



Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System

WIOA Policy Work Group

1:30 – 3:30 PM, March 22, 2018

Annie E. Casey Foundation, 503 N Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Attendees: Erin Roth, Francine Trout, James Rzepkowski, Richard Reinhardt, Charles Hunt, Ellen Beattie, Jacqueline Turner, Kim Lightfoot, Lauren Gilwee, Lloyd Day, Matthew Jackson, Sara Muempfer, Wesley Wilson, Eric Collins, Jody Boone, Terry Gilleland, Mary Sloat, Sarah Sheppard, Bruce England, Michael DiGiacomo, Danielle Torrain, Maryam Abdul, Dejuan Patterson, Lamontre Randall, Kirsten Allen, Shawn Burnett, Imani Victoria Bryan, Dayvon Love, and Natalie Clements

Handouts:

- Agenda,
- WIOA State Plan Excerpt “Jobseeker Advisory Focus Groups”,
- Report: “Reshaping Workforce Development in Baltimore: Ensuing Community Voice and Expertise Guide Us”, and
- Executive Summary: “Reshaping Workforce Development in Baltimore: Ensuing Community Voice and Expertise Guide Us”

Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

- Each team member introduced themselves, briefly shared why and how they engaged in this project, and their subject matter expertise related to the participatory research project.
- Six of the seven consultants involved in the Annie E. Casey Foundation report, “[Reshaping Workforce Development in Baltimore: Ensuring Community Voice and Expertise Guide Us](#),” participated in the panel discussion, including Dejuan Patterson, Lamontre Randall, Kirsten Allen, Shawn Burnett, Imani Victoria Bryan, and Dayvon Love.
- Consultants were selected based on the following core competencies:
 - Demonstrated commitment to community empowerment and racial equity and inclusion;
 - Strong track record of grassroots organizing;
 - Capacity to represent and directly engage a diverse range of youth and young adult perspectives; and
 - Availability and willingness to commit to an intensive, five-month research process.

II. Project Introduction

- This project began with local grant programs’ focus on Baltimore City opportunity youth. 2015, USDOL awarded five million dollars to the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR).

- The grant was sub-contracted to Baltimore City’s Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED), creating the One Baltimore for Jobs (1B4J) program, following the death of Freddie Gray and uprising.
- Challenges dealt with youth recruitment and retention, capacity, and understanding the youth perspective.
- The “Reshaping Workforce Development in Baltimore: Ensuing Community Voice and Expertise Guide Us” research and report aimed to address these questions:
 - What strategies are most effective for reaching young people with the greatest barriers to employment?
 - What do young people need in order to stay engaged with training work opportunities once connected?
 - What would incentivize and support their engagement?
 - What careers do young people aspire to?
 - How does this compare to the range of opportunities available to them and what the market can bear? And what does this tell us about how we should think about the future of training design and delivery?
- May 2016, the concept and model was developed. MOED and other institutions were engaged around participant research models. Baltimore Civic Site made an investment into this project.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Baltimore Civic Site developed a team of community leaders, based on core competencies, to commit to a five month intensive research process.
- The research took place over 5-6 months, and the report was complete by December 2017. The research and report make up phase 1 of this project.
- The consultants are now in phase 2, a listening tour to get the information out to the different stakeholder tables. The consultants are sharing what they learned and the process they used.
- The findings and recommendations of this report are translatable across Maryland geographically, across sectors (e.g. education and healthcare), and across populations.

III. Team Presentations: Project Overview and Process

- The consultant team was made up of seven consultants of color. Each consultant provided a different perspective, making for a range of experience. Other consultants include Frontline Solutions, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the community.
- The project was intended to highlight and raise youth voices around workforce development in Baltimore City. In the consultants’ opinion, monetizing the consultants’ work shows how money can be invested into the communities.
- The research involved a unique style of community engagement, an intentional process to determine how, where, and who to research as well as what questions to ask. The hope is to transfer this process to employers, government, and all other stakeholders.
- The consultant team began by reading the available reports on workforce development to see how the community and their barriers are talked about and what research points are missing. Then the consultants conducted corner conversations (focus groups) with opportunity youth, ages 14 to 29.
- The consultant team went to Detroit to do a landscape analysis and analyzed the similarities and differences between Detroit and Baltimore City as it pertains to support for workforce development, particularly entrepreneurship.

