



CITY OF ATLANTA  
Office of the Chief Operating Officer  
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## Memorandum

**To:** Leslie Ward, City Auditor  
**From:** Duriya Farooqui, Chief Operating Officer *DF*  
**CC:** Cathy Hampton, City Attorney  
Jim Beard, Chief Financial Officer  
Yvonne Yancy, Commissioner of Human Resources  
**Date:** 2/4/2013  
**Re:** AWDA proposed audit

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The office of the Chief Operating Officer is in receipt of your draft audit report. Per your own scope, a performance audit should provide a framework to "improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision-making and contribute to public accountability". Further, you state that you "perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusions based on our audit objectives". I expected to receive recommendations to improve the operations and performance of AWDA.

### **Recommendation #1**

It is perplexing that the audit report asks the Mayor and City Council to discontinue an agency with over 40 years of service which, according to your report, served over 25,310 clients in less than a two-year period. The loss of AWDA would have an immediate detrimental impact on the City's economic development and may hinder the City's competitiveness. Thousands of residents will lose services currently provided at AWDA's One Stop Center. In a time when the economy has displaced so many workers, it does not make any sense to remove a workforce development function from the City when it continues to serve so many disadvantaged residents.

AWDA is funded primarily by external grants and offers at no cost to the City or its residents:

- Paid work experience for adults, dislocated worker, and youth clients that are assigned to City Hall and various City departments, such as Public Works/Parks and Recreation, etc.;
- Job readiness workshops for offenders and customers with background issues;
- Assisting drug addicts and offenders with employment;
- Short-term occupational skills training with national recognition certification;
- Skills upgrade;
- On-the-job training leading to employment;
- Computer classes (basic up to intermediate);
- Onsite construction classes with recognized credibility;
- Self-directed Customer Service courses;
- Employer Job Fairs;

- Organized job fairs for certain neighborhoods;
- Drug/Background screening for employers;
- Free tax preparation (year round);
- Clothes for job seekers to dress appropriately;
- Childcare service with a discount;
- Training and testing for taxi drivers to obtain/retain permits;
- Youth services (education/occupational);
- Resume preparation;
- Recruitment services for firefighters;
- GED preparation classes for youth and adults (day/evening);
- Screening for food stamps, TANF (temporary Assistance for Needy Families), WIC, Medicaid, LIHEAP (Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program) and life insurance, and
- Kaiser Permanente Medical Insurance.

These are among the many services that AWDA offers. The conclusion that this job placement and workforce development function should be terminated by the City of Atlanta appears to be based on the agencies data tracking function, instead of its primary function of providing jobs and workforce development. I strongly disagree with the recommendation to consider closing the agency as a solution. Per the scope of the audit, I expected this report to make useful recommendations for accomplishing more effective execution of AWDA's mission.

### **Recommendation #2**

The Office of Chief Operating Officer recognizes the importance of strategic analysis to improve performance and for this reason I had directed Invest Atlanta (well before the audit report) to utilize a consultant in developing a work force development strategy based on the City's economic development strategy (once completed). It would identify industries and clusters where the job skills gap can be bridged to better match the City's labor pool with job growth and emerging industries.

The agency has withstood significant scrutiny by federal agencies. It was most recently found to be in compliance by USDOL under its most recent assessment (utilizing extensive data analysis). The AWDA has collaborated with the Departments of Finance, Law and Human resources to take corrective steps towards improving its operations.

### **Recommendation #3**

As noted by the audit, AWDA operates under a Board and the workforce development strategy will also consider the best practice approaches for its governance as well as the organizational structure that would best support its strategic direction. The City Council engaged in a similar exercise with its economic development agency formerly known as ADA with great success. Once the independent assessment is completed, I will share it with City Council for input as well.

AWDA will develop a scorecard of ATLStat metrics that it will use for performance benchmarking. A list of accomplishments including recent performance data is also attached. I will exercise additional oversight on AWDA operations and implement a workforce strategy once complete by year-end.

This is a response to audit recommendations only; please include appropriately with your report.

Thank you.

