

National
League
of Cities



Institute for
Youth, Education,
and Families



transitional jobs

A WORKFORCE STRATEGY
FOR CITIES



A Report on the Transitional Jobs Project
*funded by the Joyce Foundation and
the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's website, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs.

To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or leave a message on the YEF Institute's information line at 202/626-3014.

Copyright© 2006
National League of Cities
Washington, D.C. 20004

Printing of this report was made possible in part by the generous support of the National Transitional Jobs Network — hosted by Heartland Alliance — and the Annie E. Casey and Joyce Foundations.



National
League
of Cities



Institute for
Youth, Education,
and Families



transitional jobs

A WORKFORCE STRATEGY FOR CITIES



A Report on the Transitional Jobs Project
*funded by the Joyce Foundation and
the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*

JULIE BOSLAND *and* ABBY HUGHES HOLSCLOW

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
City Stories	7
Baltimore, Maryland	9
Detroit, Michigan	15
Fort Wayne, Indiana	19
Jackson, Mississippi	25
San Antonio, Texas	29
Syracuse, New York	35
Virginia Beach, Virginia	41
Waco, Texas	47
Winston-Salem, North Carolina	53
Lessons Learned	59
Appendices	69
City Contacts	71
Collaborating Organizations	72

Acknowledgements

The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) would like to thank the many individuals and organizations whose support and participation made this technical assistance project a success. In addition, we are grateful to those who helped prepare this report to share the lessons from this project with other cities across the nation.

YEF Institute staff are indebted to Annette Case formerly of the Transitional Jobs Network; Tiana Wertheim of the Transitional Jobs Network; Steve Savner of the Center for Community Change; Elise Richer of the Center for Law and Social Policy; and Richard Greenwald, Jim Klasen, and Lili Elkins of the Transitional Work Corporation, as well as independent consultant Andrew Moore, for their close collaboration in providing direct technical assistance to selected sites. The time, resources, and expertise they contributed to this project were invaluable.

We also recognize the contributions of the many existing transitional jobs programs around the country that were willing to share their experiences with project participants, such as Heartland Alliance in Chicago, Ill.; Lifetrack Resources in St. Paul, Minn.; the Center for Employment Opportunities in New York, N.Y.; Community Jobs in Washington State, and Pioneer Human Services in Seattle, Wash., among others.

We acknowledge the mayoral leadership from each of the ten participating cities: Mayor Martin O'Malley in Baltimore, Md.; Mayor

Kwame M. Kilpatrick in Detroit, Mich.; Mayor Graham A. Richard in Fort Wayne, Ind.; former Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr. in Jackson, Miss.; Mayor Irma Anderson in Richmond, Calif.; former Mayor Edward Garza in San Antonio, Texas; Mayor Matthew J. Driscoll in Syracuse, N.Y.; Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf in Virginia Beach, Va.; former Mayor Linda Ethridge in Waco, Texas; and Mayor Allen Joines in Winton-Salem, N.C. We applaud their support and leadership for the development of new paths to employment for individuals with barriers to work.

We especially thank the public servants in each city who convened community teams and led the planning and implementation process: Karen Sitnick in Baltimore; Jennifer Davis formerly in Detroit, now of Goodwill Industries in Rockville, Md.; Anthony Hudson in Fort Wayne; Michael Raff in Jackson; Illona McGriff in Richmond; Dennis Campa and Lynn Stewart in San Antonio; JoAnn Coria in Syracuse; Barbara Brinson and Steve Cannizzaro in Virginia Beach; Bert Lumbreras in Waco; and Linda Jackson-Barnes and Mary Anne Forehand in Winston Salem. These leaders and their partners carried out the hard work that yielded so many improvements in the employment services available to residents of their communities.

Abby Hughes Holsclaw and Julie Bosland, the current and former YEF Institute program directors for early childhood and family economic success, coordinated this project on a day-to-day basis and served as

primary authors of this report. Stephanie Pierce on the YEF Institute staff also provided significant assistance with research and editing, and Susan Gamble was responsible for design and layout.

Clifford M. Johnson, executive director of NLC's YEF Institute, provided overall direction for this project, expertise in the transitional jobs model, and editorial

assistance throughout the preparation of this publication.

The YEF Institute would also like to thank the Joyce Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for their generous support, which allowed the YEF Institute and its partners to share the transitional jobs model with the participating cities and, through this report, with our broader membership.

Introduction

Mayors and city councilmembers understand that a healthy economy yields a stronger community and a more productive, engaged citizenry. However, approximately 60 percent of city officials say that unemployment is a problem in their city, according to the National League of Cities' *State of America's Cities 2004 Survey*.

Although responsibility for coordinating workforce development efforts typically lies outside of municipal government, city officials can be important leaders and partners in helping residents move toward economic success. NLC's 2004 research report entitled *Strengthening Families in America's Cities: Family Economic Security* highlighted that cities and towns are already engaged in a range of workforce development strategies, with an emphasis on job training and education.

The transitional jobs (TJ) model offers cities a much-needed framework for effectively serving those with significant barriers to employment. TJ programs provide time-limited, wage-paying jobs – typically in public and nonprofit agencies – combined with skill development activities and related support services.

At the end of the transitional employment placement, participants are much more likely to be hired and retained in unsubsidized jobs. In fact, studies have shown that these

programs typically place 50-75 percent of participants in unsubsidized employment within six to nine months of enrollment, a rate that is approximately one-third higher than less-intensive programs serving individuals with multiple barriers to work.¹

The resulting benefits are three-fold:

1. *Families are stronger.* Transitional jobs help set hard-to-employ individuals on a promising career path to which they otherwise might not have had access. Not only does steady employment have a tremendous impact on the financial status and self-respect of the individuals who are working, but it also has a host of positive benefits for their children and other family members.
2. *Municipal budgets are stronger.* As new workers spend their paychecks in the community, city budgets benefit from the additional tax revenue. In addition, as more residents find stable employment, demand for emergency services and other public benefits declines.
3. *Communities are stronger.* Fully utilizing a community's human capital boosts economic development, and stable workers can strengthen the neighborhoods in which they live. Targeted programs – such as those focused on former offenders or substance abusers – can also reduce crime rates over time. Finally, transitional

¹ Clifford Johnson and Lana Kim, *Washington State's Community Jobs Initiative* (Washington, D.C., Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, September 1999).

jobs are generally set in government or nonprofit settings, allowing participants to contribute to important community services.

What are Transitional Jobs?

Transitional jobs are short-term, publicly subsidized jobs that combine real work, skill development, and support services to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment. Since 1997, more than 35 cities and four states – Washington, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Minnesota – have established over 200 TJ programs in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the country.

TJ programs typically target individuals with more significant barriers to employment for whom less intensive job readiness and job search programs are insufficient. Some categories of individuals served by existing TJ programs include: long-term welfare recipients, at-risk youth, refugees/immigrants, former offenders, substance abusers, and homeless individuals.

Participants in TJ programs work between 20 and 35 hours per week. Because transitional jobs are publicly-funded, they are typically set in government or nonprofit settings, allowing participants to provide essential services that benefit the community while gaining the work experience, skills, and references necessary to get hired into an unsubsidized job.

Workers earn a wage – not a benefit – of between \$5.15 and \$8.00 per hour. For those who had previously been receiving welfare checks, this distinction helps instill a sense of pride in their work. It also allows participants to pay into Social Security and the unemployment system, and makes them eligible for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (up to approximately \$4,500 a year).

TJ programs supplement this meaningful work experience with opportunities to develop hard skills (e.g., GED classes,

computer training, vocational skills, etc.) and soft skills (e.g., job readiness, anger management, communication skills, etc.) critical to employment. In addition, TJ programs have staff members who can help each TJ worker get the supports they need to address barriers to work such as mental health issues, language or literacy barriers, or difficulty finding appropriate childcare or reliable transportation. These members of the staff often act as a liaison with the temporary employer as well to ensure that each worker is succeeding in his or her placement.

Participants remain in the program anywhere from three months to a year, and the majority of participants go on to find unsubsidized employment. Time-limited participation allows workers to gain skills and experience, while keeping the emphasis on the ultimate goal of transitioning into a permanent, unsubsidized job.

These programs are typically funded through a combination of public and philanthropic investments. Some of the key federal sources that programs have utilized to launch TJ programs include: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Community Service Block Grants (CSBG), Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET), Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative (SVORI), and HOPE VI Public Housing funding. To reduce their dependence on outside funding, some programs provide transitional work experiences as part of work crews or a social enterprise in which they provide products and services for a fee.

Roles for Municipal Leaders

Mayors and city councilmembers have an opportunity to use their leadership positions to promote transitional jobs as a successful employment strategy for local residents who are currently struggling to find and keep

jobs. As visible, respected leaders of the community, municipal leaders can:

- **Convene stakeholders and partners** to assess community needs, identify target populations, survey existing support programs, and design an employment program that meets the needs of the community.
- **Lead city action** to design, support, and implement an employment strategy that elevates the needs of a population facing significant barriers.
- **Build public will** among community residents by highlighting the importance of fully integrating the targeted population into the workforce, and the expected benefits for local employers and the community as a whole.
- **Help programs find resources** by providing grantwriting assistance, letters of support, or matching funds to bolster grant applications; investing city dollars; or helping to identify county, state, or federal funds that may be appropriate for a transitional jobs program.
- **Engage the business community** by encouraging employers to provide permanent employment positions for TJ participants, provide input on the skills and supports their employees most need, and reach out to other employers who might be willing to do the same.
- **Advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and federal level** to ensure that workforce support services, training and educational programs, and employment programs are fully funded and adequate to meet the needs of the community.

Project Overview

With the creation of the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) in 2000, the National League of Cities (NLC)

strengthened its capacity to assist municipal leaders in their efforts to help families achieve economic success. One component of this work focuses on municipal strategies to strengthen the overall job readiness of individuals with barriers to employment. As a part of this effort, the YEF Institute launched the two-year Transitional Jobs Project in April 2002 with financial support from the Joyce Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The Transitional Jobs Project (TJ Project) set out to assist municipal leaders in establishing high-quality transitional jobs programs to help hard-to-employ residents obtain steady employment. The following ten cities were selected through a competitive process:

- Baltimore, Maryland
- Detroit, Michigan
- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Jackson, Mississippi
- Richmond, California
- San Antonio, Texas
- Syracuse, New York
- Virginia Beach, Virginia
- Waco, Texas
- Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Following their selection, YEF Institute staff worked closely with team leaders to set a vision for the project and ensure that each team's composition reflected the full range of key community stakeholders, including municipal leaders, representatives of the workforce development system, community and faith leaders, business executives, and other civic leaders. Furthermore, staff helped each community identify and answer key questions for consideration in designing a TJ program, including topics such as program administration, target population, financing, and evaluation.

The ten project cities made impressive strides toward designing and, in some cases, implementing a transitional jobs program in their respective communities within the 24-month project timeframe. The next section of this report highlights the experiences of nine of these cities during the TJ Project. Due to significant budget constraints and staff turnover, the City of Richmond, Calif., withdrew from the project after the first year

and therefore they are not included in the city summaries that follow.

The final section of the report contains a series of lessons learned derived from the city stories. These lessons are relevant for mayors and councilmembers nationwide who are interested in exploring transitional jobs as a workforce strategy in their community.

Project Activities

The YEF Institute sought to provide the ten cities participating in the TJ Project with advice on TJ program development in the context of relevant local and federal policies. In selecting cities, staff and national experts looked for a strong commitment from the mayor or sponsoring city councilmember to support and sustain the project. The YEF Institute also sought diversity among the cities selected to participate (e.g., by region, size, and target population) to better inform the lessons learned that would be shared with the broader NLC membership. Project activities included:

- **Regular Communications and Resource Information**

The YEF Institute and its partners helped each city develop a work plan for the project and provided site-specific memoranda. YEF Institute staff and technical assistance partners also hosted regular calls with team leaders to discuss progress, next steps, and issues on which they felt assistance would be useful. In addition to

these focused exchanges, the YEF Institute hosted a number of conference calls for all team leaders on topics such as business engagement, exploration of specific federal funding streams, and data collection and evaluation to provide timely information, while also enabling the cities to receive updates and feedback from each other and from national experts.

