



CITY OF ATLANTA

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
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SHIRLEY FRANKLIN
MAYOR

*"Providing Services To Build
A Quality Workforce!"*

February 24, 2009

AWDA MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF ATLANTANS

Dear Atlanta Stakeholder:

I am writing to you today, to provide an update on the recent inquiries into the financial management practices of the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency. Over the last five years, the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency has grown to better meet the needs of city of Atlanta residents. We have consecutively served over 60,000 customers yearly, with resources varying from job readiness skills training, summer employment for youth, free tax preparation and access to low-cost health insurance. These achievements are directly related to the reform that the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency has undergone, allowing us to focus on generating job training and employment opportunities for those who need them most.

AWDA is a one-stop shop funded by federal grants and service contracts. The federal grants in question are the Welfare-to-Work (WtW) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grants funded between 1998 and 2003. When I became the executive director in 2003, I immediately evaluated the agency and began a mass reform of all programs and service contracts. We then asked the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to come in and investigate. The OIG completed their investigation in November 2008 and found that Atlanta did not have effective financial management systems for managing its WtW and WIA grant funds and that Atlanta could not demonstrate that it always complied with eligibility requirements when enrolling individuals into WtW and WIA Youth programs. AWDA was given a thirty day extension allowing us to analyze and evaluate the documentation associated in order to substantiate the validity of the findings. Based upon our analysis of the existing documentation, we disagreed with the two primary findings of the report. Our response to the findings is still under review by the government's Employment and Training Agency.

Some of the ways AWDA was restructured in 2003, upon my arrival:

- **We re-examined all of our service contracts** and terminated all contracts immediately, as well as those employees who were charging to those accounts. We decided to bring all services in house, creating the efficient “One-Stop-Shop” that we have today.

- **We modernized the way we track our customers.** We developed a computer based tracking system that allows us to capture 100% of our data and save it electronically, doing away with the need for paper files that can get lost or damaged. When a customer enrolls in our program, they use an online application. Their information is captured in a secure virtual system and as they access the various resources our agency provides, their profiles are updated. Should a customer then become laid-off and return to re-access our services, his information is available and he can start off where he ended.
 - On January 3rd, 2008, the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency incurred damage due to the flooding of three floors of the building. Some of the files that were stored in the building from past years were damaged or destroyed, but because of our new virtual system, our new customer files are still intact!

- **A brand new Atlanta Workforce Development Board was appointed** to plan and oversee all programs. The board has a majority of business representatives, and includes representatives from the education community, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and each of the one-stop partners. This board has worked diligently to identify opportunities to provide better workforce resources to city residents.

- **We developed a diverse group of partnerships** that enable us to provide outstanding resources to our customers. Our partnership with *Atlanta Technical College* has allowed us to send thousands of adults into training programs where they obtain certification in top career fields. We have also been able to send hundreds of youth interested in the medical field, to school to become Certified Nursing Assistants and Pharmacy Techs. These students receive their certification during the summer months while being paid for summer work experience, and are able to work in their field while pursuing post-secondary education in the fall. Another partner, the *Atlanta Housing Authority*, has enabled us to provide job readiness skills to hundreds of catalyst participants seeking a way to get back on their feet. From this partnership, we have seen thousands become employed and/or seek training and other resources. Yet another partner, *Atlanta Public Schools*, has been providing GED preparation to our customers at our home office, enabling thousands of customers to receive their GED and go on to gain employment where they could not before.

The variety of employment, training, youth services and programs that the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency has to offer local residents today, is a direct result of the many changes made to help refocus our services on those who need them. In addition to assisting Atlanta residents obtain employment, AWDA is currently providing:

- over 60,000 people a year with employment resources including job search assistance, resume writing assistance, employment readiness classes, job placement, occupational testing and skills training, on-the-job training, and computer literacy classes;
- weekly Tuesday job fairs for corporations and government institutions and placement of job seekers in positions with companies such as CVS, Dompatci and Aramark;
- thousands of students with summer work experience opportunities and/or classroom instruction, and,
- thousands of people annually, with "free" screenings through EarnBenefits to determine their eligibility for a wide array of government and private benefits such as earned income tax credits, WIC, food stamps, low-income Medicaid, Peach Care, TANF, Individual Development Accounts (IDA), Energy Assistance, Life Insurance, and more.

Just last week, the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency celebrated the second annual graduation of ten African American Men from the Seagram's Gin sponsored program *Pursuit of Excellence*. These men were chosen to participate in this program, managed by AWDA, and receive training in leadership skills by local community and business leaders, giving them the confidence to go out and achieve their career goals.

In this time of unprecedented unemployment and lay-offs, the work of the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency is more essential than ever to the health of this city and its residents. I encourage you to stop by the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, at 818 Pollard Boulevard, south of Turner Field, to see this wonderful transformation for yourself. AWDA makes a difference in the lives of our citizens each and every day. You can also visit us online at www.atlantaworkforce.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Lum".

Deborah Lum
Executive Director