## ***Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA) 2011-12 Accomplishments***

- Total job creation for AWDA 3781 as delineated below:
  - ✓ Atlanta Housing Authority – 29
  - ✓ City of Atlanta Fire Fighters – 139
  - ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> Source Jobs Ordinance – 253
  - ✓ Direct Employment/Work Experience – 2603
  - ✓ On-the-Job-Training – 156
  - ✓ Summer Work Experience – 601
- Over 34,000 adults, dislocated workers, and youth customers were served through employment and training activities at Atlanta Workforce Development Agency's (AWDA) One Stop Center from July 2011 through June 30, 2012.
- Over 453 adults and youth are enrolled at Atlanta Technical College and other training providers in high demand occupational training under an Individual Development Account (ITA) funded by AWDA.
- AWDA received over \$4,400,000 in funding from the Governor Office of Workforce Development - Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Seedco, and corporate donations for the Mayor's Youth Program for high school seniors.
- 601 high school juniors and seniors ages 14-21 were placed in "paid" summer work experience jobs, academic enrichment activities, and occupational skills training at over 179 public and private sector worksites around the city of Atlanta during the summer of 2012.
- AWDA in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools assisted 50 youth to complete their GED.
- AWDA assisted over 100 out-of-school-youth ages 16-21 with the following services:
  - ✓ Basic skills instruction
  - ✓ GED prep and testing
  - ✓ High School Graduation Test completion assistance
  - ✓ Work readiness training
  - ✓ Post secondary education exploration, readiness and admissions
  - ✓ Paid work experience
  - ✓ On-the-job-training
  - ✓ Employment assistance

- Bank of America contributed \$100,000 to support AWDA’s Youth programs, with specific attention given to the East Lake Community for program services.
- AWDA was awarded a Department of Labor (DOL) YouthBuild Grant in the amount \$1,100,000. Additionally to support the YouthBuild program the following grant awards were received:
  - ✓ National Corporation of Community Service AmeriCorps Program \$130,000
  - ✓ National Mentoring Alliance Program \$75,000
  - ✓ YouthBuild USA/Gates Foundation \$120,000
- Under the YouthBuild program operated by AWDA the following outcomes were achieved:
  - ✓ 35 youth were enrolled
  - ✓ 20 youth completed the GED
  - ✓ 10 youth enrolled in a post secondary education program
  - ✓ 15 youth were employed
  - ✓ 30 youth received AmeriCorps Education Awards in the amount \$1500
  - ✓ 25 youth were assigned a mentor
- AWDA partnered with the following agencies on two DOL Workforce Innovation grants:
  - ✓ Baltimore County Workforce Development Agency - Accelerating Connections to Employment (ACE) \$315,000
  - ✓ DeKalb County Workforce Agency – Long-term Unemployment Work Experience Program (no funding, but target is Atlanta residents)
- Throughout the year, 10,600 citizens attended the AWDA’s weekly job fairs, getting on the spot interviews and many receiving job offers same day. 17,800 citizens used our in house Resource Library for computer and internet access to conduct online job searches in addition to assistance with resume development.
- In addition to the weekly job fairs conducted at AWDA, the Adult and Dislocated Worker Program offered multiple “customized” job fairs throughout the year to meet specific employment needs for City of Atlanta businesses. In Spring of 2012, a series of job fairs were conducted in partnership with Concessions International to interview and hire employees for the businesses in the new International Terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Through AWDA, employees were hired under the First Source Agreement and 5,500 citizens attended the job fairs.
- Summer 2012, AWDA organized and conducted an ambitious job readiness program to recruit, prepare and train future applicants for positions at the new Walmart that will open in January 2013 in the Vine City neighborhood. 43 community residents were hired as a result of this effort.

- On June 19, 2012, the annual MAYOR'S CUP GOLF TOURNAMENT was held at the Piedmont Driving Club. Through the AWDA Mayor's Youth Program, the proceeds raised by this annual tournament are awarded to graduates of the Atlanta Public Schools who have unmet needs for their post secondary education. The goals set forth for this year's tournament were met and surpassed. Over \$125,000 was raised to pay for books, tuition, fees or room and board for Atlanta's future leaders.
  
- Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) partners with AWDA to implement the CATALYST program aimed at employment readiness and employment assistance for AHA residents (\$250,000).
  
- AWDA provided training for 1215 taxi drivers during the program year.
  
- The Atlanta Prosperity Campaign (VITA Tax Assistance Program) offered at AWDA had the following results:
  - ✓ \$1,055,609 in total tax refunds
  - ✓ \$452,739 in Earned Income Credit