

Building a Detroit Jobs Alliance: “A Detroit Workforce United”

Meeting Summary

Feb 9, 2012

Hosted by the Detroit Regional Workforce Fund

@ The Office of the United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Detroit’s Work and Learning Opportunities – what’s working well, what isn’t, and what are the “game changing ideas” that could make a difference?

Attendees were given the opportunity to discuss and write down their individual perspectives on what is and isn’t working well, as well as game changing ideas. The tables below summarize those individual answers as turned into the worksheets and posted on the big blue “sticky wall.” Comments have been organized into the topical categories identified at the Feb 9th event, and around which stakeholder learning and action groups will be formed.

Workforce Service Delivery

What’s working well

Participants identified several things about workforce service delivery that were working well in the current model. They felt that there was a lot of demand for services, and that providers were knowledgeable, mission driven, and community focused. There were many comments about the system being demand driven, including gathering input from employers and business associations, using sectoral strategies, and focusing training on jobs that exist and have demand for new workers. In terms of training, several participants mentioned a strong focus on soft skills, while others mentioned professional skills development, industry specific training, and financial literacy coaching as areas where the system was succeeding. The Learning Labs were identified by name as a particularly effective program.

What isn’t working well

In almost all areas that some participants identified as strengths, other participants identified as weaknesses, although generally fewer identified it as a weakness than a strength. This included needing a better focus on businesses in order to understand what employers need, and communicating available resources more clearly to businesses. Service providers were encouraged to focus on retention rather than just placement. The lack of basic skills, literacy, and STEM skills in the target population was also identified as a weakness that needs to be addressed to allow the system to work.

Game changing ideas

Build Key Infrastructure:

- Regional access to transportation to get people to jobs
- Improved ACCESS TO MASS TRANSIT

Build a Continuum of Participant Support:

- Focus on low income, low education attainment individuals in earning their GED and H.S. diploma and create a career pathway that includes additional education and training (soft skills!) (high demand industries) and leads to sustainable employment
- Workforce development strategy for Center for Working Families
- Initiatives that address needs all along the spectrum – low skills – high skills
- New, small high school models (University prep, University High School) such as
 - 90% Graduation rate
 - 90% Post Secondary enrollment
 - 70% + continuation in post-secondary after 3-4 years
- Sharing workforce development best practices beyond the traditional partners. More info needs to reach traditional economic development agencies focused on Redevelopment.
- Transplant Training – use CBOs to train Workforce Development staff
- Frontline professional development and networking & resident support (eg. Career coaching)
- Corporate mentoring programs for single parent (head of household)
 - Community Billboards to advertise resources
 - Neighborhood or mobile service providers
 - Seminars and Networking events for lower-level job seekers
 - Job preparation workshops
 - Corporate mentoring programs

Rethink Employer Engagement:

- Networks – Employers; Prior to provide specific job training according to the need; improve transportation
- Identify employers in each growing cluster to collaborate with workforce agencies to provide honest feedback on system improvements. Employers need to believe in the product and benefits offered to increase hiring opportunities.
- Build Businesses (people) into all of the Workforce Development supply-siders initiatives

Community-based Job Creation

What's working well

[No comments were provided.]

What isn't working well

Respondents identified general difficulty with getting people jobs, with the wages and quality of jobs, and the need to focus on creating jobs within the neighborhoods.

Game changing ideas

Multi-pronged Approaches:

- Jumpstarting industries to create jobs rather than search for existing jobs – economic focus on supporting industries in Detroit
- Community Benefit Agreement – promotes employment opportunities for local residents
- Community Based – Job Creation for transition from unemployment to supervised employment to unsupervised employment (outside employer)
- Development of worker coops & a business service co-operative to expand scope of small community businesses
- Support connections with economic development initiatives and promote value and return on investment of community-based workforce assets

Data-driven Action

What's working well

[No comments were provided.]

What isn't working well

There were several comments, including an emphasis on better labor market information as well as better coordination of program-related data. Data is often hard to access, not connected across databases, leading to sense of duplication and inaccessibility to data that could help with planning and matching education and training with skills needs in the marketplace.

