

# GOOD JOBS AND CAREERS

What Communities  
Need to do to Train  
and Move Low-Income,  
Low-Skilled People  
into Good Jobs  
and Careers



# Dear Colleague:

In the early 1990s, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) recognized the importance of addressing economic opportunity as a key component of a larger set of strategies needed to create family economic success for low-income families. Joblessness and lack of family sustaining income have devastating consequences, not only for families, but also for communities as a whole. Improving child outcomes clearly requires increasing the employment and earnings opportunities of low-skilled, low-income adults.

To address that challenge, the Casey Foundation embarked on the Jobs Initiative (JI), an eight-year effort in six cities to connect inner-city young men and women to family-supporting jobs in the regional economy and to improve the way urban labor market systems work for low-income, low-skilled workers. From the start, the Jobs Initiative emphasized jobs with career opportunities and promoting longer-term job retention for participants. It has stressed the importance of employers and job seekers as customers, focused on outcomes to track performance, and used data to promote accountability.

The work of the Jobs Initiative has resulted in a number of key findings:

- Basic supportive services increase the likelihood of successful job placement for low-skilled workers.
- “Job readiness” services are the most important factor relative to workers with limited skills or previous work experience achieving short-term employment retention (that is, a three-month job retention milestone).
- “Hard skills” training is the most important factor for achieving longer-term retention for such workers (that is, retention of 12 months or longer).
- Access to employer-subsidized benefits generates higher retention rates.
- Positive wage changes following initial placement are a strong predictor of long-term retention.

Along with the Jobs Initiative, AECF has joined with local public workforce systems to better serve low-skilled adults, and to test new workforce development approaches and models. Examples of our investments have included support for:

- Innovative industry sector-based training models
- Development of effective job readiness training curricula designed to achieve scale
- Employer-driven workforce intermediaries
- State-level advocacy based upon education and workforce data
- Increasing capacity of community colleges to increase skills of low-income working adults
- Linking workforce strategies to income and asset-building approaches that support family economic success
- Improved federal and state policies for good jobs and careers.

After ten years of these investments and partnerships, we have pulled together our lessons and experiences so that they might be helpful for communities trying to move large numbers of low-skilled workers into good jobs and careers.

The attached wheel and examples reflect “our take” on the key components necessary to implement a large-scale and successful workforce initiative. We believe that a community must start by assessing its own assets and existing programs and partnerships. Also, communities must develop strategies based upon data about employer needs, the regional economy, and the skill levels of its job seekers and incumbent workers. These assessments will guide a community in implementing the workforce strategies described in the attached material.

This document is intended as a guide in your work to promote workforce development. It should be used in conjunction with other rich resources, new tools and promising practices from the field.

Sincerely,

Bob Giloth  
Director, Family Economic Success  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

# GOOD JOBS AND CAREERS

## ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Workforce strategies must be adapted to serve individuals such as adults returning from incarceration, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees who may bring particular assets and barriers as they participate in workforce programs and reach for family economic success.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

An increasingly diverse workforce requires that cultural competence be an integral part of the public and private workforce systems. Cultural competence in workforce development means understanding and integrating the web of behaviors, attitudes and policies that foster effective work in cross-cultural situations.

## CAREER MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Career management services help low-wage workers on the journey toward family-sustaining jobs. These kinds of services include work supports, career planning, financial education, and asset building.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Formal and informal neighborhood-based supports help families move toward economic success by: 1) creating a pipeline of job-ready candidates; 2) referring neighborhood residents to workforce and social services; and 3) providing post-placement and career advancement supports.

## INDUSTRY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Low-skilled job seekers and workers are connected to good-paying, high-demand occupations with clear career paths through partnerships that provide employer-driven job readiness and skill training, and career planning and support services.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development and economic development are linked to achieve good outcomes for communities, employers and low-wage workers. Job-ready workers are essential to employers growing their businesses and local governments carrying out major public works projects.

## CIVIC WILL AND CAPACITY

Key stakeholders such as public officials, philanthropies, business, community leaders, and organized labor demonstrate the commitment, influence, and leadership needed to mobilize resources to produce better and more ambitious workforce results for low-skilled workers and job seekers.

## SOCIAL INVESTOR

Public and private funders provide clear goals and outcome measurements and flexible, long-term funding partnerships to support workforce strategies to achieve better results for employers and job seekers.

## DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY

Use of data is critical in three ways: 1) as a powerful tool to improve workforce policy; 2) to permit development of workforce strategies that reflect employer needs, regional economic opportunities, and skill levels of job seekers and incumbent workers; and 3) to support continuous program improvement and results.

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Two types of career advancement strategies help workers earn family sustaining wages: 1) pre-employment preparation, including education and skills training, to unemployed job seekers; and 2) upgrade training and career management for currently working low-income people trying to move up a career ladder.

## WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES

In order to better meet the needs of employers and low-skill workers, entrepreneurial partnerships integrate funding streams, bring together key service deliverers, and advocate for policy changes.

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## DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY

Data is critical to improving workforce outcomes in three ways. First, it can be a powerful tool to push policy to focus on improved workforce development outcomes (see example A). Second, communities need information about the economy, employers and jobs seekers to develop effective workforce strategies (see example B). And third, data is essential to measuring and improving program results (see example C).

### *A. Philadelphia Jobs Initiative (PJI)*

AECF has learned through its Kids Count effort that data can be used to focus policymakers on results and to push for more effective policies and programs. Gathering state-level workforce data around a policy agenda can be an important strategy for improving outcomes for low-income working families. The Philadelphia Jobs Initiative took on this challenge in Pennsylvania by publishing a map of state workforce expenditures and then a blueprint for a state-level report card. The state has since agreed to begin tracking expenditures tied to results and to issue reports with that data. In a larger effort, advocates participating in the Working Poor Families project are using data to improve policy outcomes for working families in 15 states.

### *B. Baltimore Health Care Coalition*

As with many regions around the country, Baltimore is experiencing a skills shortage in many high-demand health care occupations. A data-driven partnership of hospitals, foundations, public agencies, and community groups has formed to develop strategies to meet the needs of both employers and job seekers and underemployed community residents. The coalition has pulled together individual employer data, state-level health care projections, along with skill requirements and assessments of the basic skills of Baltimore residents, as the critical first step in designing effective health care workforce strategies.

### *C. Seattle Jobs Initiative*

In 1998, the Seattle Jobs Initiative's first round of job retention data showed disappointingly low numbers. The SJI took steps to "focus like a laser beam" on improving retention. First, it conducted a rigorous self-assessment to identify critical points in its service process where people were dropping out. It then renegotiated its contracts with community-based service providers to emphasize long-term job retention, and to connect payments to meeting retention targets. Finally, it invested in a collaborative process with its partner community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop clear standards for retention-focused case management, and training curricula to help CBO staff acquire the skills and knowledge needed to help clients keep their jobs.

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT MODELS

There are two distinct career advancement strategies for low-skilled workers. In the first, unemployed individuals receive skills training that leads to better jobs than their previous ones with opportunities for career advancement (see example A). The second approach helps underemployed or incumbent workers increase their skills so that they can move up into better jobs with career ladders (see example B).

### *A. Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI)*

In the late 1990s, when Seattle's economy was booming and demanding workers with basic office and computer skills, the Seattle Jobs Initiative created a program to advance low-skilled adults into good-paying jobs in the "office occupations" field. The SJI worked with employers to identify the skills they needed, and teamed with the Seattle Vocational Institute, a part of the community college system, to house the program. Upon meeting entry requirements for language, reading and math (about an 8th grade level), the trainees begin a 22-week full-time program with hard skills, soft skills and internship components. A SJI "industry representative" works with employers to identify internship sites and potential job openings and works with the community colleges to ensure that the curriculum reflects employers' needs. Each participant is assigned a case manager to assist in overcoming barriers. The case manager works with the participant from intake to as long as two years after job placement. Since its inception in 1997, the program has trained and placed more than 325 people in office occupations that provide medical coverage and pay an average hourly wage of \$10.44, representing an increase of 21 percent over the participants' pre-Jobs Initiative average wage of \$8.58. Job readiness, case management, employer-based curriculum and improvements in wage and health insurance help explain why participants achieved a one-year retention rate of 68 percent.