- **Site Visits**

During the first year of the project, each city received on-site guidance from YEF Institute staff and a technical assistance partner. These visits were designed in close collaboration with local team leads to ensure that the activities would best meet local needs, from engaging key stakeholders to pinpointing opportunities and building momentum for action. Some visits included such activities as employer breakfasts to engage the business community, conversations with mayors and other city leaders, city council briefings, facilitated team discussions, an

in-depth assessment of how to utilize local resources, and meetings with potential employers and community-based organizations.

● **Cross-Site Meetings**

At the end of the first year, the YEF Institute convened each of the ten participating cities to discuss their progress, challenges, and plans for action. Held in January 2003 in Philadelphia, Pa., this cross-site meeting brought at least three team members from each city together with national experts, existing TJ programs, and most important, other TJ Project participants to grapple with a range of issues, such as competing program design models, roles for municipal leaders, strategic employer partnerships, and financing options.

Two other gatherings for team leaders served as bookends for the project. The first, held in conjunction with the National Transitional Jobs Network's conference in April 2002, allowed team leaders to immerse themselves in the transitional jobs model, meet with national experts and leaders from existing TJ programs, and meet one another. The second, held in April 2004 in Portland, Ore., as part of the YEF Institute's Your City's Families Conference, allowed team leaders to reflect on their respective projects, discuss their collective successes and challenges, and plan for their ongoing activities after the end of the project.

A subset of the participating cities also had the opportunity to attend a summit on TJ programs to serve the ex-offender population in Baltimore, Md., in 2002. In addition, several city teams attended a special conference in January 2004, co-

hosted by the National Transitional Jobs Network, the National H.I.R.E. Network, and NLC, focused on transitional jobs for former offenders and individuals struggling with substance abuse.

● **Access to National and Local Experts**

The YEF Institute secured partnerships with the Center for Law and Social Policy, the Transitional Jobs Network, and the Transitional Work Corporation at the outset of the project to ensure that cities had direct access to national and local experts in the areas of transitional employment, workforce development, TANF policy, and support services for "hard-to-serve" populations.

In addition to the expertise provided by YEF Institute staff and technical assistance partners, participants benefited from connections to existing transitional jobs programs across the country. These connections – by phone, through conferences, or through in-person site visits – yielded best practices and innovative strategies tailored to the particular design choices and target populations each city chose to pursue.

● **Research and Publications**

Based on the applications of the cities participating in the TJ project, it was clear that while there was certainly interest in the TJ model, many municipal officials were seeking assistance finding sufficient public resources to fund such a program. As a result, the YEF Institute commissioned *Financing Transitional Jobs Programs: A Strategic Guide to Federal Funding Sources*, which was published in 2003. This comprehensive guide combines advice on overall funding strategies, maps

out which funding streams are most appropriate for specific target populations, and concludes with a listing of all federal resources that may be used to fund all or part of a TJ program, with specific eligibility information and funding limitations for each.

Drawing upon the experiences of existing transitional jobs programs, technical assistance partners, and other resources, staff also wrote a white paper on specific programs serving the ex-offender population.

● **Local and National Visibility**

The YEF Institute elevated experiences and goals of the participating cities by getting the word out to local and national media. To increase national visibility and recognition, NLC staff also highlighted these ten cities' efforts in the *Nation's Cities Weekly*, NLC's newspaper with a circulation of 30,000, and on NLC's website. Additionally, the YEF Institute invited city representatives to highlight their own accomplishments at national conferences such as NLC's annual Congress of Cities.

City Stories



Building Partnerships to Serve Former Offenders in Baltimore, Maryland

With approximately 9,000 former offenders returning to Baltimore annually, Mayor Martin O'Malley bolstered his top priority – public safety – by helping former offenders re-enter the workforce.

With public safety as his top priority, Mayor Martin O'Malley saw the TJ model as an important opportunity to reduce recidivism among former offenders. Under his leadership, the City of Baltimore worked collaboratively with a diverse group of community partners to create a TJ program for former offenders as they re-enter the city's workforce.

Of the 15,000 men and women leaving Maryland's prisons each year, almost 9,000 return to Baltimore. Most employers, however, are hesitant to hire individuals with criminal records, leaving unemployment rates for former offenders in the city at or above 50 percent. Problems such as inadequately treated addictions and unstable housing arrangements exacerbate these employment problems. As a result, approximately half of released offenders in the city are re-incarcerated or placed under supervi-

sion for a new offense or parole/probation violation – a figure 25 percent above the national average.

NLC's TJ Project provided Baltimore with an opportunity to build upon the city's existing transitional jobs programs serving welfare recipients and youth, while using national expertise from NLC and its partners to address the significant and complex challenges of their new undertaking.

Commitment to the Transitional Jobs Model

Starting in the fall of 2001, the Open Society Institute-Baltimore – an initiative of the Soros Foundation focusing on critical urban issues – convened several meetings to determine how to help former offenders find and keep steady employment. A clear consensus emerged among those participating in these conversa-



Baltimore, MD

Home of the Baltimore Orioles and famous for its Chesapeake Bay crabcakes, Baltimore, MD, attracts 11 million business and leisure visitors every year. The City of Baltimore has worked hard on a number of downtown revitalization projects and has turned the beautiful Inner Harbor area into a hot spot for locals and tourists alike. Under the leadership of Mayor Martin O’Malley, the city has witnessed a 40% drop in violent crime since 1999.

Population	651,154
	(2000 Census)
% White	31.0%
% Black	63.8%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	1.6%
% American Indian	0.3%
% Other	0.2%
% Multiracial	1.4%
% Hispanic/Latino	1.7%
Median Household Income	\$30,078
Unemployment Rate	10.7%

tions that former offenders would have the best chance for success with a strategy that provides time-limited employment in a supervised and supportive environment.

The selection of this model was bolstered by the fact that the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) was already operating successful TJ programs for individuals moving from welfare to work (through the Work Matters program) and disadvantaged youth (through the Youth Opportunities program, or YO!).

- *Work Matters*: Under a contract with the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, MOED places up to 500 participants in transitional jobs. Participants begin with a 90-hour job readiness/barrier removal workshop. After successful completion, participants work for 25 hours per week and earn \$6.10 per hour for three months. Work sites for this existing program include hotels, law firms, daycare centers, state and city offices, and community based organizations. The program has been successful and average wages in unsubsidized jobs are close to \$8.00.
- *YO!*: Baltimore also supports the Youth Opportunities (YO!) internship program as part of a larger Department of Labor funded initiative to provide academic, career, and personal development services to youth residing in Baltimore’s Empowerment Zone. During the internships, youth in the program work four days per week and participate in weekly retention seminars. Following their internships, one-third of interns are hired at their worksites, and many others go into education or skills training courses.

While these programs demonstrated the success of the model and provided some design ideas, the team recognized that a new program would need to be tailored to the special needs of their target population: former offenders.

Developing a Shared Vision

To develop the city’s transitional jobs program for former offenders, a consortium of more than 20 organizations involved in workforce development and criminal justice – including city and state agencies, private foundations, and social service organizations – spent 18 months exploring existing TJ programs in the city and around the country and developing a plan for Baltimore.

The Baltimore TJ team’s mission was fourfold:

1. *Improve Public Safety:* Reduce the city’s recidivism rate and decrease the number of arrests of program participants.
2. *Save Money:* Generate a positive “social return on investment” as measured in state savings to offset the cost of incarceration.

3. *Work Efficiently and Collaboratively:* Coordinate and partner with other workforce development programs and agencies.
4. *Improve Outcomes for Former Offenders:* Create a supportive environment that would facilitate a successful transition from prison to work.

Despite the involvement of a highly knowledgeable and committed set of partners, the group encountered some challenges reaching consensus, in part due to the large number of organizations involved. Under the guidance of the group’s steering committee – including representatives from MOED, the Abell Foundation, Open Society Institute-Baltimore, the Job Opportunities Task Force, and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – the full team was able to work through these challenges to create a framework that could guide implementation.



“Transitional work is a powerful programmatic component for our re-entry program for two reasons: First, the promise of immediate work motivates offenders to participate in job readiness and life skills training prior to transitioning back to the community. This training that teaches the theory of work and employer expectations along with practical skills serves as the foundation for successful future employment. Secondly, the temporary nature of a transitional job gives the ex-offender an opportunity to apply the newly acquired workplace skills and affirms that they can achieve success. For the employer, transitional work affords an opportunity for them to make a good hiring decision.”

— Karen A. Pearson, Vice President, Workforce Development, Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc.

Moving Toward Implementation

Having determined the core elements that they wanted to see in a program and the number and type of participants they hoped to serve, the team decided to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to identify a managing entity for the project in July 2003.

The RFP asked that respondents submit their plans for implementing a project that would move at least 100 former offenders into employment in its first year and increasing this number by its third year of operation to 600.

The steering committee reviewed more than a dozen proposals and ultimately selected Project Bridge, a partnership including: Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc.; Associated Catholic Charities; the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development; the Second Chance Project, Inc.; and their advisor, the Center for Employment Opportunities of New York City.

The Consortium awarded Project Bridge \$30,000 to create a detailed plan for the implementation of a pilot transitional jobs program.

A Program Takes Shape

The Baltimore Transitional Jobs Project is broken up into four operational phases, with comprehensive case management and support services provided throughout:

- Assess voluntary participants for skills and needed services prior to release and provide five weeks of job readiness and skills training;
- Engage participants for two to four months in paid transitional work on work crews for 28 hours per week, with an additional paid Personal Development Day each week for training and skills development;
- Help participants find an unsubsidized placement in the competitive labor market after successfully completing three

continuous weeks of transitional work with acceptable evaluations in five critical areas, including attendance/punctuality, effort/quality of work, cooperation with supervisors, cooperation with others, and communication skills; and

- Offer post-placement retention services for a minimum of 12 months.

Throughout the program, Project Bridge provides supportive services, either directly or through memoranda of understanding with government agencies, service providers, and other key programs and organizations.

The transitional jobs program recruits voluntary participants from “behind the fence,” focusing on former offenders that have served at least three years in prison and will be under supervision at least 12 months following release. Participants must be 21 years of age or older and cannot be convicted of murder, child abuse, or sex offenses.

While still incarcerated, participants attend five weeks of job readiness training. During this time, program staff help participants develop an individual support plan that addresses major concerns such as housing, potential substance abuse, and reconnecting with family. Participants also take aptitude and interest tests to help the program identify their strengths. The results of these tests help drive participant’s activities in the program.

The project partners are key to the program. Goodwill Industries, Inc. is the lead partner, and Goodwill staff conduct the job readiness training, participant counseling, and program marketing as well as manage the fiscal aspects of the project. Staff at the Associated Catholic Charities, and Second Chance, a local nonprofit, provide the transitional work opportunities by recruiting employers, supervising work crews, and evaluating participants. Strive Baltimore, an employment and training program operated by the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development (CFWD/STRIVE),

prepares participants for competitive employment, job searches, and interviews.

Financing a New TJ Project

The Baltimore team estimated that they would need approximately \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 to support the first 100 participants through three to six months of transitional employment and 18 months of follow-up services. Based upon the experiences of similar programs across the country, a large portion of the budget was allocated for wage payments, as well as close supervision at work sites and individualized educational assistance and supportive services.