Game changing ideas

Improve Sharing of Current Data to Drive Creation of Pathways to Employment and Careers:

- Workforce development agencies should partner w/colleges & universities to receive labor market trends, etc. & create training programs to prepare citizens for current & future employment opportunities
- Career Pathways – based on current/real-time data & employer feedback; Communication & awareness along the continuum of service providers
- Regional Data System
 - Collect data on outcomes and people served
 - Share job openings, employment projections
 - Create real-time, web-based systems to distribute data
- Change funding to promote collaborating & collective impact; common data base w/real time access

Alignment & Collaboration

What's working well

Many participants indicated that they saw that alignment and collaboration between providers was beginning to improve. They specifically called out the elimination of silos, collaboration at multiple levels within the system, and the role that decreasing funding plays in driving partnerships to form. Pathways

& Sector Grants, NEI Initiatives, Earn & Learn, and Skillman – Good Neighbors were called out as good models of collaboration.

What isn't working well

However, there were also many specific examples of ways in which there are unclear or disconnected pathways to employment and careers. Providers were described as being territorial, and the system as both fragmented and duplicative. Factors mentioned included a lack of a common agenda across providers and differences between Detroit and the region. Funders were identified as contributing to the misalignment by making funding decisions on a project-by-project basis, rather than having a community-wide perspective. Another concern about funders was that each has different objectives, measurements, timeliness, policies, and priorities – but all want organizations to integrate and leverage funding streams, and that these two things were often incompatible. Some specific examples of lack of alignment included poor connections between the community colleges and Michigan Works agencies, the non-inclusion of community based organizations (CBOs) into community college partnerships, and a perception from CBOs that state/local WIA contractors don't want to work with CBOs because they view them as competition.

Game changing ideas

Focus on Collective Impact:

- Collaboration Buy-in w/out losing agency (or self) identity; mutual promotion (?) to prevent being swallowed by the lead
- Regional Solution – Transportation!!! Employer – Connect w/W.F.D.
- Alignment across funders (fed and depts./agencies, state, local, philanthropic, etc.) in terms of outcomes/measurements, funding integration/leverage, policies, goals, timelines, priorities, etc.
- Develop Collective Impact Strategy around Youth Workforce Development in the city & region
- Blend of public & private funding
- It'd be great if funders/policymakers had a community-level strategy for addressing unemployment of disadvantaged workers and then established and implemented funding priorities that moved this agenda forward (versus making funding decisions project by project and without community viewpoint).
- Engagement
- More involvement from non-traditional workforce orgs. & how to engage (eg. local procurement) a mix of orgs.
- Connect Community-Based efforts with Governmental Efforts
- Engage development of resource leveraging strategies between a variety of services – delivery sectors
- Incentive alignment & integration of workforce system stakeholders & initiatives
- Put more people in the room and hold people accountable for whom they're serving. Make folks hold true to what they say. Customer service should be an ongoing basic.
- One point of entry & using cloud to maintain a collaborative database
- Developing innovative solutions for jobs placement officers to work together collaboratively within & across organizations

- Connect Detroit efforts on advocacy to statewide coalition (Mich. League for Human Services) and to state (e.g., MEDC) conversations regarding practices/policy

Advocacy & Communications

What's working well

A couple of participants identified an increase in Federal support of the region as a positive, and a result of better collaboration.

What isn't working well

Participants felt that there was a lack of resources to meet demands, and that funders' expectations for outcomes in the current economy may be unrealistic. From a communications perspective, a few respondents identified the need to better communicate to job seekers and the community regarding available programs. In terms of specific programs identified for policy advocacy, one person indicated that TANF was too restrictive to be effective in moving people to self sufficiency. Another emphasized the need to shift from a "high tide floats all boats" perspective focusing only on high-tech opportunities, to a focus on making "low-tech" boats more "sea worthy" in order to achieve long term gains regarding family self sufficiency, less reliance on safety net (food, housing, healthcare), and more stability for next generation.