### *B. Philadelphia Jobs Initiative (PJI)*

Recognizing that the child care industry provides many employment opportunities but pays low wages, the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative has partnered with Allegheny Child Care Academy, Inc., a large inner-city child care firm, and the United Child Care Union to help low-skilled, entry-level child care workers advance. Several years ago PJI provided Casey Funds to supplement Project TEACH, a State of Pennsylvania scholarship program, to help incumbent workers get associates degrees, which are needed to advance to lead teacher positions. PJI worked with the company and union to develop a Learning and Support Center, which develops mentor teachers, provides team-building training for center leadership (both directors and union), and offers classroom teacher training. Fifty-five new teachers have been trained so far. The long-term goal for the center is to offer a Child Development Associate certificate that would bring higher wages, and move completers part way toward the two-year degree.

## WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES

### *Greater Cleveland Growth Association*

On the eve of welfare reform in 1997, the Greater Cleveland Growth Association (GCCGA), a regional chamber of commerce, teamed with local funders and business executives to form a workforce intermediary, known as the Jobs and Workforce Initiative (JWFI), to link employers with labor market stakeholders and resources. Research had shown that strong employer connections were key to helping emerging and incumbent workers find jobs with a future. With foundation support, the JWFI launched literacy and job training initiatives in several industry sectors, as well as a work-readiness program adapted from WorkLink in St. Louis. JWFI is developing closer relations with the public sector and works with the American Red Cross and with the local community college to structure other health care training programs, including a part-time, on-site LPN training program. Through JWFI-facilitated programs, more than 630 residents received work-readiness preparation and 121 participated in the health care training initiatives. As of December 2003, training programs supported through the JWFI had placed more than 1,200 people in jobs.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### *The Milwaukee Jobs Initiative and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP)*

The Milwaukee Jobs Initiative and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership believe that employer-driven skills training leads to family-supporting wages. It has become adept at partnering with the public and private sectors to leverage economic development resources. WRTP, for example, saw a \$7 billion investment by We Energies in the utility industry as an opportunity to leverage commitments and resources for diversifying the construction industry. Now it is developing a construction center of excellence to maximize community participation in a series of economic development initiatives over the next five years. The public, private, and philanthropic sectors have all committed new resources to the initiative, and the industry has committed to a 50 percent increase of women and people of color in apprenticeships. WRTP estimates that it will place 1,250 central city residents in family-sustaining jobs in the construction industry over the next five years, including one-third placed into apprenticeships.

## INDUSTRY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

### *San Francisco Works*

Even with the economy's recent fluctuations, stable and growth industries need semiskilled and skilled workers. While health care is experiencing national workforce shortages, individual regions have found a sharp demand in biotechnology, automotive services, IT, and manufacturing. In one example of linking non-traditional workers to high-demand occupations, SFWorks, an affiliate of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, leverages employer connections to create career opportunities in fields such as telecommunications, bioscience, and legal services. As of May, 2004, SFWorks has trained and placed approximately 350 people in jobs. SFWorks co-founded (with the Bar Association of San Francisco and Jewish Vocational Service) a legal services initiative that has placed more than 85 people in jobs at law firms with starting annual salaries between \$20,000 and \$28,000. The program has expanded to offer skills-upgrade training that prepares entry-level workers for increased responsibility, promotion, and wage growth.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

### *Better Family Life (BFL)/MET Center*

As part of the St. Louis Jobs Initiative, Better Family Life has partnered with the community college and public agencies to deliver comprehensive and integrated services including: assessment, basic skills, supports, job training, placement, and career development and pathways in an accessible and family-friendly location. The MET Center effort builds from BFL's WorkLink, a four-week program that helps former welfare recipients and others with little job experience to adjust successfully to work. BFL developed community and family support for new workers by sponsoring family orientation sessions, monthly alumni meetings to recognize achievements, and graduation ceremonies. Between the spring of 1998 to the end of 2003, BFL's WorkLink program placed 1,000 people in full-time jobs. The Met Center has set ambitious goals to place more than 500 people annually and to help them pursue a career pathway.

## CAREER MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Career management services help low-wage workers on the journey toward family-sustaining jobs. These kinds of services include work supports, career planning, financial education, and asset building. While no single project implements a full complement of services for a sustained period (funds are rarely available), several have implemented a full complement of services for a lengthy period.