The Consortium looked to a variety of funding sources and ultimately secured a consultant to assist with grant applications and general funding. The group successfully secured \$30,000 for the initial planning grant to Project Bridge from the Job Opportunities Task Force. Also, the project secured support in the amount of \$150,000 from the Abell Foundation, \$125,000 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, \$200,000 from the Baltimore Community Foundation, \$100,000 through a partnership with the Baltimore Police Department, \$500,000 from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., and \$125,000 from the Open Society Institute-Baltimore.

Working with Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, the City of Baltimore submitted a proposal for a federal earmark in 2005 and was granted \$446,400 for Project Bridge and two other local re-entry programs. “One of the biggest challenges facing Baltimore today is ensuring that the thousands of men and women being released from prisons each year have the tools that they need to contribute to the community so that they do not become recidivists,” said Senator Mikulski of the transitional jobs programs.

Program Goals and Outcomes

With funding in place, an 18-month pilot program was launched in July 2004 with the goal of recruiting and providing job readiness and training to 250 incarcerated offenders prior to release, with 170 completing the training. The Consortium expected that 120 ex-prisoners would complete two to four months of transitional work at minimum wage following their release from prison, and aimed for 100 ex-prisoners to enter competitive employment initially paying at least \$7.25 per hour. The group set a retention goal of 80 percent retaining jobs or continuing to work at another job for eighteen months following exit from the transitional work phase of the program. Finally, the group anticipated that at least 50 percent of participating former offenders would not be re-incarcerated.



“Transitional jobs open the door for ex-offenders and those with prior criminal records to acquire marketable skills, build a resume, and develop a solid track record of positive work experience. These are all critical in helping individuals succeed in the workplace, stay engaged in work, and avoid recidivism.”

— Karen L. Sitnick, Director, Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, City of Baltimore

At each step, the pilot was able to exceed their goals. When the pilot concluded in December 2005, 407 former offenders had participated, with 334 completing the job readiness training phase. Of these, 199 entered transitional work (including 26 participants in Associated Catholic Charities' work crews), and 121 completed this phase. Upon completion, participants received job placement assistance and employment retention support from CFWD/STRIVE, with 101 participants entering competitive employment. Most of those who received training but did not enter transitional work were still incarcerated and will receive employment assistance upon their release.

Pilot Project Reveals Challenges

Experiences with the pilot program have underscored the need for strategic marketing that shows potential employers the various benefits of employing former offenders. Project Bridge aggressively continues to market the program by giving presentations to local employers and job fair attendees, calling employers, and mailing materials to various businesses and business associations. Despite these actions, staff have found that it

takes a great deal of time to recruit businesses willing to employ former offenders. To help remedy this challenge, Project Bridge devotes a staff person to focus on the marketing component of the program.

Because release dates for prisoners often vary and can change unexpectedly, the pilot has revealed that there is a dynamic balance between securing subsidized work crew opportunities and having the appropriate number of former offenders ready to begin the transitional work. For example, prior to the 2004 holiday season, the program had a large number of participants ready to begin their transitional jobs but the program lacked jobs.

Additionally, Project Bridge has worked diligently to find staff with the skills necessary to understand the pressures that former offenders face. Securing staff to help participants manage life issues remains a high priority for the program.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the correctional community has responded very favorably to the program. The project recruits from four different facilities and the word is spreading among the prison population that the program provides a positive option for finding employment upon release.

Moving Forward

While it is still too early to see the overall impact on recidivism, the program had numerous success stories that made it clear that the program indeed made a difference in the lives of many individuals in terms of time out of prison, improved employment and educational outcomes, and stronger family relationships.

Based on the success of the Project Bridge pilot, Goodwill has incorporated

components of the program into its existing re-entry program, called Supporting Ex-Offenders through Employment, Training and Transitional Services (SEETTS). The SEETTS program has retained key staff from Project Bridge, funded new case manager positions, and continues to offer transitional work opportunities, though on a more limited basis than in the pilot.



≈
CITY STORIES
≈

Detroit, Michigan: Putting the Pieces Together

The City of Detroit's Workforce Development Department helped bring together existing programs and services to create a new, cohesive TJ initiative for former offenders.

In April 2002, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick launched his “Kids, Cops, Clean” action agenda designed to make Detroit a more livable city. The “cops” element of this agenda focused on new ways to ensure safe neighborhoods within the city.

Faced with a staggering 6,000 prisoners returning to Detroit every year – many of whom had little or no job experience and faced significant barriers to employment – the city’s Workforce Development Department (DWDD) realized that one element of the mayor’s public safety agenda would need to address employment supports for former offenders.

To meet the needs of this challenging population, the City of Detroit applied for and was selected to receive two years of technical assistance from the National League of Cities and its partners to create a transitional jobs program for former offenders.

Bringing Key Stakeholders Together

To begin the planning process, DWDD Director Cylenthia LaToye Miller, Esq., and Program Planner Jennifer Davis invited a variety of community stakeholders to discuss exactly what was needed and how to get an ex-offender TJ program off the ground.

Key partner agencies included: the Office of Councilmember Sharon McPhail; representatives from several prisons operated by the Michigan Department of Corrections in southeast Michigan; the Wayne County Department of Community Justice; and several employment, training, and support service agencies, such as an AFL-CIO job placement program, one-stop career centers, Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit, a food assistance employment and training provider, and a community-based organization providing creative transportation solutions.



Detroit, MI

Detroit, MI, is the 10th largest city in the United States. Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick took office in 2002 as the youngest mayor in the history of Detroit and the youngest mayor of a major US city. One of the mayor’s main initiatives focuses on improving the Police Department and increasing public safety for the children and families of Detroit.

Population	951,270
	(2000 Census)
% White	10.6%
% Black.....	81.0%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	1.0%
% American Indian.....	0.3%
% Other	0.2%
% Multiracial.....	2.0%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	5.0%
Median Household Income.....	\$29,526
Unemployment Rate.....	13.8%

The team also gathered input from employers and business groups, former offenders, and additional stakeholders, such as parole and probation officers, the county sheriff’s office, substance abuse and mental health programs, and halfway housing providers.

Finally, the work of the team was both enhanced and documented for long-term evaluation by a talented Ph.D. candidate and research assistant at the University of Michigan Program on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy.

Leveraging Local Resources through New Partnerships

Although there were no dedicated funds with which to carry out a new program, there was significant enthusiasm and commitment among members of the planning team. By

bringing everyone around the same table to think through existing and needed employment and support services for former offenders, DWDD and its partners recognized that many pieces of the puzzle were already available and simply needed to be pulled together into a cohesive program.

Some possibilities for new city commitments surfaced but never came to fruition due to funding constraints. For instance, a nearby social enterprise program approached the planning team to discuss opportunities for collaboration that might range from providing transportation to allow residents of Detroit to participate in the program to replicating it in Detroit as a TJ program for former offenders.

Nevertheless, DWDD was able to broker an exciting partnership among other members of the planning committee to design a pilot TJ program. The primary partners in this collaboration were:

- Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit, which brought to the table an existing supported workplace in the manufacturing industry and a \$100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. The grant covers staff costs and revenue from the work center provides funding for the subsidized wages;
- Wayne County Department of Community Justice, which administers a residential substance abuse center for probationers;
- Elmhurst House, a residential substance abuse treatment center that provides case management and cognitive behavior therapy;
- AFL-CIO’s Collaborative on Training and Employment (COTE) program, which had WIA Special Populations funding from DWDD to provide job placement services for former offenders; and
- The JARC, a local community based non-profit that serves people with disabilities,

which provided transportation to unsubsidized jobs through van providers coordinated by a mobility manager at the Eastside Community Resource Center.

Through these partnerships, the collaborative was able to design a strong program that effectively addressed recruitment, housing, supervision, case management, employability and life skills training, 90 days of paid work experience, jobs placement, and transportation to work.

According to the proposed design, new participants were required to attend orientation during the first two weeks. Most would then attend half a day of job readiness training and work half a day at Goodwill's Industrial Services Work Center for which they would be paid the minimum wage. After the first two weeks, participants entered into full-time subsidized employment.

Building Support, Expanding Services

In January 2003, DWDD kicked off the pilot TJ program, called the *New Start Employment Project*, with a group of 18 former offenders residing in the Elmhurst Residential Treatment Center. Elmhurst selects the participants jointly with Goodwill

of Greater Detroit, giving priority to those facing the greatest barriers to employment.

Initial feedback on the program was extremely positive. Goodwill reported that the participants were productive and were fitting in well with other employees in the Industrial Services Work Center. At the same time, the Elmhurst program found that TJ participants were coming back with positive attitudes and pride in their new paychecks, which was changing the tenor of the house.

In July 2004, DWDD awarded Goodwill with a contract using funding from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant for special populations, making it possible for Goodwill to expand case management staff, add a GED preparation component, and provide unsubsidized job placement support.

Based on this early success, the partners continued to increase enrollment over time, with the numbers rising steadily from the original 18 to 41 participants by the end of March 2003, 99 by January 2004, and 178 by January 2005. In 2005 alone, a total of 267 individuals participated in transitional employment.

Throughout the process, the collaborative carefully tracked and documented the



“We have seen our participants walk a little taller and hold their heads high because of this project. The respect that comes with earning a paycheck and legitimately supporting your family through meaningful work is invaluable. We’re able to demonstrate this in a transitional setting and help make it happen for these individuals as they move into the community.”

— Delois Caldwell, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit.

outcomes of the program in order to improve New Start while also building support to sustain and expand the program. For instance, of the 267 people served in 2005, 171 (or 64 percent) were placed into competitive employment, with an average hourly wage of \$10.42, with 86 percent still on the job after 90 days.

Building on this model, the local team also successfully expanded the program in the fall of 2004 to include female parolees from Naomi's Nest, the first transitional housing facility for women exiting state correctional facilities, as well as from other area parolee facilities.

Sparking Systemic Change

While the New Start program was showing impressive outcomes for former offenders, Goodwill had two other programs – *Within Reach*, which served the chronically unemployed, and *Flip the Script*, which served low-income, young, minority men – that were also demonstrating results. Looking across these programs, the Goodwill leadership noticed that participants in these programs all needed the same core services and access to an array of additional supports. They realized that they could do even more by moving away from a program-based service delivery model and instead offering a menu of service components in a way that better met each participant's needs.

The resulting initiative, *Moving Men and Women to Economic Independence in Michigan*, combines the three population-specific programs and provides individualized access as needed to eight critical services: intake/assessment; individual coaching; soft skills; hard skills; academic preparation; transitional employment; job development and placement services; and post-placement/retention services. In addition, the Business Advisory Council for the *Within Reach* program now encompasses all of the participants in the new service system.

This model, which used the strengths of three successful programs to create a more effective and efficient service delivery model, generated great interest – and \$1.5 million in year one funding – from private and public funders. Further, the fundraising plan for this initiative is designed to support long-term sustainability, with multi-year commitments that decrease reliance on private sources over time as state government funding increases.

The TJ project not only helped spark this overhaul of the delivery of employment services for individuals with barriers to work in Detroit, but also led to the inclusion of paid, transitional jobs as a core service available to every Goodwill participant for whom it is appropriate.

Moving forward, Goodwill leaders hope to expand this model to all of Southeast Michigan and other communities in the state pending adequate funding support.



By bringing everyone around the same table

to think through existing and needed employment and support services for former offenders, the Workforce Development Department and its partners recognized that many pieces of the puzzle were already available and simply needed to be pulled together into a cohesive program.



Creating a New Nonprofit for Transitional Jobs in Fort Wayne, Indiana

In Fort Wayne, local officials recognized the need to establish a new nonprofit to design, negotiate, and manage various transitional employment strategies for ex-offenders.

Mayor Graham Richard of Fort Wayne, Indiana, saw the NLC Transitional Jobs Project as an opportunity to support Allen County Community Corrections in its efforts to help adult former offenders find stable employment.

