

“Putting Youth to Work” Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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Overview

Kansas City faces the challenge of addressing barriers for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 2,000 teens are not attending school and not working, and around 7,000 young adults 18 to 24 with no high school diploma are also not attending school and not working¹. To address these barriers, the OneKC Regional Workforce Council and The Full Employment Council (FEC) work to bring multiple stakeholders together to create a comprehensive and effective youth service delivery system that meets the needs of young people and of the local economy. The OneKC Regional Workforce Council serves as a regional advisory body for the public workforce system. It strives to create a talent-development pipeline for business and economic development in the region, with a focus on advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, and healthcare².

FEC is a private, nonprofit organization that works to obtain public- and private-sector employment for unemployed and underemployed residents of the Greater Kansas City area³. FEC acts as the intermediary working in collaboration with business, local government, educational institutions, labor, and community-based organizations to serve both young people needing services and supports to transition into and be successful in the labor market as well as employers looking to meet their business needs.

Major Accomplishments

Workforce Development

To address the needs of Kansas City’s out-of-school, at-risk and vulnerable youth populations, the FEC has developed a comprehensive youth services program called YO! TEEMS: Training, Employment, Education, Mentoring and Support Services. The training component offers on-the-job training, internships, and classes at vocational schools, community colleges and other educational institutions for young people. There is also an opportunity to receive pre-apprenticeship training in the labor trades. Employment services range from on-line job listings, resume development, career and labor market information, and computer access for job research, to more hands-on services such as job referrals, career planning and work readiness preparation, work experiences, internships and summer employ-

ment, and job placement. YO! TEEMS also offers access to receiving G.E.D. programming, high school diploma or tuition assistance at area vocational schools, community colleges and other educational institutions as part of the educational component of the program. Mentoring opportunities include learning from peers, observing professionals in specific career fields and working on community service assignments. The program’s mentoring component also provides an opportunity to connect with individuals who can help youth develop a career. Finally, YO! TEEMS offers support services such as access to assistance and resources to help with work tools, clothing for work, training supplies, childcare, housing and transportation⁴.

Education

Substantial responsibility for drop out recovery lies with the Kansas City school system, which has built partnerships across systems and sectors to strengthen its efforts. One example of a partnership with the workforce system is hiring of a full-time staff person to be stationed at the One-Stop MO Center. This staff person has access to school systems records and support programs and is responsible for connecting dropouts to the most appropriate educational option⁵.

In addition to recovery efforts, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, whose membership includes more than 80 CEOs from the region’s largest companies partnered with the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation to create the Partnership for Region Educational Preparation-Kansas City (PREP-KC)⁶. PREP-KC works with the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools and the Kansas City Missouri School District to develop, leverage and deploy resources to improve outcomes for all KC youth. In particular, PREP-KC’s goal is to increase college going and access to high-quality employment for more than 47,000—mostly low-income students—served by the two districts⁷. The initiative launched in 2005 as a proactive strategy for supporting Kansas City’s urban districts in building sustainable capacity to improve educational outcomes and develop a pipeline of well-prepared young people to foster improved civic life and workforce development⁸.

PREP-KC invests in the three strategies—small learning communities, family advocacy, and academic rigor and works—with school district partners to measure results. The three strategies have been shown to improve academic outcomes, improve graduation rates, and better prepare students for college & careers⁹.

PREP-KC also invests in strategies designed to: create a pipeline of well-prepared urban teachers/leaders; support urban districts in growing their own current and future leaders; and enhance collaboration between high school and postsecondary institutions designed to support curriculum alignment that will prepare all students to continue their education after high school and to be competitive for high-quality employment¹⁰.

Kansas City also has a strong focus on postsecondary success and offers its young people access to Metropolitan Community College (MCC), which operates five colleges in Missouri. MCC colleges offer nearly 70 career and transfer programs that cover the first two years of a four-year degree. MCC colleges also offer numerous career and certificate programs that prepare students to enter the job market in high-demand careers.

Employer Engagement

The Full Employment Council works diligently to engage employers as partners to provide opportunities for young people to gain the skills and training necessary to be successful in the workforce. As an example, FEC partners with The Manufacturing Institute’s Alliance for Innovation in Manufacturing - K.C. (AIM-KC) to implement the [Dream It! Do It! campaign](#). The campaign seeks to provide tools and resources for young adults to help them identify what they are passionate about and then utilize this information to find a fulfilling career in manufacturing. It also seeks to create an awareness of the broad range of highly paid, interesting careers offered in manufacturing¹¹.

AIM-KC published a report entitled; [BRIDGING THE GAP: Keeping KC Manufacturers Competitive](#) , which addresses the area's education and training goals related to manufacturing. It comprises the results of a survey of area manufacturers, an inventory of education and training programs, and an assessment of the industry's workforce needs. This report specifically targets the primary workforce issues facing KC-area manufacturers¹².

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¹ Kids Count 2007 Data, the Annie E. Casey Foundation Web site, <http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx>.

² Full Employment Center Web site, <http://www.feckc.org/home.html>.

³ Full Employment Center Web site, <http://www.feckc.org/home.html>.

⁴ Full Employment Center Web site, <http://www.feckc.org/home.html>.

⁵ CCRY Network Web site <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/?q=node/65>.

⁶ PREP-KC Web site <http://www.prepkc.org/>.

⁷ PREP-KC Web site <http://www.prepkc.org/>.

⁸ PREP-KC Web site <http://www.prepkc.org/>.

⁹ PREP-KC Web site <http://www.prepkc.org/>.

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¹² CCRY Network Web site <http://www.ccrynetwork.org/?q=node/65>.