

**31st Annual Emerging Issues Forum****FutureWork****Leadership Hackathon:
Government & Smart Communities****Priorities for Action from
Day Two (Feb. 9, 2016) of the FutureWork Forum**

Note: Forum participants came together to explore challenges to job creation and workforce development in the “Government and Smart Communities” sector, and to identify key action priorities to position our state for future success in this area of the economy. A panel of sector experts opened the session with thoughts on key challenges and priorities for action. Participants then broke into self-selected small groups to explore strategy options. Each group then reported out on the impact each strategy was likely to have, what resources and assets were needed and available, threats to implementation and existing models for success. Each participant then voted for three top priorities among the strategies. This document summarizes key elements of the hackathon.

Sector Context

In the future, while jobs will diminish as city service workers are replaced through automation, opportunities will emerge for those that produce and manage the technology. Hardware and software integration firms, along with other tech service provider industries, are projected to have high growth supplying the physical infrastructure and connectivity. Simultaneously, community readiness is projected to be a central component to addressing the new realities of work.

The central question session participants wrestled with are:

What are the necessary components a local government needs for a smart community to thrive (data, infrastructure, people, etc.)?

What is the roadmap to developing the necessary partnerships to create jobs in tomorrow’s smart communities?

Given our impending challenges, it is clear that the roadmap to prosperity for any community reflects a conscious decision to embrace change. That reality necessitates embracing technology, establishing itself as a hub for talent, and becoming a place that is attractive to established industries and emerging startups.

In Europe, leaders have established a *grand coalition for digital jobs*. This coalition is premised on the idea of a multi-stakeholder partnership aimed at facilitating collaboration among business, education, and government. This partnership is devising plans to prepare and attract young people into the careers that will be in demand in tomorrow's economy. These partnerships rest on the foundation of smart communities. These smart communities are places of connectivity: connected human capital, communications networks, physical infrastructure, and the necessary data analytics.

Truly integrated and connected communities will boost their sustainability, resiliency, citizen satisfaction, and expand their opportunity for economic success. If North Carolina communities are to prosper in the future, it is clear that we must develop a grand plan for the emergence of thriving smart communities.

To answer that challenge, leaders from across North Carolina came together on Day Two of the Emerging Issues Forum. At the end of the session, these leaders and insightful minds developed four clear strategies for moving North Carolina forward.

Priorities for Action

1. Increase Education System Equity

Session attendees embraced the wisdom of the collective and decided that increasing educational system equity is critically important for the development of a smart community. They voiced the idea that smart communities can only thrive when all of their citizens are prepared, engaged, and capable of meeting the challenges of tomorrow's economy. They articulated a vision of North Carolina that recognizes that we are building a bridge to the future of our communities. They noted that this future should reflect a North Carolina where young people are fully engaged in civic life, where there is equality of opportunity, and an elimination of stark pockets of underachievement.

Assets and Success Markers: Participants highlighted the strength and resilience of established institutions as key assets in making this a reality. It was noted that for many rural communities, local community colleges are a key asset. Along with community colleges, it was suggested that established early college programs could prove to be an asset worth investing in. Lastly, and not least, participants identified teachers and the people of communities as strengths from which to build upon.

2. Develop more interest in Government Jobs

It was clear from the discussion that communities will need a strong cadre of talented government workers to usher in the new era of smart communities across North Carolina. Participants articulated this strategy as a necessary step toward ensuring that communities have the pipeline of talent necessary to move toward becoming a smart community, and to sustain the transition. Participants identified the need to rebrand local government service as well as the need to develop career pathways in the government sector. The realization of this renewed interest in government service would lead to greater retention of public service employees, and the attraction of bright young minds.

Assets and Success Markers: North Carolina's long history of engagement with young people can serve as a platform to build upon. From the legislature to our city and county offices there has always existed a spirit of inclusion and a desire to work with young talent. Combined with the leadership from our university's public administration, economics, and related programs, North Carolina has a foundation from which to jump start this initiative. Once achieved, public service in North Carolina can be celebrated as a haven for innovation.

3. Improve Access to Technology in Rural and Impoverished Areas of the State

The various labor markets across the state will require infrastructure to fuel the emergence of smart communities that can support the growth of tomorrow's jobs. A key component of that infrastructure is wireless, cable, and satellite internet access. Participants discussed the pressing challenges of rural North Carolina and emphasized that many communities are falling farther and farther behind. They championed the idea of a "Marshall Plan" to bring rural North Carolina into the modern economy to ensure its capacity to compete.

Assets and Success Markers: Participants highlighted the presence of a committed group of providers in several areas of the state as an asset. Their success in bringing internet access to non-urban areas was evidence of the necessary capacity and willingness. They also pointed to the recent efforts of major telecom providers in bringing gigabit service to North Carolina. In addition to higher numbers of residents with high-speed internet access, meeting this goal would lead to 1) successful startups emerging in non-urban communities, and 2) greater access to training via the web and a resulting increase in the skill sets of residents.

4. Student Engagement Collaboration

Project-based learning emerged as a priority from the Day One voting process at the Emerging Issues Forum. Participants in the Smart Communities session combined project-based learning with the idea of open government. With open government data and

information about government operations would be readily available and useful to citizens to accommodate the widest practical range of users and uses. Participants championed the idea of creating opportunities for citizens (and especially high school and college students) to solve pressing challenges facing their communities by using technology through project-based learning.

Assets and Success Markers: In addition to addressing challenges, participants believed this strategy could lead to improved economic growth and increased cooperating among government, business, and educational institutions. And with the existing strength of community colleges and many local K-12 systems, a platform exists from which to launch this novel idea.