In 2001, Community Corrections launched a Re-Entry Court, a program aimed at easing former offenders' transition from prison to the community. To address an average 60 percent unemployment rate for ex-inmates, Community Corrections developed an Employment Academy in 2002 to provide job-readiness training through a combination of the soft skills needed to get a job and the life skills required to keep it. Participants in the Academy also had access to a job developer who helped them identify appropriate job openings.

One month after completing the program, however, 20 percent of participants remained unemployed, highlighting the fact that for some former offenders, job-readiness training is not enough. Barriers to job readiness included a lack of work experience, employer concerns about hiring an ex-offender, difficulty readjusting to workplace norms, and instability in other areas of their lives, from housing to substance abuse.

The City of Fort Wayne applied to participate in NLC's technical assistance project – with Community Corrections designated as the lead agency – to provide a new, more intensive program for returning offenders to obtain a transitional job with wrap-around support services.

Over the course of the project, Community Corrections and its local partners laid out ambitious plans for a variety of transitional employment strategies. In an effort to avoid



Fort Wayne, IN

Indiana’s second largest city, Fort Wayne, is led by former Indiana State Senator, now Mayor Graham Richard. Fort Wayne has received the prestigious title of All-American City three times and has also been named one of America’s Most Livable Cities. The City of Fort Wayne has enjoyed a steady decrease in crime over several years, and its violent offender re-entry program has received national recognition.

Population	205,941
	(2000 Census)
% White	73.2%
% Black.....	17.1%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	1.5%
% American Indian.....	0.3%
% Other	0.2%
% Multiracial.....	1.9%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	5.7%
Median Household Income.....	\$36,518
Unemployment Rate.....	6.2%

some of the political and funding constraints of a government-run program, they ultimately concluded that a newly-formed community nonprofit would best manage these efforts. The city formally launched the resulting entity, Blue Jacket, Inc., in September 2005 to provide a long-term home for these TJ initiatives.

Filling a Gap in the System

The City of Fort Wayne found that the greatest barrier to former offenders’ aspirations of finding a job and returning to a more stable life was a pervading sense of pessimism by both potential employers and providers of vocational training.

Most WIA-funded service providers would not provide services to former offenders unless WIA-related outcomes could be guaranteed, focusing instead on the sizeable population of dislocated manufacturing workers in the community.

Community Corrections decided to implement its own in-house workforce preparation, transitional employment, and job placement program. The underlying philosophy of this venture was that former offenders can succeed in the workplace, but only with increased resolve and motivation to stay on the job and be a good employee. Therefore, they sought to provide needed skills and services without coddling participants or overwhelming them with “programming.”

Bringing Partners to the Table

Project Lead Anthony Hudson, Program Director for Allen County Community Corrections, spent significant time reaching out to appropriate partners to help with the design and oversight of a transitional jobs program. Key partners to Community Corrections included:

- Allen County Re-Entry Court



“We are pleased with the continuing success stories through our re-entry court and Blue Jacket transitional job initiatives. We have come together as a community to help reduce repeat offender crime by giving returning offenders the tools they need to succeed. We believe this first of its kind program will be a model for other cities to use to keep their communities safe and improve the quality of life for residents.”

— Mayor Graham Richard

- Project Renew, Inc., now entitled Neighbor Works
- Ivy Tech State College
- JobWorks, Inc.
- The Possibility Network
- Unity Christ Church Family Reconnect Program
- Family and Social Service Administration
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development

These partners remain active, providing services and referrals to and from the Employment Academy and job development services at Allen County Community Corrections. Employers in the manufacturing, construction, and service industries have continued hiring and providing ongoing input for improvement for former offenders whom have graduated from the Employment Academy.

Assessing a Range of Opportunities

Through NLC’s site visit to Fort Wayne and subsequent opportunities to learn about

existing TJ programs, Community Corrections focused on three primary opportunities to offer transitional jobs to former offenders in the community.

The first was an individual placement model, operating like a temp agency, that would place participants in temporary work placements at private for-profit companies. The TJ program, however, would offer substantial worker supports and livable wages to the client. In addition, each participating business would be strongly encouraged to hire successful transitional workers.

The work crew model was the second potential TJ structure that held promise for Fort Wayne. Participants in the proposed work crews could construct and rehabilitate transitional housing for ex-inmates while developing valuable construction skills.

Finally, the TJ planning team explored several social enterprise options, such as the development of a small finishing plant to do contract work for a local foundry or a food service company.

A First Step: Transitional Jobs for Non-Custodial Fathers

While they had many ideas of what could be done, finding funding to get a TJ program off the ground still posed a problem.

In July 2003, the Indiana Family and Social Service Administration granted Community Corrections \$75,000 to fund parenting classes, financial counseling, and job-readiness for former offenders who were non-custodial fathers owing child support. The grant also covered employer retention and training reimbursements when an offender was employed for 90 days.

Community Corrections hoped to garner additional grant money to provide wage subsidies rather than reimbursements after 90 days, but this did not come to fruition. In the end, they found that if the employer was given a good worker, they were satisfied with the existing subsidy structure.

As a result, Community Corrections puts additional emphasis on making a successful match between the participant and the employer. Staff systematically assess employers in terms of the skills, training, and experience requirements – as well as the physical space and culture of the workplace – for the various employment opportunities open to participants. This information guides job developers in identifying viable referral candidates and helps the program work with the participants to satisfy each employer’s workforce needs.

Spinning Off a New Nonprofit

As Community Corrections launched the TJ program for non-custodial fathers and continued to pursue the other potential options, the advisory board began to seriously consider a new, independent home for this work. First, Community Corrections was absorbing the cost of the Employment Division without a set funding stream, which

caused it to lose money; they were only continuing operation out of necessity and principle. Second, it became clear that it would be easier to garner funding and avoid potentially sticky political issues by separating these programs from local government. Finally, the creation of a new nonprofit to oversee this work would allow the new TJ programs to serve a larger population, including those former offenders not actively under correctional court supervision.

The advisory board for the TJ project spent approximately a year and a half carefully preparing a strategic plan for a new organization, named Blue Jacket, Inc., after an influential Shawnee Native American leader of the late 1800s.

Blue Jacket, Inc., was created with legislative approval by the Allen County Executive Branch and Community Corrections’ advisory board, and then bought for \$500 by an independent board of entrepreneurs, community leaders, academics, and nonprofit leaders.

The mission of Blue Jacket, Inc., is to provide a full spectrum of services that lead to the reduction of crime and the enrichment of the workforce and economic structure for offender populations. This mission translates into direct action through innovative service programs designed to impact the skills, attitudes, opportunities, and motivations of offenders returning to the free world as citizens. Blue Jacket’s philosophy of service concludes that former offenders who choose to be law-abiding and self-sufficient should have the opportunity to do so.

Blue Jacket Grows

Blue Jacket, Inc., was designed to be a social enterprise, generating revenues through earned income. It now contains in-house employment, a key component that sets the organization apart from traditional workforce development agencies. Several of the TJ models originally envisioned by



Blue Jacket's philosophy of service

concludes that former offenders who choose to be law-abiding and self-sufficient should have the opportunity to do so.

Community Corrections and the advisory board are currently operational under the auspices of Blue Jacket, Inc.

The work crew model, for example, has evolved into a wage-paying training and apprenticeship gateway in which former offenders rehabilitate and build new homes. Blue Jacket, Inc., transitional employees have an opportunity to participate in a five-week introduction to home construction and rehabilitation. At the same time, they earn \$8.00 per hour in the afternoon on work crews providing general labor to rehabilitate foreclosed homes that have been purchased by Blue Jacket, Inc. Some of these units are then sold, while others are retained as transitional living units for former offenders exiting the Re-Entry Court.

In addition, the “temp agency” model, placing participating former offenders in for-profit and nonprofit companies on a transitional basis, now serves juvenile offenders through a WIA youth services grant.

In the summer of 2006, Community Corrections transferred operational control of the Employment Academy – now serving both adult males and juvenile offenders in two counties – to Blue Jacket, Inc. The Employment Academy remains an important gateway to Blue Jacket's transitional employment opportunities.

Lessons Learned

One of the lessons that the Fort Wayne team learned is that it can be hard to balance the double bottom line of a social enterprise –

working for improved outcomes for participants while trying to generate income – and the right mix of partners is required.

Private sector involvement turned out to be invaluable to the team. As a result, they felt the composition of the board must be at least 60 percent private entrepreneurs and business people and the remaining 40 percent public workforce development, education, and corrections leaders. Moreover, in the latter group, all sectors of the criminal justice system must also be engaged to design an effective ex-offender program, including prison, the courts, probation, parole, and community corrections.

A second major lesson from Fort Wayne was that it is not only important to have the right partners, but also the right type of partnerships. If partnerships do not meet the needs of both partners, they will not thrive. The NLC technical assistance project helped bring many potentially useful partners to the table. However, many ended up consumed in their primary business and found the project overwhelming. By asking for agreements, committee reports, and meeting attendance, the team was able to draw together a core team to guide the design and implementation of the pilot transitional jobs programs and, ultimately, Blue Jacket, Inc.

Finally, in working with former offenders, they discovered that many participants were hostile to the traditional classroom. A more engaging, didactic approach to adult learning proved more effective in teaching pre-employment skills than activities such as listening to lectures, reading, or watching videos.

Moving Forward

Within five years, Blue Jacket, Inc., hopes to generate enough revenue to become self-sufficient. However, the organization will continue to access grants and other funding opportunities to subsidize new initiatives, reach out to female offenders and other new populations, or redirect the program based

on ongoing evaluation. The establishment of a separate nonprofit provides an institutional base for creative new ventures that will expand the employment and training options for people in Fort Wayne with barriers to work.



~
CITY STORIES
~

Garnering Federal Funding to Provide Transitional Jobs in Jackson, Mississippi

Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr., vigorously – and ultimately successfully – sought federal funding to serve at-risk youth and homeless individuals in the City of Jackson.

For then-Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr., the transitional jobs model provided an opportunity to better serve a variety of populations within Jackson, Mississippi, that were largely disconnected from the local workforce.

The City of Jackson's Department of Human and Cultural Services (DHCS) conducted an assessment in 2002 to determine the most pressing needs for out-of-school youth, homeless individuals, and former offenders and determined that employment opportunities were the most important missing factor to help individuals in these categories achieve self-sufficiency. Yet employment services and case management for these populations was limited and disjointed.

Over the course of this project, DHCS designed and implemented two TJ projects: one serving at-risk youth – called GED &

Beyond – and another aimed at serving homeless individuals.

Through their dogged efforts to find an appropriate funding source, the city successfully lobbied for and received earmarked federal funding to get these programs off the ground.

TJ for Homeless Individuals: Community Support, Federal Barriers

Before the NLC TJ Project began, Mayor Johnson asked key city officials to develop strategies to help homeless men and women successfully move into stable employment.

To this end, Project Lead Michael Raff, deputy director of DHCS, became more active in the local Partners to End Homelessness coalition (Partners Coalition), which was already coordinating services for homeless individuals. In addition to the city,



Jackson, MS

Jackson, MS, the state capital, has been the recipient of one of America’s Most Livable Cities awards, and former Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr. committed to ensuring that Jackson lives up to its nickname, “Best of the South.” Current Mayor Frank Melton has focused on expanding Jackson’s economic and cultural opportunities.

Population	184,032
	(2000 census)
% White	27.5%
% Black.....	70.4%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	0.5%
% American Indian.....	0.2%
% Other	0.1%
% Multiracial.....	0.6%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	0.7%
Median Household Income.....	\$30,414
Unemployment Rate.....	8.9%

coalition members included homeless service providers, other nonprofit agencies, county agencies, faith-based institutions, housing providers, neighborhood groups and former homeless individuals. Formed in 1998 to fulfill a funding requirement for the *Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs* within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the city viewed this as a viable, active, and effective coalition to help DHCS design, promote, and implement a new TJ program for the homeless population.

