



# MAX

Metro Atlanta eXchange for Workforce Solutions

## MAX AT TWO YEARS



The Metro Atlanta eXchange for Workforce Solutions (MAX) was launched in December 2014 by a team of regional leaders who saw a need for greater coordination and collaboration among players in workforce development. Since its launch, there have been several notable milestones achieved by this team of workforce partners. The unveiling of the region's first comprehensive [portal of workforce development providers and services](#), the hosting or co-hosting of regional events, the launch of the MAX Academy, and ongoing efforts to share information are all examples – each of which has led to increased connections and enhanced relationships among workforce development stakeholders. Indeed, thanks to the dedication of its volunteer leadership, MAX has experienced several significant accomplishments as a virtual organization in its early days.

During the fall of 2016, MAX steering committee members took time to reflect on the past two years and consider how MAX can be most helpful going forward. Feedback shared by members underscored the importance of MAX as a convener, connector, and catalyst for the workforce development community. Following are some examples of what they shared.

- MAX pulls all the fragmented pieces of the complicated workforce development landscape together in one place. (No one else is doing this for everyone.)
- MAX connects the dots in metro Atlanta to ensure that we have a workforce system that is working well together and leveraging all the available resources.
- MAX offers a forum for individual organizations to think more broadly about the landscape and consider how to address the problems more broadly than what's in the purview of any one organization.

- MAX serves as the liaison organization, working to connect all influencers involved in workforce development, each with distinct missions, roles, and responsibilities, and unique doors.
- MAX offers an open forum, with a non-biased agenda, for workforce development stakeholders.
- MAX provides a platform for sharing best practices and learning how can we leverage each other and work toward the same goals.
- MAX assists workforce development professionals in improving their services to the region.

Looking ahead into 2017 and beyond, the MAX steering committee has adopted some key strategic goals for guiding the future work of MAX. For more information on where MAX is heading, see the following Q&A with MAX Chair Wendell Dallas.

## Q&A WITH MAX CHAIR WENDELL DALLAS



*Wendell Dallas is the vice president of operations for Atlanta Gas Light and Chattanooga Gas. He also has served more than four years as the chairman of the State Workforce Development Board. In this role, he oversees initiatives that align state efforts with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and ensure federal and state workforce funds are spent in the best manner possible to support Georgia job seekers. In 2016, Wendell also became the first chairman of MAX. Here, he answers questions about MAX and what we can expect in the days ahead.*

### **MAX: Tell us about the mission of MAX.**

**DALLAS:** The mission of MAX is “to advance economic competitiveness in the Atlanta region by strengthening connections, collaborations and practices among workforce developers and organizations engaged in workforce development.” We seek to help strengthen how we collectively do workforce development to better meet employer needs.

### **MAX: Who is engaged in MAX today?**

**DALLAS:** MAX is unique in its ability to reach a broad sector of players involved in workforce development and this is perhaps its most exciting attribute. There is no other convener in the Atlanta region that brings together all of these players at one table. MAX members include those representing the public workforce system, higher education, service providers, employers, funders and the intermediaries who work to support all of these players. These organizations are represented on MAX’s dynamic steering committee, which is guiding MAX’s future efforts.

### **MAX: What does MAX seek to achieve in the year ahead?**

**DALLAS:** This next year is an organizational building year for MAX. Our steering committee has adopted three programmatic goals to guide our work going forward. These goals are: (1) improve alignment between workforce development service providers to better meet employer needs, (2)

improve awareness and visibility of workforce development system assets and opportunities, and (3) provide opportunities to increase the quality, capacity and effectiveness of Atlanta's workforce system. Over the next year, we will seek to do this through regional convenings and other engagement opportunities. We will also support these goals through our communications tools, such as this newsletter, the *MAX Informer*, and our weekly partner update email, *MAX Mondays*.

**MAX: What excites you most about where MAX is heading?**

**DALLAS:** I consider it a huge honor and privilege to work side by side with some of our nation's sharpest and brightest workforce minds. Every organization and person involved with MAX is fully committed to strengthening our workforce value chain. Because of this support and engagement, I see our workforce challenges as true workforce opportunities. The upshot is we have a world-class team focused on building a world-class workforce. The future is very bright.

## **MAX SPOTLIGHT: WESTSIDE WORKS CREATES LIFE CHANGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WESTSIDE ATLANTA RESIDENTS**

Westside Works – an innovative partnership among the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA), Integrity Transformations Community Development Corporation, New Hope Enterprises, Per Scholas, Invest Atlanta, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, and WorkSource Atlanta – serves residents in Castleberry Hill, English Avenue, Vine City, and contiguous neighborhoods in the Atlanta zip codes 30314 and 30318. Westside Works offers six different tracks of hard skills training – construction, certified nursing assistant, education, culinary arts, office operations, and information technology. All trainees can also receive remedial help with literacy, numeracy, and other areas.