Game changing ideas

Promote effective policy and investment:

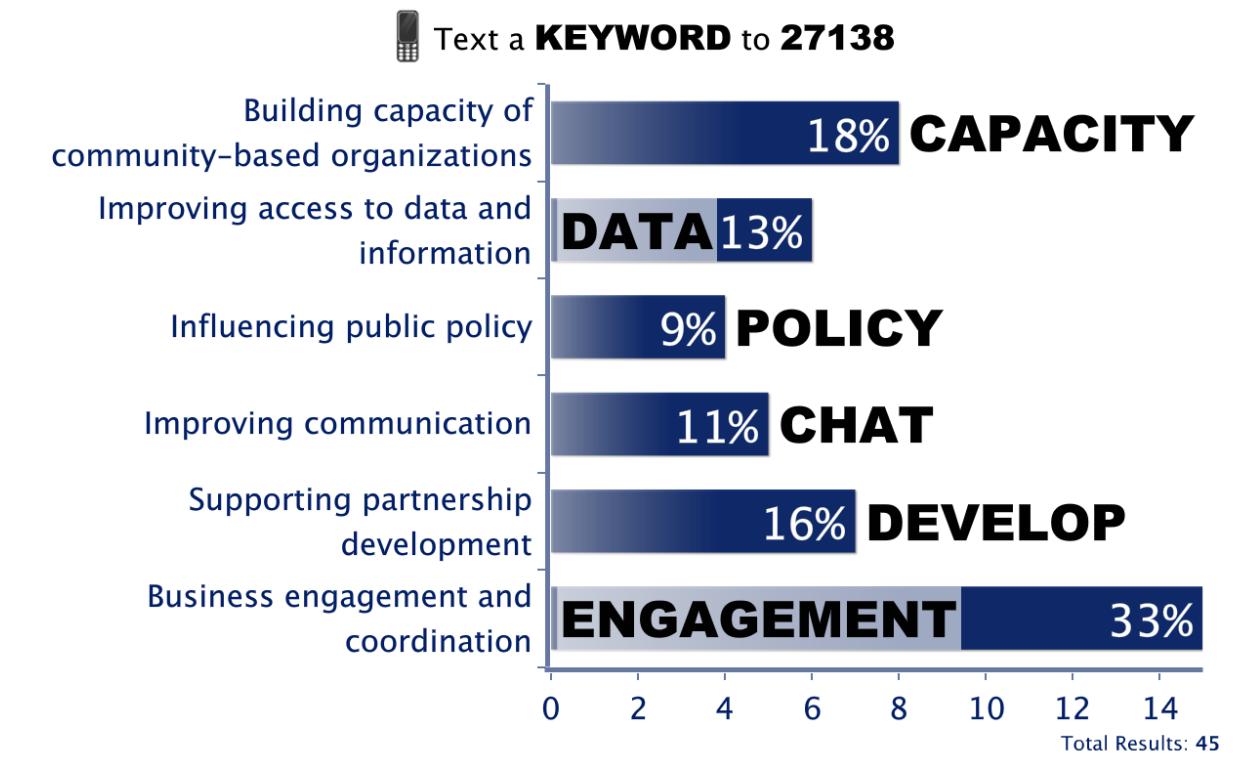
- Advocate for funding that provides incentives to collaborate
- Advocate for funding policies that incentivize uniting instead of dividing groups – Have a primer describing the players
- Get "power" leaders attention (business, industry, gov't, civic) with a good data-driven argument on the value of creating family sustaining careers because it will impact future reliance on safety net (food, housing, healthcare)

Communicate assets and opportunities in new ways:

- Engaging employers as champions for what we do (elevator pitch for workforce development, campaign)
- Develop a resource guide (local agencies) for job seekers and each other to determine who is out there and who is doing what in each region/community. Job seekers are not aware of all the services available.
- Develop Asset Map of Detroit WFD initiatives/programs and work to align & integrate them to increase efficiency & improve customer service

Towards the end of the event, participants were asked to rate the kinds of activities an alliance would coordinate. The results are below.

Creating an Alliance: What do You Value MOST?



Topical Group Sign Ups

Participants were invited to sign up for the five topical areas, including (in abbreviated form):

- (Promising Practices/Capacity) for Workforce Service Delivery
- Community-based Job Creation
- Data-driven Action
- Alignment & Coordination
- Advocacy & Communications