The Partners Coalition agreed with the city that employment is a critical – yet very difficult – component of a homeless individual’s transition into permanent housing. Without a paycheck, it is hard to get an apartment or pay the rent, yet without a permanent resi-

dence, many find it difficult to get a job. Transitional employment – and transitional housing – can help individuals break out of this vicious cycle.

When the coalition voted on local priorities for a federal funding proposal to HUD, the city found strong local support for the inclusion of transitional employment. Even though several well-established programs had to scale back their individual funding requests to keep the combined proposal under the federal limit for the community, the coalition unanimously decided that it was worth giving the proposed TJ program a try.

Despite high hopes that they had found a potentially sizeable and sustainable federal funding source for this effort, the city received the disappointing news that HUD had denied the request for funding for the TJ program based on a ruling that wages during transitional employment are not allowable expenses.

Hoping to pave the way for a request in the subsequent year, the City of Jackson, with the help of NLC, the Center for Law and Social Policy, and some lobbyists for the city, mounted a campaign to demonstrate that transitional wages could indeed be considered allowable expenses under current laws and regulations. Nevertheless, HUD maintained its right to make the discretionary decision that wages would not be allowed, and the TJ proposal was denied a second time.

During this time, a range of requests to the state and the county also met with rejection due to tight budgets and competing priorities.

Regrouping: An Opportunity to Serve Youth

Undeterred, the mayor and leaders within DHCS moved forward with plans to develop a transitional employment program for a different priority population: at-risk young adults.

Statistics from the Mississippi Department of Education in the years preceding the project showed a dropout rate in Jackson that was roughly two-thirds higher than in the rest of the state. Moreover, a rise in the crime rate in 2003 was largely attributable to an increase in crimes committed by 16-21 year olds.

In late December 2003, the city received a \$300,000 federal earmark, which enabled it to move forward with the GED & Beyond Pilot Program. The goal of this program – called GED&B for short – was to provide 15 out-of-school, low-income, unemployed 16- to 21-year-olds per quarter with individualized educational and employment opportunities to lead to permanent, stable employment. GED&B’s target was for 85 percent of the participants to get their GED and become employed.

GED&B consists of four essential social service components: 1) GED preparation, sponsored by the city in conjunction with

the local community college’s adult education program; 2) transitional employment; 3) wraparound social services; and 4) job readiness, referral, and placement. An initial assessment allows the city to ensure that these components are appropriately targeted to participants’ needs and interests.

Participants in GED&B work in transitional jobs on Mondays and Tuesdays, work on GED preparation on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and attend life-skills training and basic computer-skills training on alternating Fridays.

Based on early results from the GED&B program, the city reconfigured the program’s structure to allow for a longer subsidized employment period. The city also put even greater emphasis on parental involvement, beyond the parent contracts that had always been a part of the design.

After supporting the GED&B program for over two years, the city continues to find it



“In 2005, the City of Jackson received a small congressional earmark grant from the U.S. Department of Labor for a pilot transitional job project for homeless individuals. The goal was to move fifteen participants from subsidized employment to unsubsidized employment in one year. Through the technical assistance provide by the National League of Cities, our project succeeded in moving twenty-four homeless individuals from a dependent lifestyle to one of independence and self-sufficiency through employment. The Jackson Transitional Job Project is now a critical component of Destination Home, the city’s Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.”

— Michael Raff, Director, Department of Human and Cultural Services, City of Jackson

challenging to address the many barriers that youth bring to the table. The initial goal of 85 percent success rate in the program has proven to be a lofty expectation, with only 20 of the 65 participants receiving their GED. Nevertheless, the city has seen educational advancement, if not GED attainment, by all participants.

Persistence Pays Off: A New TJ Project for Homeless Individuals

The City of Jackson's persistent efforts to garner funding for their transitional jobs initiatives paid off with a \$120,000 earmark in the FY 2003 appropriations for the federal Department of Labor to provide transitional employment for homeless individuals.

Launched in 2005, the goal of this program was to assist 15 individuals over a one-year period. A case manager from the correctional system brought significant experience assisting individuals with barriers to work to this project. Local providers of support services were also critical partners in this effort.

Participants in this project include formerly homeless individuals, currently living in transitional housing or in the private housing market, who have been through recovery for drug or alcohol addictions. With only 15 participants in the program at a

time, the city screened applicants carefully to find those who were ready to make the most of a second chance. Selected participants must agree to maintain their addiction treatment throughout the project to increase the chances of success on the job.

While participants were allowed to stay in their transitional jobs for up to six months, all of the initial participants were ready to move to competitive employment sooner. This allowed the city to stretch program resources to continue six months longer than anticipated and serve more participants.

As the program wraps up in the summer of 2006, the program has placed more than twenty individuals, significantly exceeding the original goal of 15. Moreover, the competitive employment secured by these individuals holds great promise. Several are now working in medical or legal settings and at least one is in a managerial position.

While funding will not be available to continue the project uninterrupted, the City of Jackson has already begun to reach out to federal partners to seek the necessary funds to build on the success of this initial project. In addition, the release of the City of Jackson's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in the summer of 2006 will keep local partners focused on supporting employment for homeless individuals.



The Partners Coalition agreed with the city

that employment is a critical – yet very difficult – component of a homeless individual's transition into permanent housing. Without a paycheck, it is hard to get an apartment or pay the rent, yet without a permanent residence, many find it difficult to get a job. Transitional employment – and transitional housing – can help individuals break out of this vicious cycle.



~
CITY STORIES
~

Aligning Existing Transitional Jobs Programs in San Antonio, Texas

Building upon a strong foundation of existing programs, the City of San Antonio worked with partners to create a more effective transitional employment model for youth.

San Antonio, the ninth largest city in the nation, faces higher poverty and illiteracy rates and lower educational attainment than most other major American cities. In 2000, the city had an 18 percent poverty rate and 11 percent of youth ages 16 to 19 were not enrolled in and had not graduated from high school. Of adults over the age of 25, twenty-three percent did not have a high school diploma or GED. To compound these issues, San Antonio faces a high teen pregnancy rate.

Understanding these challenges, then-Mayor Edward D. Garza implemented a comprehensive campaign aimed at improving educational opportunities, quality of life, and the overall standard of living for residents. The City of San Antonio's Department of Community Initiatives (DCI) was a central player in this effort. Not only did DCI work hard to improve its own

programs focused on workforce development and family economic success, but they also strengthened partnerships to make this a unified community effort.

The NLC TJ Project helped the city focus on one component of this campaign: creating a coordinated TJ program model to improve several existing transitional employment programs operated through the city's youth programs, literacy centers, and transitional housing programs. The city's goal was to streamline these existing programs to improve their quality across the board.

Spearheaded by Dennis Campa, director of the city's DCI and Lynn Stewart of the city's Youth Opportunity (YO!) Program, the TJ Project team tackled the youth-focused transitional employment programs first, seeking to align program practices, advance service integration, and more effectively and efficiently market these programs.



San Antonio, TX

The 9th largest city in the U.S., San Antonio, now led by Mayor Phil Hardberger, attracts 20 million visitors a year to its rich history, thriving metropolitan region, and its arts and culture scene. Former Mayor Ed Garza and the San Antonio Police Department enjoyed a 15% drop in the already low murder rate thanks to city efforts to reduce violent gang activity and the San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) community policing program.

Population **1,144,554**
(2000 Census)

% White	31.8%
% Black.....	6.4%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	1.6%
% American Indian.....	0.2%
% Other	0.1%
% Multiracial.....	1.3%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	58.6%
Median Household Income.....	\$36,214
Unemployment Rate.....	6.2%

A Strong Foundation of Programs and Services

San Antonio entered the technical assistance project with a wide array of employment and training opportunities for young adults struggling to enter the workforce.

The *YO! Transitional Jobs Opportunity Program* enhances the education and employability of youth, ages of 14 and 21, who reside within the designated Enterprise Community of San Antonio. The educational component, including GED and college preparation, is complemented by career exploration and planning, job readiness, occupational skills training, and internships and apprenticeships that range from twelve weeks to three years. Participants also receive leadership development, mentoring, two years of case management, and assistance with childcare and transportation to ensure that participants are able to make the most of their work experience.

YO! WORCS (Workforce Orientation, Resources, and Career Services) is an entry-level workforce development program that provides a nine-week life skills, job readiness, and GED preparation, followed by a three-month internship program.

The *Youth Opportunity (YO!) Academy for Training and Advancement* is a program that provides young offenders, usually ages 16 to 17, with life skills and basic job readiness skills in the months before they are released from the juvenile justice system. After release, the participants are placed in internships for approximately 20 hours per week. In addition, they receive counseling, meet with parole officers, study for the GED, and receive peer-to-peer mentoring.

Operation Fleet (Future Leaders Educated for Tomorrow) is an industry-specific training program that provides instruction and

internships in various areas including property management, health care, computer technology, office management, and gardening/landscaping. For instance, participants in the gardening/landscaping program can study groundskeeping and horticulture, while interning with the local botanical gardens. Local businesses like Big Ike’s Landscaping then hire program graduates onto their crews. Additional industry-specific training programs are offered through a partnership with the community college. All participants are required to take a customer service class at Alamo Community College District (ACCD) to help boost their likelihood of success in any of the fields of study.

The *YO! VITA Initiative (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)* has trained over 180 youth in tax preparation and provided transitional employment in the completion of tax returns for low-income families of San Antonio. This nationally recognized program offers work experience in a setting that provides a meaningful service to the community.

Working in partnership with existing programs, the City of San Antonio supports approximately 150 to 200 *summer internships and job placements* annually through the Parks and Recreation Department. Youth have a variety of positions from which to

choose, including basic clerical, home service, and childcare.

While the city entered the project hoping to align all of their transitional jobs programs – including the youth programs described above, in-house work opportunities for families in transitional housing, and unpaid transitional employment opportunities through the city’s literacy centers – the TJ team decided to focus their efforts on the array of youth-serving programs first.

Collaborating to Make a Difference

To begin to build a more cohesive system, city leaders organized a team of community stakeholders. Partners included the City of San Antonio’s Departments of Community Initiatives, Human Resources, Literacy Services, and Community Action; the Youth Opportunity (YO!) Program; the Dwyer Street Shelter; VITA; the University of Texas Health systems; the Annie E. Casey Foundation; Avance-San Antonio, Project Quest, Inc.; Goodwill Industries; and Alamo Workforce Development. From the beginning, this dynamic group was ready to collaborate and make the TJ Program a success.

As they moved forward, the team also forged partnerships with The Lynd



“Work provides dignity and helps define us as people. In San Antonio, transitional jobs serves this purpose for our young adults. We have engaged them in work, they have found it inspiring, and they have used transitional jobs to transform their lives.”

— Dennis Campa, Director of the Department of Community Initiatives, City of San Antonio

Company and the American Opportunity for Housing in order to provide industry-specific training opportunities and positions. At the same time, they have strengthened their relationships with the local chamber of commerce, the Alamo WorkSource board, and business leaders.

Mapping Services for the Target Population

In order to make the challenge of coordinating a wide array of existing transitional jobs programs more manageable, the TJ team decided to focus first on programs that served youth and young adults ages 16-24.

As a first step, the team mapped out the workforce employment programs and services available to the target population and flagged service gaps and opportunities to recruit participants and providers who could offer supportive services. While some mapping had already been done, the TJ team further dissected what services were being offered and how they were or were not connected to other program services. This process helped the team modify existing programs to meet the needs of particular populations (e.g., homeless, youth aging out of foster care, juvenile offenders, etc.). At the same time, it helped identify program area needs and gave the team direction in recruiting providers who could help create a more comprehensive service system.

Additionally, the TJ team mapped the participant flow patterns, from the various points of entry through services and to placement, retention, and advancement. This effort helped demonstrate which programs are involved at each stage and how they are – or should be – connected to one another.