- The scientific process influences how things are thought about. The process does not always account for environmental factors and cultural competency.
 - Research needs to take into account the space as questions are asked, the questions asked, and the researchers used. Researchers need a level of trust with their participants. Locations should be familiar to the community, a regular safe part of their lives.
 - The consultants often dressed-down for the interviews to support genuine conversation.
 - The subjects of studies are often seen as objects of other's thought experience. This work highlights that the researchers are part of the community that the study is about.
 - The traditional process often does not capture community voice but instead projects the researcher's view on the participants.
- This research project borrowed from different methods and paradigms to create its own framework. The study intentional collected data that is not traditionally collected by the workforce system, including data on youth that are unemployed and underemployed. The consultants engaged the youth in ways that are respectful to their experiences, in the places they feel safe in (e.g. one corner conversation took place in a sub shop).
- The consultants would stand on the street corner asking for participants and would gain about two participants for every 100 people approached.
- The corner conversations combined the informal comfort of honest community engagement with scientific rigor and reliable, reproducible outcomes. Every corner conversation explored themes of aspirations, resource landscapes, and vision for the transformation of Baltimore City.
- All seven consultants are African American, which enabled their research to engage the community, for the researchers were able to view the participants without a cultural disconnect.

IV. Q&A

- Individuals are often asked for information concerning their barriers and life experiences, but they are not compensated. These individuals should be recognized for their level of expertise, so they can brand themselves as consultants and connect to other resources (e.g. grassroots movements).
- Concerning Port Covington, the Center for Urban Families has a partnership with the Foundry.
 - Port Covington is a large project that will employ many local individuals (estimated around 25 thousand).
 - Humanim and Living Classrooms are helping to activate assets around hospitality training, creating a training track with certifications.

V. **Recommendations from the Report – Intersection with the *Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System***

- **Recommendation #1:** Provide wraparound services to mitigate the participation barriers young people face.
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #3:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to and use of life management skills and **Goal #4:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by eliminating barriers to employment.
 - Many young people that face barriers are forced to become adults at an early age. Workforce training should meet them where they are and collaborate with partners to remove their barriers.
- **Recommendation #2:** Make job opportunities, including training and placement resources, more visible through social media, at the library and on street signs.

- The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
- **Recommendation #3:** Invest in and use under-resourced community centers that are already reaching young people.
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
 - Many community centers have been closed; others are open but need investment to maintain that status. These centers are viewed as safe places in crime-riddled neighborhoods.
 - There is a gap in communication and information sharing between these centers and workforce development resources.
- **Recommendation #4:** Provide resources and information to mentors who are already working in communities.
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
 - Similar to recommendation #3, this recommendation deals with resources and people that are not on the traditional workforce development map.
 - There are mentors already working to fill gaps (e.g. mentor driving youth to after school activities, relieving the transportation barrier) with few resources. The simple solution would be to monetize/invest in the mentor, enhance their tools, or to create a business around what the mentor is doing.
- **Recommendation #5:** Support entrepreneurship
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
 - Throughout the research, the consultants shared that there was an expressed lack of employment opportunities. They shared that there is a pattern of young people, especially young people of color, feeling left out so creating their own opportunities through entrepreneurship.
 - Sales, leadership, and managerial skills can be obtained through entrepreneurship education. There is not much funding for such education. This type of education would also expose youth to different types of career paths.
 - In Detroit, the mayor established a public/private partnership to give loans and support to entrepreneurs. This partnership was developed due to the recognition that small businesses fill employment gaps.
- **Recommendation #6:** Create opportunities for young people to train or study and earn at the same time
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
 - Earn and learn models reduce the opportunity cost of engaging in the workforce development system, so individuals can focus on their studies.
- **Recommendation #7:** Ensure workforce development programs are designed to meet industry demands.
 - This recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #2:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to and use of skills and credentialing.
 - Maryland is becoming an information technology/cyber security leader in the nation. Workforce development programs should be developed and supported accordingly.

- Many individuals are suspicious of workforce development programs, for they do not always lead to job opportunities. Certificates are not always recognized by employers.
- Job opportunities and industries should be monitored for workforce demand before training is offered.
- **Recommendation #8:** Create and connect work opportunities for those with felony convictions and invest in advocacy efforts to change expungement policies and hiring practices.
 - The consultants shared that this recommendation relates to the *Benchmarks of Success*, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland’s workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment and **Goal #4:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland’s workforce system customers by eliminating barriers to employment.
 - There is a gap of understanding of the impact of the justice system on communities of color. Criminal records impede employment opportunities.
 - This issue requires meaningful legislative advocacy around expungement to remove some of the barriers.
 - Entrepreneurship is sometimes the only option for justice-involved individuals.
 - Two acts were passed recently on expungement, the Second Chance Act and the Justice Reinvestment Act. It is too early to have data on the effects of the Justice Reinvestment Act, but it is estimated that data will be available in 2020.
- **Recommendation #9:** Engage employers to improve perceptions of youth workers.
 - This recommendation relates to the Benchmarks of Success, **Goal #1:** Increase earning capacity of Maryland’s workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment.
 - This recommendation requires an open dialogue between employers and youth, for youth feel disrespected and no longer view institutions as safe places.
- **Recommendation #10:** Follow up on investments.
 - This recommendation relates to the Benchmarks of Success, **Goal #5:** Strengthen and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Maryland’s workforce system.
 - The community should be a walking billboard for workforce development programs that receive funding, but many individuals do not know that such programs exist.
 - Funders physically have to go to the community to assess impact. They can hire consultant, similar to the consultant for this report, to go to the community.
- **Recommendation #11:** Continue to solicit and follow up on feedback.
 - This recommendation relates to the Benchmarks of Success, **Goal #5:** Strengthen and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Maryland’s workforce system.
 - Consultants found that the community wants to be involved in the process. They want to know the results of the study and be involved in future dialogues.
 - The community individuals are the subject matter experts, and they should be involved in the solutions of their barriers.