### *Project Match*

For more than 20 years, Chicago's Project Match has helped welfare recipients — and other long-term unemployed populations — progress toward stable employment and increased income. Project Match counselors support this multi-year, back-and-forth process, through close relationships, help to find first, second, third and, in some cases, tenth jobs, and, in general, maintain a “do whatever is necessary” philosophy. A hallmark of the model is monthly tracking and rewards for both small gains (such as a two-month interval between jobs rather than four months) and big ones (such as long-term job retention).

### *Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI)*

The Seattle Jobs Initiative has developed a unique case management model that emphasizes long-term job retention. Services start at intake and continue through job placement and training, and up to two years after employment. Early in the project, the SJI's own data tracking showed that job retention varied depending on the capacity of particular community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver appropriate services. These services included willingness to work closely with employers, provide follow-up services to clients after they had started working, and ability to access the city's wide ranging services. As a result, the SJI sponsored a collaborative process among interested CBOs to increase their capacity and standardize and upgrade services.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

### *New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI)*

The New Orleans Jobs Initiative was organized by a coalition of prominent African-American business and community leaders to help low-income minority residents in New Orleans — especially those in public housing — develop better connections to jobs that pay a living wage and benefits. A “disconnect” had been exacerbated by two problems: hard-to-employ residents often lacked successful, working role models; and local employers often held negative stereotypes of low-income workers. To address those challenges, the NOJI partnered with regional employers and residents to develop the 21st Century Success Principles, a workplace curriculum and training module. Through these curriculum and training modules, low-income workers overcome social isolation, understand workplace culture, develop strong coping skills, and connect to networks of opportunity. Since 1998, more than 1,250 people have been trained in 21st Century Success Principles. On the demand side, the NOJI widely marketed the program's principles and its graduates to regional employers. Going forward, the training will be housed at the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans and will be made available to community organizations.

## ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

### *North Lawndale Employment Network*

The North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) was launched in 1999 to improve the earning potential and employment opportunities for this low-income Chicago neighborhood that includes many formerly incarcer-

ated people with few services to help them. In 2000, the neighborhood unemployment rate was 26 percent, compared with 6 percent citywide. NLEN launched U-Turn Permitted, which offers employment services to ex-offenders and family-centered re-entry support for returning inmates. NLEN works closely with employers to train and place U-Turn Permitted graduates into family-supporting jobs with benefits. NLEN is piloting the federally funded Going Home Program, a community-based re-entry model, and is urging that criminal justice and corrections departments provide greater family preparation and support. Since 2002, more than 145 participants in NLEN programs have been placed in jobs; in 2003, 561 people attended the U-Turn Permitted orientation, 270 enrolled, and 202 completed the program.

## CIVIC WILL AND CAPACITY

### *Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI)*

In the mid-1990s, then-Mayor Norman Rice decided that welfare reform represented an opportunity to advance low-income residents into jobs with good wages and benefits. Mayor Rice gathered support from stakeholders in key sectors and created a multi-million dollar "Career Investment Fund" to help support a Casey Jobs Initiative site in Seattle, which he integrated into the city's Economic Development Department. Seattle's commitment has continued. Mayor Rice's successors have supported the SJI and preserved the fund during fat and lean times. Although the SJI recently separated from city government to become an independent non-profit group, Seattle's financial commitment continues. Since 1996, the City of Seattle has invested more than \$10 million in the SJI. As of May 2004, the SJI had placed more than 3,900 people in jobs paying an average hourly starting wage of \$10.10 with 91 percent of these jobs providing employer-financed health benefits.

## SOCIAL INVESTOR

### *Boston SkillWorks*

Boston SkillWorks, formerly The Boston Workforce Development Initiative, is a unique enterprise of private and public funders (five local foundations, two national foundations, and the city and state government). They have forged an agenda for advancing the city's low-income residents into family-supporting jobs, have raised nearly \$15 million to implement that agenda, and have disbursed the funds through a unified, competitive grant-making process. Multi-year grants have been awarded to five sector-based workforce partnerships that include employers, community-based organizations and training providers. An additional grant has been awarded to a partnership dedicated to advocating for and reforming state policy. Boston SkillWorks' five-year plan envisions moving entry-level workers up the skills ladder to jobs that pay a living wage and offer benefits, while giving employers trained employees. Boston SkillWorks anticipates that, between 2004 and 2008, 900 participants will be placed in a job and 2,000 people will be promoted in their jobs as a result of the skills training and support services it provides.



## The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).