The TJ Team used the matrix results to evaluate marketing, participant recruitment, program gaps, and program intersections.

Addressing Emerging Challenges

In addition to aligning, improving, and expanding existing workforce development programs, the team's efforts also allowed the city to take a coordinated approach to emerging challenges.

For instance, as participants were placed in companies, the team found that some employers viewed the transitional workers as simply “free labor.” To combat this perception, the team designed a supervisory training curriculum to educate and equip the supervisors to help achieve the goals of the program. Many area businesses participated in the program by providing positions including the DCI.

The city also found that transportation was a large source of frustration. Most participants rely on public transportation, so monthly bus passes were provided to participants in the city's workforce skills training programs and many potential employers were willing to provide bus passes as well. In cases where the bus system turned out to be unaccommodating, they had to find more creative solutions. For instance, when UPS offered to hire workers for its night shift, participants found that the buses did not run late enough in the evening for them to make it to their shift and did not run early enough to pick them up. As a result, one of the workers on the night shift started his own small shuttle service. He would pick up and deliver night shift employees and they in turn would pay him a nominal fee for the service.

Making an Impact

Ultimately, the San Antonio team was successful in five major areas. First, city leaders and the DCI Director demonstrated strong leadership in bringing the right partners to the table to ensure that the project



The city's goal was to streamline

existing transitional employment programs to improve their quality across the board.

was effectively implemented. The city will continue to reap rewards from these strong partnerships through increased support from local companies seeking to hire transitional jobs participants.

Second, the collaborative efforts to map existing programs and services helped the team streamline the referral processes for a variety of programs. Several existing programs also made changes to the referral and intake processes to link to other community programs and services.

Third, the team partnered with the Alamo Community College District (ACCD) to formalize a standard job training curriculum, which has had a beneficial impact on all of the city's TJ programs. Through discussion and input from partnering businesses, ACCD developed curricula for various underserved populations in high-growth, high-demand occupations that can earn participants Continuing Education Units at the community college. In addition, DCI incorporated computer technology training into all of the programs.

Fourth, access to existing programs has been improved and these programs are more closely tied to wrap-around support services. The city's TJ programs are now being offered at the Community Family Resource and Learning Centers located throughout San Antonio. These centers also provide adult basic education (ABE) and GED preparation, English as a second language (ESL), citizenship, and financial literacy classes, enrollment into Individual

Development Accounts to help participants save for the future, and many other workshops and activities for individuals and families.

Finally, through a more coordinated approach, local programs are now more easily marketed to the public and to potential business partners through publications and videos showcasing success stories. They have found that stepped up public relations activities and program highlights in the media have had a beneficial impact on recruiting and garnering interest from the business community.

Financing a Collaborative System

The San Antonio TJ project had the initial advantage of working with existing area programs that already had funding. Moreover, due to the success of the YO! program, sixth year funding was awarded and an additional funding extension will provide services to YO! Members through December 2006. These funds will provide for additional workforce training and transitional jobs opportunities for young adults who have dropped out of school and are under or unemployed as well as money for tuition, books, and supplies for those YO! Members already enrolled in higher education.

The newest off-shoot of the city's TJ efforts, the Ambassador Program, is a city council sponsored initiative and is supported through the city's general funds.

DCI, in partnership with Northwest Vista College, was also awarded \$400,000 through the Texas Workforce Self-Sufficiency Funds, providing 150 young women on TANF or food stamps the opportunity to receive basic workplace skills training with further training in Microsoft Office Certification. The first class began in June 2006.

Finally, the city has successfully partnered with a variety of local businesses and organizations that continue to support the TJ Project. For example, the Alamo Community College District has supported the industry-specific training through a special training fund controlled by the city's Human Resource Department.

Moving Forward

The city plans to continue to work toward their goal of “no wrong door” to connect area youth to the vast array of transitional employment programs and services that the community has to offer. In addition, initiatives related to the efforts of the TJ team continue to emerge.

The Better Careers Program, an initial partner in the TJ efforts, has been expanded to include curricula developed by ACCD and includes industry-specific training in high-growth, high-demand occupations. Now called the DCI Adult Workforce Skills Training Program, this program provides job readiness and financial literacy training as well as potential placement with a company. Once focused on incumbent workers with a GED or high school diploma, this program has been expanded to include adults who are in need of a GED and those who are underemployed or unemployed.

In 2005, a new workforce development initiative called The Ambassador Program was piloted to provide first year college students with workplace skills training and summer internships in high-demand occupations. The overall goal was to entice these young people to remain in or return to San Antonio to live and work after graduation. The pilot initiative for 2005 had 29 first year college students participating in the program. For 2006, 41 college students are enrolled and participating in their weeklong workplace skills training.

Participating businesses and chambers of commerce have had such a positive reaction that they have expressed an interest in partnering with the city to provide transitional job opportunities for adults who are under and unemployed, and have opened doors to other businesses within the community.



Building on Summer Jobs Programs in Syracuse, New York

In Syracuse, New York, Mayor Matthew J. Driscoll sought to decrease youth violence by providing disadvantaged youth with employment opportunities and supportive services.

After Syracuse, New York, experienced record-high levels of youth violence in 2002, Mayor Matthew Driscoll convened an Intervention Task Force to identify the causes of youth violence and develop realistic recommendations for promoting positive youth development, decreasing youth violence, and improving young people's lives. The Task Force – consisting of youth, clergy, law enforcement, service providers, and representatives of labor, business, social services, probation, and mental health – identified poverty, unemployment, and under-education as the primary contributors to youth violence.

As the group sought positive strategies to address these issues, transitional jobs emerged as a promising model. The city's vision for its TJ effort was to integrate existing resources to produce truly comprehensive and inclusive employment services

for youth and young adults, with an emphasis on reaching individuals who might otherwise be at risk of perpetrating or becoming a victim of violent crime.

The NLC Transitional Jobs Project provided a perfect venue for the city to explore an employment strategy that would not only provide local youth with jobs but also move the city toward a reduction in youth violence.

Mayor Driscoll's involvement in the TJ project appealed to community businesses and led to widespread business participation in a summer jobs pilot. In addition, the city has maintained an interest in offering transitional employment to young people at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system through a more recent Violence Intervention and Prevention program.



Syracuse, NY

Syracuse, NY, is ranked among the top 25 cities for doing business. Syracuse’s central location as the major metropolitan center of Onondaga County has earned it the nickname “Crossroads of New York State.” Despite a slew of highly unusual, nationally publicized crimes over the past few years, the overall crime rate in Syracuse has steadily declined due to efforts by Mayor Matthew J. Driscoll and the Syracuse Police Department to prevent crime through the Community Policing Division.

Population **147,326**
(2000 Census)

% White	62.4%
% Black.....	24.4%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	3.3%
% American Indian	1.1%
% Other	0.3%
% Multiracial.....	3.4%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	5.1%
Median Household Income.....	\$25,000
Unemployment Rate.....	9.3%

A Vision to Serve Youth

To design a youth-focused TJ program, Syracuse organized a team of local stakeholders under the leadership of JoAnn Coria, director of the Mayor’s Research Department.

Two organizations in particular, JOBSplus! and Central New York Works (CNY Works), spearheaded efforts to link youth to support services, job coaching, and private sector employment. Other key partners included the City of Syracuse’s Department of Economic Development and Bureau of Research, Onondaga County Department of Social Services, and the Syracuse Partnership to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence/Project Hope.

The TJ planning team established the goal of placing thirty young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 in unsubsidized employment in 2003. Based on recommendations from the Intervention Task Force, they targeted young adults at risk of violence and required that each participant have a designated community case manager who would support each participant.

Longer-term goals included securing resources to fund a two-year job coach/developer position to work with those young adults and their employers. The team also worked to develop several strategies to make these efforts more comprehensive and inclusive, such as: developing effective collaboration among partners through shared projects and resources; enlisting business community support; securing resources to cover the gaps in the system; and offering pre-employment opportunities to young people.

Partnerships Maximize Existing Resources

All members of the TJ team saw the value in developing effective collaborative relationships among partners through shared proj-

ects and resources. To that end, the group developed “work readiness teams” composed of staff from Jobsplus!, CNY Works, Syracuse Partnership to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence, and the Southwest Community Center. These organizations pooled some of their resources to serve young adults in the community.

For instance, JOBSplus! and CNY Works committed their computer labs for inter-agency staff development. Both groups provided part-time and temporary staff members to provide services necessary to the success of the program. Moreover, CNY Works donated resources to support training, and JOBSplus! donated direct financial support.

Piloting a Summer Jobs Program

Syracuse piloted the TJ project in the summer of 2003, with a combination of city-funded positions and private sector jobs for youth.

The summer program combined the services of an employment agency with the community case management system. Eight city departments committed to accepting thirty participating young adults for eight-week internships that would help them transition to private sector jobs. Managers in these city departments also agreed to adjust standard procedures to allow participant assessment to occur at the same time as the work experience.

Ultimately, youth were placed in wage-paying, summer jobs both in the city and the



“National League of Cities’ Transitional Jobs Program has been of great value to the City of Syracuse. In focusing on the employment needs of young adults ages 18-25, we gradually succeeded in forging an effective collaboration involving key agencies. Through this inter-agency approach, we have been able to expand on the range of services that are so vital in sustaining employment situations for our young people. This integration of local resources has produced 125 positive employment experiences, either in transitioning from being a victim/perpetrator of violent crime to a more stable environment, or through their transition from non-employed to self-reliance. NLC’s responsive technical assistance has been invaluable throughout!”

— Mayor Matthew J. Driscoll

private sector. Participants mainly consisted of young men with a history of juvenile justice system involvement. A staff person, supported by funding from Jobsplus!, helped coordinate the summer jobs program and the TJ project in general.

Business Community Key to Project Success

Despite the fact that many employers were reluctant to hire youth with criminal backgrounds, the team recognized that strong private-sector support was key to the project's success.

During the summer of 2003, the mayor hosted an employer breakfast to kick off the city's summer jobs program. Over seventy-five employers attended the breakfast and learned how they could be involved. When the mayor committed to supporting thirty city-funded positions, many companies stepped up to the plate and offered to provide private sector summer jobs for youth.

The TJ team also marketed TJ participants to potential employers using Empowerment Zone (EZ) tax credits as an incentive. If employers hire a resident living in an EZ, they are eligible for an \$8,500 tax credit. Moreover, if the resident is also living in an EZ and is welfare-to-work eligible, the employer can receive a \$13,500 tax credit for

hiring the participant. They found that these credits were most appealing to mid-sized companies that were large enough to have accountants to file the paperwork but small enough for the credits to matter to their bottom line.

Finally, they requested financial support from the business community, including several banks who would benefit from successful Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) credits. While these fundraising efforts were less successful than the team had hoped, they did yield modest contributions for employee clothing and tools; transportation; summer camp experiences; and short-term job training.

Financing a Summer Jobs Program

A key initial challenge, which was not unique to Syracuse, was the struggle to find seed money for the initiative.

By June of 2003, the TJ Project received \$90,000 in financial support from the City of Syracuse for a ten-week temporary work experience for youth. CNY Works supported the project by providing on-the-job training valued at \$50,000, and JOBSplus! and Onondaga County gave \$39,000 towards the program.

The TJ project also received approximately \$11,500 in one-time private sector contributions from Verizon and other companies.



The city's vision for its transitional jobs effort

was to integrate existing resources to produce truly comprehensive and inclusive employment services for youth and young adults, with an emphasis on reaching individuals who might otherwise be at risk of perpetrating or becoming a victim of violent crime.

Moving Forward

While the TJ planning team was not able to use the summer jobs pilot as a direct springboard to initiate a year-round TJ program, some of the partnerships and lessons learned through the TJ project continue to influence the city's efforts to curb youth violence by providing positive alternatives and supports.