VI. Q&A

- A Two-Generation (2gen) Approach describes a new approach to reducing poverty, which calls for connecting low-income families with early childhood education, job training and other tools to achieve financial stability and break the cycle of poverty — and recommends ways to help equip parents and children with what they need to thrive.
 - 2gen requires a look at literacy rates, a barrier to workforce development. Service providers should be intentional about wraparound services, e.g. tutoring help and health insurance; agencies cannot work in silos if the family is to be successful.

- 2gen examples include triaging for fatherhood/fathers in workforce development and dual/triple enrollment in WIOA programs. Youth are often supporting their household bills.
- Youth learn about different career paths (i.e. what an occupation looks like, expectations) from exposure.
 - This exposure should be intentional during outreach, including early introduction to career days, internships, and volunteer opportunities in high schools.
 - There is a model from Making Spaces of an impact hub. This model would allow for collaborations of spaces in schools to create apprenticeship opportunities and career pathways.
- In the consultants' opinion, there is a structural issue of how workforce development programs are conceptualized, with the framework of the employer as provider and community as consumer. This framework does not lend itself to those having an understanding of the landscape terrain of opportunities. The community is not just a recipient. Investment and decision-making in communities could bring in the correct employers that match the wants and needs of the youth. This would require a change in the business model and workforce development framework.
- Self-taught individuals are not given credence to approach employers with their skills. In the consultants' opinion, there needs to be a dialogue on self-taught versus certificates and connecting hobbies to employment.
- In the consultants' opinion, to create jobseeker advisory focus groups, the system must create a sustainable structure for the workforce development system to hear community voice. Thoughts from the consultants' include:
 - The structure should engage those individuals directly affected by the system and value their expertise (e.g. stipend). This model adds professionalism, character, and self-confidence.
 - After the Baltimore City uprising, police realized that they were not interacting with youth in positive ways. A consultant team was brought in and created a youth advisory board with the policy department.
 - Training the community to consult does take time, but it is essential to reaching the core of the disconnect problem.
 - Community advisory groups must have a real impact or source of power. Their contribution must go towards change, or there is no benefit/incentive for participation and no enhancement of the system. If there is no decision-making power, than these forums can do unintentional harm.
 - These groups will look and be structured differently according to the initiating organization and task of the group.
 - Jobseeker advisory focus groups require intentional recruiting to get the right people to the table, not just the people that the system is already comfortable with. This requires going to the community. If the group is set up well, then the organization should feel uncomfortable.
 - There should be more than one participant per area, for the needs differ by location.
 - Discerning a person's proximity to community is important to avoid creating gatekeepers of information to the community.
- The research found an expressed desire of youth wanting to give back to their community, i.e. create a business that hires local youth and lift them through employment.
 - In this way, supporting resources for entrepreneurship can help the larger community, rather than just the individual.
 - Youth inspired to give back because of memories of trusted mentors and other adults that helped them.
- In the consultants' opinion, at times, there is employer bias with hiring youth. The consultants recognized different approaches within the business community, depending on the size of the business. Small local businesses are more likely to hire local youth; however, they have limited capacity. Onboarding youth with barriers (e.g. low math skills) takes great resources for training, so businesses can only hire few youth.

VII. Discussion, Next Steps, and Closing Remarks

- There was not enough time for in-depth discussion, so the Policy Work Group leadership will disseminate a survey to the Policy Group members to identify the set of recommendations the Group may lift up from the discussion.
- In the Policy Group's report, which is one of the group's deliverables to the WIOA Alignment Group and Executive Steering Committee, there will be a discussion on how to set up the Jobseeker Advisory Councils cited in the WIOA State Plan. Recommendations will built on this meeting's discussion.
- The April meeting for the WIOA Policy Work Group will be rescheduled. A poll will be sent out to gauge members' availability in May or June.
- A survey will be sent to narrow down the scope of the WIOA Policy Work Group priorities for 2018.