

Notes from Advocacy & Communication Workgroup Meeting #1 – June 11, 2012

Attending

- Richard Carson, Renaissance Consulting
- Jamal Awada, SER Metro
- Mary McDougall, Operation Able
- Anthony Thornton, Lighthouse
- Susie Schechter, Reading Works
- Rogelio Landin, Detroit Michigan Works!
- Susan Taylor, Detroit Public Library
- Naheed Huq, SEMCOG
- Karyn Goven, Detroit Learning Labs/ MSU Labs
- Ryan Michael Dinkgrave, Focus: HOPE
- Megan Wilbur, Focus: HOPE
- Sahem Elhady, ACCESS
- Tammy Coxen & Michael DiRamio, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

Introduction & Timeline

The Feb 9, 2012 event held at United Way kicked off the effort to build a Detroit jobs alliance focused on a collective action plan and policy agenda for creating pathways to employment and careers for Detroit residents. The effort focuses on community engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy and is principally focused on city- and region-wide systems change. The Detroit Regional Workforce Fund is incubating the Detroit jobs alliance effort, and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce is managing the effort. The Communication and Advocacy stakeholder group is one of five groups that emerged from the Feb 9th event. The rough timeline is to have 2-3 sessions for each of the five groups leading up to a series of coordinated action planning meetings in the late summer/early Fall and formation of a governance structure. In addition to identifying areas for coordinated action, the five stakeholder groups are also meant to be a forum for peer-to-peer learning and exchange of ideas and identification of areas for capacity building that would be helpful to participating organizations.

The Advocacy and Communication workgroup met to discuss opportunities for advocacy and communication efforts that could improve outcomes for Detroit residents. The group identified barriers faced by Detroit and Detroit residents, identified opportunities for policy change, and prioritized policy opportunity areas.

Summary of Discussion

Barriers

- Population-based challenges
 - Large pool of long-term unemployed
 - Low basic skills – both literacy/numeracy and job skills
 - Large population with criminal backgrounds
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental health
 - Disabled veterans

- Lack of business attraction incentives that would create employment opportunities in low-moderate skill jobs
- Structural jobs deficit
- Lack of transportation options
- Failure of P-20 educational system
- Quality of some service providers (such as for-profit colleges)
- Limited awareness and capacity of support service offerings
- Disconnect between employers and CBOs in terms of workforce need
- Federal/ state/ city policy that doesn't support coordination and idea of collective impact
- Digital Divide - access to technology/computers
- Bad reputation – city as a whole, and organizations within the city, such as MichiganWorks agency
- Lack of coordinated leadership and vision

Policy Opportunities

General

- Better integration of workforce development and economic development
- Develop business champions for workforce development who can provide vision, leadership, and advise
- Promote the concept that workforce development equals jobs through better marketing/outreach
- Partner with Department of Human Services – look to interagency opportunities to collaborate with workforce development and leverage declining welfare \$
- Encourage use of 211 as a vehicle to communicate and link residents to needed services, encourage CBOs/providers to be proactive in updating their information
- Need elected officials (local, state, federal) who are champions for Detroit workforce/career access
- Incorporate Global Supply Chain thinking into training programs

Returning Citizens

- Streamline criminal background expungement
- Develop a system that keeps driver responsibility fees from growing to unpayable levels
- Look to examples from NYC and DC for helping promote hiring of returning citizens
- Develop funding or strategies for bonding

Transportation

- Coordinate privatized solutions to transportation
- Grow mass transit infrastructure
- Agencies should think about geography when placing individuals in jobs, to ensure accessibility and success

Basic skills/ literacy

- Coordinate of literacy/ basic skills programs and curriculum
- Promote mindset/ culture change re. what is required to prepare for a career
- Grow computer access/ training – ask companies to donate old computers

Prioritizing Action Areas

Attendees were asked to indicate their 1 or 2 most critical issues/ opportunities for action. Three issues emerged as the most critical:

- Start a campaign focused on improving access to employment and career opportunities for the large population of low-skilled, ex-offender and otherwise disadvantaged residents in the city
- Coordinate public and private transit information and advocate for solutions to help residents access available jobs
- Promote the idea that workforce development equals jobs and engage business leaders to champion the importance of workforce development to the success of their business

Next Steps

- Group will meet again to further refine opportunities for action
- Several volunteers to host next meeting, confirmation will be sent out.