In response to an increase in shootings and gang violence, the City of Syracuse created the Violence Intervention and Prevention program (VIP) in 2003 to provide case managers and mental health therapists to assist young people ages 12-30 who are at risk of entering (or re-entering) the justice system. The effort receives approximately \$225,000 from the city each year, with over a million dollars secured from a variety of other federal, state, and local sources.

Incorporated within VIP is an informal, year-round transitional jobs program that builds on many of the ideas and partners involved in the TJ project. The local WIA agency is partnering with VIP, JOBSplus!, and the city to provide 15 weeks of jobs readiness, work experience, and retention services, with a half-time job coach funded by Onondaga County. Other partners, such as the Syracuse Auto Dealers Association (SADA) have supported these efforts by sponsoring several rounds of job retention groups in the evening for employed participants.

Finally, the employment subcommittee of VIP's Community Advisory Committee is tackling some of the collaboration challenges that the TJ team faced, laying the groundwork for more joint initiatives in the years to come.



Taking a Regional Approach in Virginia Beach, Virginia

Focused on building a program that could serve the region, Virginia Beach city officials developed a work program with strong supports for youth offenders.

Five cities — Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Suffolk — and two counties make up the South Hampton Roads Region located in Southeast Virginia. These cities have worked closely over the years to approach planning and development in a regional way in order to share resources and to maximize the benefits to area youth.

Holding true to that spirit of collaboration, Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera Oberndorf and city officials within her administration recognized a need to better link existing services throughout the region to help young adults with criminal backgrounds turn their lives around and secure steady employment.

In 2003, nearly 100 juvenile offenders from the City of Virginia Beach were released into the community. Many of these youth were undereducated and lacked basic work skills. With a recidivism rate of 26.3 percent for

former juvenile offenders, the city recognized that a key step to breaking this cycle was to provide these young people with the skills, work experience, supports, and adult mentors necessary to succeed in the local workforce.

With technical assistance from NLC, Virginia Beach developed critical partnerships, designed and operated a pilot project serving young former offenders, and took steps to expand this project to the greater region. While funding has not yet been found to continue and expand the project, the team's work during the project built critical awareness and greater collaboration among service providers and employers in the area.

Partnering to Support Young Offenders

Under the leadership of Barbara Brinson, coordinator of the city's Youth Opportunities Office, the city hoped to link resources and



Virginia Beach, VA

Virginia Beach is the most populous city in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the 38th largest in the United States. Virginia Beach was the first city in Virginia to earn the distinction of “A Certified Crime Prevention Community.” This award was presented by the state Department of Criminal Justice Services to Mayor Meyera Oberndorf and Chief A. M. Jacocks, Jr. during the 23rd Annual Virginia Crime Prevention Association Conference.

Population	425,257
% White69.4%
% Black.....	18.5%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	4.7%
% American Indian.....	0.4%
% Other	0.2%
% Multiracial.....	2.6%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	4.2%
Median Household Income.....	\$48,705
Unemployment Rate.....	4.1%

forge area partnerships to help juveniles with criminal records get the supports and work experience they need to make a fresh start.

To accomplish this task, the city established a local group of stakeholders to guide the project. Critical TJ Project partners included the city’s Youth Opportunities Office and Departments of Social Services and Housing; Opportunity, Inc., the local Workforce Investment Board; Tidewater Community College; the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice’s Court Services Unit; and other community, education, and business representatives.

The mission of Virginia Beach’s TJ Project team was to provide youth former offenders with the education, support services, skills, and experience necessary to obtain and maintain gainful employment. The TJ team sought to accomplish its goals through a program that would offer assessment, mentoring, recruitment, job readiness and skills training, educational programs placement, job placement, and case management.

The TJ team also wanted to set up a broad-reaching program that would encompass the efforts of the local organizations with a vested interest in the success of young people with unique challenges. While the decision to create a comprehensive TJ project was easy, determining how to bring all the local organizations together under one vision was one of the team’s greatest challenges.

Defining the Target Population

When the team began discussing how to implement such a program, they first had to come to an agreement on how they would define the target population.

The TJ team decided that the program would have the greatest impact if it focused on former offenders between the ages of 16 and 21. These participants would be young enough to embrace change and old enough to move responsibly into the world of work.

Moreover, the team chose to focus specifically on youth offenders who were paroled to the community from correctional centers. A funding opportunity required that the target group also be parents. The group approached this addition to the criteria positively, noting that not only could a change in their life path make an enormous difference to the individual participants over the years, but it could also affect the life chances of their children. Non-parent youth involved in the justice system were eventually able to participate in the program.

While the team focused on the opportunities inherent in serving this population, they were keenly aware that this was also a very challenging population. Many of their potential participants lacked the education and skills needed to succeed in the workforce and had real or perceived attitude problems. Additionally, because the team was focused initially on young parents, their participants would need extensive support services, such as childcare, housing, and counseling, in addition to educational opportunities and workforce readiness skills.

Program Design Choices

The team faced a major challenge in determining whether individual or group job placements would be the most effective approach to providing the target age group with the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce. The team approach would perhaps be the easiest to manage, but there were concerns about whether the needs of individuals would be overlooked or under-addressed in this setting. Ultimately, the team chose to work with participants individually as the project coordinators determined that individual training would be the most beneficial for their clients.

Virginia Beach also placed a strong emphasis on supporting the participants through mentoring and case management. Mentors would help keep participants engaged, responsible, and committed to their personal success. Case managers would be responsible for identifying the needs of participants and connecting them to appropriate community resources.



“The Transitional Jobs Project Committee designed a great model for this project. We had many successes, including placing young people with substantial challenges in living wage-paying positions. We anticipated and planned for the provision of multiple support services and realized the need would be greater than we imagined. In most cases, our partners, as we designed, were instrumental in providing the services needed.”

— Barbara A. Brinson, Youth Opportunities Coordinator, City of Virginia Beach



“Every young person deserves a chance to have the best life possible. It’s important to work together as a community and as a region to redirect and provide opportunities for those young people who may be on the wrong path.”

— Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf

Finally, the TJ team sought to embed the TJ program into the juvenile justice system in order to connect youth offenders to needed resources in the state and community upon their release.

Boosting the Project’s Profile

To increase community support for the program, the Virginia Beach team hosted a “Support Services Breakfast” to inform local agencies and organizations about the project and to solicit partnerships to provide services to participants. Mayor Oberndorf, State Senator Yvonne Miller, and representatives from the National League of Cities, state Departments of Juvenile Justice and Correctional Education and various public, nonprofit, and faith-based agencies attended the event. The program included a videotaped endorsement of the program by Jerrauld C. Jones, director of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. The TJ committee considers the breakfast their most creative and perhaps most successful strategy.

To further market the program to other businesses and to the community at-large, the team enlisted the support of a local media communications representative. The group received input on establishing a vision for the program and subsequently developed a one-page marketing piece entitled, “Transitional Jobs Project: More Than

Just a Job — Hope!” that could be used to present the TJ program to individuals, groups, and organizations.

An Initial TJ Pilot Project

Virginia Beach launched its pilot TJ program in November 2003, working with eight former youth offenders with children. The pilot program provided life skills and workforce readiness training, specific job skills, mentoring, and job placements at area community organizations in an effort to help participants gain employment and reduce their likelihood of recidivism. Participation in the program was voluntary and participants lacking their GED were able to enroll in classes at the Adult Learning Center of Virginia Beach.

Program participants received on-the-job building trades training and three to six months of practical work experience at one of several local community organizations such as the Community Housing Partners. Tidewaters Builders Association, which promotes the building and development trades associated with the residential home industry, also provided construction and building maintenance skills and job placement services to the pilot program participants.

Life skills training – money management, stress management, and workforce-readiness

training – were also critical services offered to all participants. As part of the project, the program counselor stayed connected to the participants and employers to manage each placement and participant’s needs.

In addition, Dr. Ruth Triplet with Old Dominion University in Norfolk agreed to do an evaluation of the program to help shape the future of the larger program servicing the entire region.

Securing Financial Support

Though the team felt that a comprehensive design offered the best possible chance of

positive, measurable outcomes for participants, they found it difficult to secure adequate funding for such an initiative.

Despite this challenge, an “Opportunity Knocks” grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services was provided to Tidewater Builders Association (via Opportunity, Inc.) to launch a pilot program in partnership with the City of Virginia Beach.

The Transitional Job Project committee also sought funding from the city, and received \$50,000 that served as matching funds for private and public grant sources’ in-kind donations and support for the pilot and the next phase of programming.

Moving Forward

To broaden the pilot efforts into a full-scale program, the TJ team worked through the city’s procurement process to publish a Request for Proposals (RFP). The first bidder’s conference did not yield the type of response that the group had hoped it would. Following a second bidder’s conference, the group selected an organization – Youth Services Corporation – to serve forty participants annually from the broader South Hampton Roads region pending adequate funding.

Virginia Beach solicited support at the municipal and state levels, as well as from the business community, to fund this project but

were ultimately unable to procure the resources needed to maintain or expand the local TJ program.

At the state level, the group continued to develop a strong, successful, and ongoing relationship with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. Key leaders of local industries and workforce development agencies were also targets for increased engagement. Virginia Beach continues to believe that these community sectors are the primary stakeholders in the effort and can help identify, secure, and leverage the resources necessary for a viable, regional TJ program.



~
CITY STORIES
~

Waco, Texas: Providing City Leadership, Fostering Collaborative Action

The City of Waco, Texas, in collaboration with the Workforce Investment Board, Mission Waco, and other area partners, designed and supported a transitional jobs program for those most in need of employment assistance.

Facing a declining local economy and significant high school dropout rates in 2002, then-Mayor Linda Ethridge and City Manager Kathy Rice of Waco, Texas, made it a priority to help those with significant barriers to employment. The transitional jobs model provided a framework around which they could mobilize city and community resources to ease the transition to work for chronically homeless individuals, day laborers, young mothers with limited job skills, former offenders, individuals in drug treatment, and high school dropouts.

Through technical assistance from the National League of Cities, Assistant City Manager Bert Lumbreras convened a variety of local stakeholders to serve as the Waco Transitional Jobs team. The team was committed to bringing the workforce system together to create transitional and permanent employment opportunities for those with

significant barriers to work. While the city remains an active partner and funder, other key partners have taken on critical resource development and management roles, making this a truly collaborative effort.

In 2003, the Waco TJ team launched a pilot project, managed by a local nonprofit, Mission Waco, that provided upfront life skills training and three to six weeks of paid temporary employment to eligible participants. The pilot program has led to ongoing TJ opportunities for adults and youth in the community.

Pulling the Partners Together

In addition to municipal leaders representing the city manager and the human resources office, Waco's TJ team included:

- *Workforce agencies*, such as the Heart of Texas Workforce Development Board (the



Waco, TX

Located in the heart of the Texas manufacturing and technology corridor south of Dallas and 100 miles north of Austin, the City of Waco, now governed by current Mayor Virginia DuPuy, boasts resources, infrastructure and incentives for industrial development. The City of Waco Police Department has a number of strong and successful community-based programs designed to combat crime in local neighborhoods.

Population	114,032
	(2000 Census)
% White	51.1%
% Black.....	22.4%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	1.3%
% American Indian	0.4%
% Other	0.1%
% Multiracial.....	1.1%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	23.6%
Median Household Income.....	\$26,264
Unemployment Rate.....	11.6%

local Workforce Investment Board) and the Texas Workforce Commission;

- *Faith-based nonprofits*, such as Mission Waco and Compassion Ministries;
- *Business organizations*, such as the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce, the Cen-Tex Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Society of Human Resource Managers;
- *Organizations serving at-risk children and youth*, such as Camp Fire USA-Tejas Council and the McLennan County Youth Collaboration (MCCYC);
- *Educational institutions*, such as the Waco Independent School District, McLennan Community College, Texas State Technical College, Quinn Campus, Inc., and Baylor University; and
- *Other community partners*, such as Labor Ready, the Heart of Texas Council of Governments, and the United Way of McLennan County.