Integrity Transformations serves as the managing partner for Westside Works. According to CEO Rev. Howard Beckham, more than 450 residents have been trained and credentialed since the program's inception in July 2014. More than 350 graduates have been placed into full-time jobs and have collectively earned a total of \$8.2 million in wages, averaging \$13.70 per hour. Approximately 125 graduates have worked in construction at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium at one time or another. Most participants were unemployed before entering the program.



Rev. Howard Beckham with Ian Miller and Anthony Lewis, two Westside Works construction program graduates. Both were referred by Integrity's reentry program, while still incarcerated at Phillips Transitional Center in Buford, Georgia.

When asked about the lives Works, Rev. Beckham can meaningful stories. One that story of Ian Miller, who program at 26 years of years in prison for an committed at the age of 16. program, Miller started Benz Stadium, got married,

Rev. Beckham attributes the to the Blank Family serving as the primary his team by providing assistance, and professional way. He notes that there are a number of developments, in addition to Westside Works, happening in Westside Atlanta today because of the Blank Family Foundation’s influence. The foundation’s 20 year commitment to help the area become self-sustaining has clearly bolstered confidence among stakeholders in the area.

“We are the prototype for what can happen for individuals and organizations when adequate resources and opportunities come together,” says Rev. Howard Beckham, Managing Partner of Westside Works, “and what is happening on the Westside can happen anywhere if there are adequate resources and opportunities.”

changed through Westside recall a number of stands out for him is the joined the construction age after spending 10 armed robbery he Since graduating from the working at the Mercedes- and is now a father.

success of Westside Works Foundation for not only funder but also investing in nurturing support, technical development along the

## MAX SPOTLIGHT: A GREAT START FOR THE AEROTROPOLIS WORKFORCE COLLECTIVE

The Aerotropolis Workforce Collective was launched in 2016 to connect Aerotropolis area employers (employers surrounding Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport) with the workforce they need from local neighborhoods. It is an effort catalyzed by Atlanta CareerRise and associated with Aerotropolis Atlanta, an alliance of Fortune 500 corporations, local businesses, governments, non-profits, and other interested parties located in the general airport area. The goal is to transform the airport vicinity into a world-class Aerotropolis, stimulate investment, and strengthen public coordination for the benefit of all airport area stakeholders.



To support the goal of Aerotropolis Atlanta, the overarching mission of the Collective is to increase economic growth and prosperity in the region from within the area by: (1) connecting with business to understand current and future workforce needs and implement streamlined solutions to meet those needs, (2) developing competitive talent pipelines to support continued business growth, and (3) developing partnerships and infrastructure to ensure programs are sustainable and provide equitable access across the Aerotropolis footprint. The Collective is co-chaired by two of the four participating local workforce development

agencies and an employer, and directed by a Working Group comprised of the four local workforce development agencies, the Georgia Department of Labor, Atlanta CareerRise, and Aerotropolis Board liaisons.

By the end of its first year, approximately 70 public with a stake in the workforce Other accomplishments in environmental scan on regions and sample development and vetting of strategies with the asset map of work support and workforce strategies for included in metro Atlanta's The team's efforts also led to Annual Hubstart Sustainable Seminar.

“The intensity of interest in occupational training and services in this area has been gratifying,” says Cinda Herndon-King, Atlanta CareerRise Director, “we are working with three different groups interested in establishing physical training centers within the footprint.”

the Collective included and private organizations development of the area. 2016 included an demographics in peer airport initiatives and the mission, vision, objectives and Collective. Furthermore, an resources was developed the Aerotropolis area were first regional workforce plan. an invite to present at the 6th Airport Areas International

In 2017, the Collective seeks to work with the local workforce development agencies to cohesively engage employers in the major industry sectors represented in the area.

## MAX SPOTLIGHT: Mercedes-Benz USA and Gwinnett Tech Partner for Workforce Success

Back in January 2015, when that it would start construction on headquarters facility in Sandy announced plans to hire from the Atlanta area. [Click here](#) The Technical College System of Mercedes-Benz to create, what college-car maker partnership in degree program. With the partners, the two-year on the campus of Gwinnett Tech technology. Students will receive credits, as part of the program.

“Gwinnett Tech is extremely proud and honored to have a global leader in the automotive industry and the symbol for excellence place trust in us to pilot this very innovative program,” said President Glen Cannon.

Mercedes Benz USA announced a new state-of-the-art corporate Springs, the automaker also hundreds of new employees for the official announcement. Georgia has worked with is believed to be, the first the country centered on a curriculum developed jointly by degree program begins in 2017 for students studying automotive college and factory-level

Mercedes-Benz has contributed \$500,000 in start-up costs for the program with Gwinnett Tech. According to Gwinnett Tech president, Glen Cannon, the automaker has provided six cars and support to renovate the classroom and lab environments. Said President Cannon: “Our goal is to provide the best career opportunities for our students and serve our great industries. This new program meets and exceeds both those criteria.”