

Jobs and Economic Development September 8, 2015

The team brainstormed barriers to employment, jobs and economic development. These barriers were discussed in terms of barriers to employment and jobs for Zone 1 residents but the team acknowledged that the barriers apply throughout the community. The full list of barriers identified is listed on Exhibit 1. Team members participating in the September 8 discussion are listed in Exhibit 2.

The group also discussed that there are at least three distinct types of potential employees:

- Those who are long-term unemployed and may have specific personal barriers to employment that are outside the scope of this group (current drug use, violent felony convictions, mental and/or physical incapacity);
- Those who are employable but currently unemployed. They may or may not have personal barriers such as mental or physical limitations, need for caring of disabled family members, transportation limitations, non-violent criminal history, low educational attainment, etc.; and
- Those who are currently employed at low levels (working poor) who are trying to improve their situation and who could be more successful with training and education. These people are at risk of losing needed benefits if they receive a small increase in salary. Included within this group would also be citizens who are unemployed but could be employed if achievable barriers are addressed.

The group concluded that they would address barriers and solutions that would have the greatest impact on the working poor and employable unemployed.

After identifying barriers, the team discussed potential initiatives to address the barriers.

Initiative #1 – Locate Missouri Job Center satellite office in Zone 1.

City of Springfield Director of Workforce Development Mary Ann Rojas announced that this initiative was already under consideration. The team enthusiastically endorsed this measure, noting that the services offered by the Missouri Job Center would address many of the identified barriers.

18 Month Measure of Success: Satellite office location secured, office operational

Responsible Partners: Missouri Job Center, City Department of Workforce Development

Barriers addressed:

- 1 Education
- 2 Job Training
- 3 Work Readiness
- 4 Financial Literacy
- 5 Debt Burden from poor education funding choices (unaccredited schools)
- 6 Soft Skills - language, dress – “employability skills”
- 7 Access to quality advice - career advice, right questions to ask, mentors and role models from Zone 1
- 8 Employer assumptions/bias
- 9 Work ethic

- 10 High school/GED
- 11 "Closed" institutions (perception that job openings at institutions aren't accessible)
- 12 Basic literacy

Initiative #2 – Identify informal and formal Zone 1 leaders and engage these leaders as mentors.

The team recognizes that there are teams devoted to Civic Engagement and to Communication. The team identified the importance of positive role models and mentors as facilitators to seeking and obtaining quality jobs and economic development. We believe that the most successful mentoring will occur when the mentors / role models are neighbors to the mentees.

We know that at least one local church outside of Zone 1 provides job mentoring. It may be appropriate to ask this church or others in the faith community to help coordinate and staff this program. While a neighbor mentor may be the most desirable, this should not limit the engagement of potential mentors from outside of Zone 1. Another source for mentors would be the North Springfield Betterment Association.

18 Month Measure of Success: Develop mentor program, identify 10 mentors and pair them with at least 10 mentees.

Responsible Partners: Faith Community, Schweitzer UMC, North Springfield Betterment Association, Zone 1 business owners

Barriers addressed:

- 1 Work Readiness
- 2 Suitability of job opportunities
- 3 Soft Skills - language, dress – “employability skills”
- 4 Access to quality advice - career advice, right questions to ask, mentors and role models from Zone 1
- 5 Generational low expectations - “lack of hope”
- 6 Self motivation / Lack of confidence
- 7 Culture of dependency
- 8 Work ethic

Initiative #3 – Develop an apprenticeship program with area businesses.

Funding for job training is available through programs with Ozarks Technical Community College and Missouri Jobs Center. Typically, this training addresses specific work skills. There is a need for entry-level training opportunities that include addressing employability skills deficits and for more entry-level jobs in Zone 1. The team endorsed the idea of apprenticeship programs where low-skilled workers could gain valuable work and life skills that will prepare them for more responsible, higher-paying positions.

