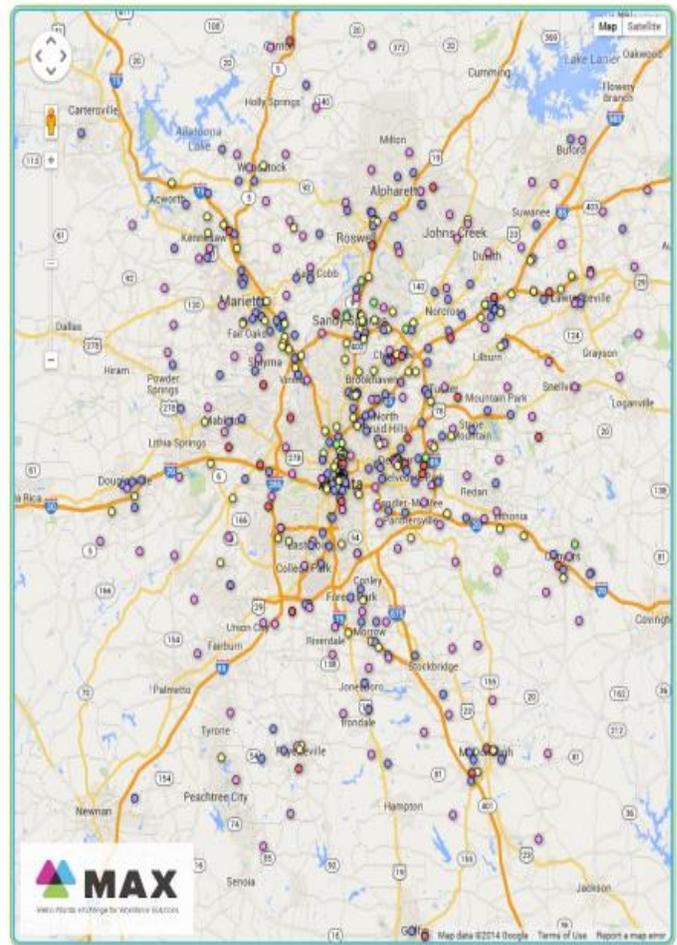
1. An effective online database
2. Regional workforce development forums
3. Professional development and training
4. Information on best practices in job training
5. Information on funding and financing opportunities
6. Opportunities for partnerships
7. Fostering opportunities to make data accessible
8. Networking opportunities



## Initiatives Underway

Some of the necessary “next steps” to fulfill MAX’s aspirations have already been taken. For example:

❶ Through a collaborative comprised of more than 20 organizations, more than 400 workforce development service providers were invited to complete a profile for a new portal in the 10-county metro Atlanta area to identify service areas, services provided, customers served, industry and occupational focus, funding, and partnerships. A subset of this information was used to build ***an online database with information related to workforce development services***, called the ***MAX PROVIDER PORTAL***.

❷ The MAX collaborative synthesized the information gathered for the MAX Provider Portal and identified ***FOUR FINDINGS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS*** in order to begin to speak in ***one voice to advocate for policies that will enhance workforce development***.



⑥ Members of the MAX collaborative— Atlanta CareerRise, Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), and the Metro Atlanta Chamber—combined resources to secure real-time labor market data for the Atlanta MSA from Burning Glass Technologies. ARC’s Research & Analytics Division analyzed and prepared the report which will **help foster greater effectiveness through data, information, and tools**. The [2014 ATLANTA REGION DEMAND OVERVIEW AND TARGETED INDUSTRY WORKFORCE TRENDS](#) report was released in January 2015.

④ [MAX HAS CREATED A HUB](#) where everyone can stay connected. The [MAXWORKFORCE.ORG](#) website provides access to the [MAX PROVIDER PORTAL](#), [TIMELY REPORTS AND DATA](#), and [LISTINGS OF UPCOMING EVENTS](#). [TELL US](#) about relevant news or events and it will be added to the site.

## Strategic Next Steps

The MAX Launch event has provided a mandate for moving ahead. Through the interactive launch discussions, the MAX mission and aspirations were reinforced with enthusiasm and thoughtful feedback:

- 96% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed there is a need for MAX, and
- 96% of attendees were interested in participating in MAX activities.

Based on the proposed activities discussed at each table, over 89% agreed or strongly agreed that MAX will help organizations and individuals within the workforce development space.

We asked, we listened, and we are acting on what you said! Based on what we heard, MAX has identified the following next steps:

- **Provider Portal improvements** – The MAX Provider Portal and mapping function provides information on workforce development organizations that was self-reported. It also includes information on post-secondary institutions as reported by IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) and on high school career pathways as reported by the Georgia Department of Education. Improving data quality and integrity is a key priority as we continue to test and refine the portal. If your organization is not yet listed on the [MAX PROVIDER PORTAL, REGISTER TODAY](#). And if there are ways that you would like to see the Portal improved, please tell us by sending an email to [PORTAL@MAXWORKFORCE.ORG](mailto:PORTAL@MAXWORKFORCE.ORG).
- **Workforce Trends Workshop** – Information sharing and regional convening/forums were identified as priorities. Through a partnership between Atlanta CareerRise, Atlanta Regional Commission, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber, regional real-time labor market data is now available. A detailed sector report is available on the MAX website. As the partners develop quarterly updates and insights to provide additional detail about key occupations and



industries, MAX will serve as a vehicle to disseminate the information and promote a community discussion. [LEARN MORE](#) about labor demands at a workshop on February 10, 2015.

- **Regular forums and speakers** – MAX Partner Atlanta CareerRise has committed funds for the next year to convene quarterly forums and professional development opportunities for the MAX community, and an annual summit is under consideration. As MAX moves ahead, persons interested in forming an Events Planning Committee should please tell us by sending an email to [INFO@MAXWORKFORCE.ORG](mailto:INFO@MAXWORKFORCE.ORG).

In addition, in 2015 the MAX team will be formalizing the governance, support, and operational plan for the initiative. We are always seeking input from the workforce community as we work to make MAX the nexus of workforce voices in the Metro Atlanta region.

## Help MAX Help You

Check the MAX website ([maxworkforce.org](http://maxworkforce.org)) regularly for news, events, and ways to get involved, and look for emails from MAX as it crystallizes its plan for 2015 and beyond. To be successful, MAX needs the involvement and ideas of all the stakeholders: business, nonprofits, government, educators, and economic development. As we find new ways of working together across the region, let us know what works...and doesn't work for you.