One barrier the team identified is that of criminal history. Many job applications include questions about an applicant’s criminal history. The group discussed whether they should endorse the “ban the box” movement which would remove all questions regarding criminal history. The group noted that this decision cannot always be made at the local level – many corporations dictate the format and content of job applications. The group also noted that there are different levels of severity of criminal history; for example, a 15-year old felony bad check conviction may be viewed differently by an employer than a recent violent felony conviction. The group also noted that the mere presence of the question on an

application can be a barrier to filing an application since some potential employees will be embarrassed or not want to disclose a prior conviction. The team concluded that it would not endorse an across-the-board “ban the box” initiative but that there is merit in encouraging a broader discussion of the level of acceptable criminal history when considering a potential employee. This apprenticeship program could provide an opportunity to test some leniency on past criminal history of prospective employees.

18 Month Measure of Success: Identify at least one business willing to implement an apprenticeship program for low-skilled workers in Zone 1. Work with the business to establish the program and solicit candidates for the program.

Responsible Partners: Business community, Ozarks Technical Community College, Missouri Job Center

Barriers addressed:

- 1 Job Training
- 2 Work Readiness
- 3 Suitability of job opportunities
- 4 Soft Skills - language, dress – “employability skills”
- 5 Criminal history
- 6 Work ethic
- 7 Employer assumptions/bias

Additional Discussion

The team identified the following barriers which are being discussed by other teams and decided not to duplicate those efforts:

Transportation
Adequate Housing

Health Care
Access to technology

In addition, the team recognized the efforts of the Every Child Promise and the "A+" childcare initiative and chose to remove **Child Care** from its list of barriers to consider.

The team also noted that the Springfield-Greene County Library System, Springfield Public Schools and Ozarks Technical Community College also make significant contributions to addressing several of the identified barriers including the following:

- 1 Education
- 2 Job Training
- 3 Work Readiness
- 4 Financial Literacy
- 5 Soft Skills - language, dress – “employability skills”
- 6 Access to quality advice - career advice, right questions to ask, mentors and role models from Zone 1
- 7 Work ethic
- 8 High school/GED
- 9 Access to technology
- 10 Basic literacy

Exhibit 1

Barriers to Jobs and Economic Development

- 1 Education
- 2 Transportation
- 3 Child Care
- 4 Job Training
- 5 Work Readiness
- 6 Suitability of job opportunities
- 7 Drug Testing
- 8 Financial Literacy
- 9 Debt Burden from poor education funding choices (unaccredited schools)
- 10 Soft Skills - language, dress – “employability skills”
- 11 Access to quality advice - career advice, right questions to ask, mentors and role models from Zone 1
- 12 Criminal history
- 13 Generational low expectations - “lack of hope”
- 14 Self motivation / Lack of confidence
- 15 Healthcare
- 16 Culture of dependency
- 17 Mental health
- 18 Adequate housing
- 19 Work ethic
- 20 Employer assumptions/bias
- 21 Limited consequences for not working
- 22 High school/GED
- 23 “Living wage”
- 24 Policy barriers - Federal and regulatory (working decreases benefits/ working doesn't offset cost of daycare)
- 25 “Closed” institutions (perception that job openings at institutions aren't accessible)
- 26 Intimidating job descriptions (jargon)
- 27 Access to technology
- 28 Basic literacy

Exhibit 2
Jobs and Economic Development Topic Team Participants
September 8, 2015

Stephanie Bryant, Co-Coach	Missouri State University
Mary Lilly Smith, Co-Coach	City of Springfield
Tracy Blaue	Consumer Credit Counseling Service
Melissa Bondy	Bass Pro Shops
Regina Greer Cooper	Springfield-Greene County Library
Bernie Dana	Evangel University
Mike Dawson	Springfield Public Schools
Gary Gibson	City Utilities of Springfield
Ginger Gooch	Husch Blackwell
Hal Higdon	Ozarks Technical Community College
Chris Jones	City Utilities of Springfield
Creed Jones	Tuthill
Brian Kincaid	Missouri State University
Allen Kunkel	Missouri State University
Traci Louvier	Tuthill
Ron Mersch	Olsson Associates
Scott Miller	City Utilities of Springfield
Ryan Mooney	Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
Pete Radecki	Neighborhood Advisory Council
Mary Ann Rojas	City of Springfield
Krissy Sinor	Edge Community Technical Center
Robin Sronce	Drury University
Joe Stokes	Consumer Credit Counseling Service
John Taylor	Drury University
Dennis Wiggins	City of Springfield