Together, these diverse partners brought needed expertise, connections, and resources to the table.

Developing a Mission

The Waco TJ team set out to develop a community-wide effort where traditionally hard-to-employ participants could enjoy the benefits of a healthy, vibrant, and self-sufficient lifestyle. Specific goals fell into two major categories:

- *Better Employment Outcomes for Populations with Barriers to Work*: The mission of the TJ program was to enable economically vulnerable residents to become self-sufficient by connecting them to needed resources and skills and removing barriers to work. The team hoped that by providing the training and skills needed to prepare these residents for permanent employment, they could



“The Waco TJ project is a perfect example of a unique, widespread collaborative effort where community leaders identify a critical need, roll up their sleeves, do whatever it takes to put the pieces together, and make it happen! The success of the program is a true testament to our deeply committed and community-minded partners who will not let obstacles get in the way when we know how vital this is to many residents who just want to do better for their families and their way of life.”

— (former) Assistant City Manager Bert Lumbreras, City of Waco

connect other hard-to-employ people, such as homeless individuals, day laborers, and dropouts and other disadvantaged youth to mainstream employment.

- *Improvements to the Local Workforce System:* The team sought to make Waco’s workforce community better integrated by linking all of the resources and allies necessary to create a transitional jobs program. The team anticipated that these systemic changes would produce expanded opportunities beyond the TJ program and a sense of hope for the entire city.

The TJ team felt strongly that the program should be inclusive of a wide variety of populations with barriers to work, rather than narrowing the selection criteria to one particular group. While this decision made some elements of the planning process more difficult, such as identifying appropriate referral systems and support structures, it succeeded in generating broad community support for the project.

Researching Local Needs and Interests

The local WIB and the City of Waco had good data on economic trends and workforce demographics that informed the team’s decisions. However, the team also wanted to hear directly from potential participants and employers about what they would find most helpful in a TJ program. As part of a technical assistance site visit from NLC and the Transitional Work Corporation, the Waco TJ team conducted focus groups with employers and disadvantaged youth to get these perspectives.

The employer focus group included a wide variety of business and nonprofit employers, including managers and executive directors from a turkey packaging plant, a major health care provider, a paper plant, a hair salon, a cable company, and the local Goodwill store. One of the focus group members also represented the chamber of commerce. The participants consistently noted that they needed workers with adequate life skills and the

necessary supports to be reliable, trustworthy, long-term workers. Employers liked the idea that a TJ program would help potential employees work out some of these issues before they applied for a job and were enthusiastic about the additional level of screening and case management that such a program would offer. In addition to work experience, the employers stressed the need for work supports like transportation, childcare, ongoing education, and personal support.

The focus group of high school dropouts underscored the need for some of the same work supports that employers highlighted. In addition, young people voiced a need for clear career ladders that would help them feel like they were working towards a better opportunity rather than stuck in a dead-end, entry-level job. They also noted that the TJ program should target youth who have recently dropped out and connect them to GED classes, alternative high schools, or technical training along with work experience opportunities.

Tapping Existing Resources

Several of the community organizations that sent representatives to join the Waco TJ team already had components of a transitional jobs program within their existing services.

The City of Waco, for example, had already hired temporary employees and had slots that could be filled more strategically with TJ workers.

The Workforce Development Board provided one-stop employment services for both job seekers and employers and had funding for more programs of this sort. In addition, several local organizations already ran employment programs for the target populations. MCYC already managed the WIA youth employment program; Compassion Ministries ran a 30-day supported job search program for families in

transitional housing; and Mission Waco worked with TANF clients and day laborers who struggled to find consistent employment and self-sufficiency.

The Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce, Cen-Tex Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Baylor University, Labor Ready, Heart of Texas Council of Governments, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Society of Human Resource Managers all had direct links to employers.

Finally, the employers who were included in the focus group already offered some temp-to-permanent employment programs and other supports that would position them to be strong TJ partners.

Addressing Challenges through a Pilot TJ Project

Launched in the fall of 2003, Waco's pilot TJ program utilized an individual placement model in which participants earned hourly wages to work in a variety of settings, such as a food service company affiliated with Baylor University, a Head Start program, a doctor's office, several city agencies, and a Business Resource Center. The Texas Workforce Development Board funded the initiative through a contract with Mission Waco. Mission Waco provided three weeks of intensive training on important soft skills such as maturity, interviewing, and conflict resolution, and facilitated three to six weeks of temporary employment for participants at various contracted locations for \$6.25 an hour. Mission Waco served as the employer of record, closely monitoring, counseling, and coaching each participant.

The Waco TJ team encountered a number of challenges as it sought to make a pilot TJ program operational. For instance, while the wages for three categories of temporary employment positions – customer service representatives, service laborers, and building maintenance workers – were already avail-

able through the city's general funds, the inconsistent, and in some cases seasonal, nature of the work made it difficult to rely on these positions as TJ placements. Further, the need to provide fair and equitable access to these city jobs posed thorny issues for the city's Human Resources Department.

The team also found that the type of participants they could serve was limited by funding restrictions. Although the team was committed to serving all Waco residents with barriers-to-work, the initial funding for this project came from the TANF program, which restricted eligibility to participants who met TANF guidelines.

Finally, the TJ team struggled to find the resources needed to offer the training and temporary employment for as long as they had hoped. In the end, they had to limit the intensive training period to three weeks and the temporary employment to three to six weeks.

Nevertheless, the first three months of the pilot program exceeded the expectations of the TJ team. After 27 TANF-eligible participants successfully completed the program, 19 moved into permanent employment, for a placement rate of 70 percent.

Finding Funding

Beginning in March 2003, the Texas Workforce Development Board began

funding Mission Waco to manage a TJ program for a six-county region, including McLennan County in which the City of Waco is located.

Due to the initial success of the program, Mission Waco was able to secure a \$192,000 contract with the Texas Workforce Development Board for 2004. Mission Waco also received \$50,000 from the City of Waco's Community Development Block Grant program and \$70,000 from the Rapoport Foundation.

While the Waco TJ team has found it relatively easy to fund orientation, life skills, case management, job development, and even wages, it has struggled to find adequate resources to cover administration, childcare, transportation, and post-placement services.

Showing Results

The Waco program was successful on a number of fronts: building partnerships, opening new opportunities for participants, and leading to employment outcomes for individuals with barriers to work.

Mission Waco successfully partnered with 25 community organizations and businesses for subsidized temporary placements and 20 employers for employment following the program.

Participants have also reacted positively to the program, expressing excitement at having



The transitional jobs model provided a framework

around which the City of Waco could mobilize resources to ease the transition to work for chronically homeless individuals, day laborers, young mothers with limited job skills, former offenders, individuals in drug treatment, and high school dropouts.

access to opportunities that had passed them by for so long. Many participants have indicated that the TJ program in Waco has given them a chance to make a significant change in their lives.

The 2004 grant from the Texas Workforce Development Board aimed to have 61 individuals successfully complete the program in one year, with 43 placed in transitional job opportunities and 28 placed in permanent employment positions. Seventy-five TANF recipients completed the job training program and, of those participants, 31 were placed in transitional jobs and 34 moved directly into unsubsidized employment. Since 2004, they have served more than 200 participants through the Workforce Development Board grant, 29 of which were through the transitional job component.

The CDBG contract originally aimed to have 20 individuals complete training, with half of those eventually placed in unsubsidized jobs. Again, the program exceeded goals: 31 entered the training class, 18 gained transitional jobs, and 10 moved into unsubsidized employment.

Through the city's Summer Youth TJ program, funded by the Rapoport Foundation, 18 youth completed training and 14 secured transitional employment. Of these, seven entered permanent employment, while others returned to school or participated in other programs with schedules that did not allow them to work. Mission Waco also developed a six-month program providing training and a brief transitional employment opportunity to 16- and 17-year-olds, serving eight out-of-school and 18 in-school youth.

Moving Forward

Mission Waco still receives funding for transitional jobs and they are working with other entities, such as Baylor University and Texas State Technical College, to provide skills training opportunities in culinary arts, computer training, lawn care, and more in an attempt to expand the TJ program.

In 2005, Mission Waco also joined forces with other local agencies to implement a "Ticket To Work" contract from the Social Security Administration for individuals with

disabilities but with the capacity to work who currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

One of the most important lessons the Waco team learned in the development of the TJ program was that working with other resource agencies decreases the chances of participants falling back into – or deeper into – poverty.



Strengthening Workforce Programs for Disadvantaged Youth in Winston-Salem, North Carolina

New partnerships unified and expanded local transitional jobs programs serving at-risk youth, while mayoral outreach garnered new employer support.

When the City of Winston-Salem applied to participate in NLC's Transitional Jobs Technical Assistance Project, they already had a strong foundation for their efforts. First, they had the strong support of Mayor Allen Joines and solid partnerships with the Workforce Investment Board and other key community partners. Second, several transitional employment programs were already operating in the community.

Third, their target population was very focused. Through a community-wide analysis in the late 1990s, the city had identified areas of the community where youth violence was concentrated as well as a number of key factors that put youth and young adults at-risk for becoming involved in criminal activity. The initiative helped the city realize that effective deterrents for at-risk

youth are jobs that pay a decent wage and help move youth toward self-sufficiency.

The city and its partners sought help from the National League of Cities to bring the city's existing transitional jobs programs into a community-wide network to facilitate resource sharing and streamline efforts to build employer support. At the same time, they hoped to use best practices from research and other programs around the country to improve program operations.

Getting Started

Through its participation in a 1998 Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI), sponsored by the North Carolina Justice Department, the City of Winston-Salem had determined that lack of well-paying jobs was one of the primary causes of



Winston-Salem, NC

Mayor Allen Joines of the City of Winston-Salem, one of America’s Most Livable Cities, hosts unique “Talk of the Town” meetings in his city so that residents can voice their concerns and their compliments. Winston-Salem’s Police Department runs an extensive number of crime prevention programs and has recently launched a new and unique high-speed notification system to improve public safety in Winston-Salem communities.

Population	185,480
	(2000 Census)
% White	52.5%
% Black.....	36.5%
% Asian/Pacific Islander	1.1%
% American Indian.....	0.3%
% Other	0.1%
% Multiracial.....	0.9%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	8.5%
Median Household Income.....	\$37,006
Unemployment Rate.....	5.7%

youth violence in the community. Therefore, they decided to focus on youth, ages 17-24, who were perceived to be at-risk for criminal activity due to poverty, unemployment, drug and other illegal activity, and low educational achievement. They also determined that these youth would need to live in one of the most distressed neighborhoods in Winston-Salem, including the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area and those neighborhoods designated as Weed & Seed target areas.

Linda Jackson-Barnes of the Mayor’s Office, in partnership with Alvin Atkins of the Center for Community Safety and Mary Anne Forehand of the Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board, formed a Transitional Jobs Steering Committee to determine exactly what was already in place for the target population and to develop a vision for a stronger, more cohesive transitional employment program.

The committee pulled together representatives of programs already working with the identified target population. The stakeholders meeting included 40 individuals representing 30 separate stakeholder groups. The individuals attending this meeting brainstormed to identify the needs of the target group and the resources already available in the community to meet their needs. The stakeholder meeting became an important vehicle for those working with the TJ program’s target population to make appropriate referrals for services.

Existing Programs with Key TJ Components

It was very clear to the Steering Committee right from the start that there were already some very exciting efforts underway in the community that served the target population, including some that offered paid transitional employment.

As part of a 1994 Enterprise Community proposal, the City of Winston-Salem had

adopted three major strategies to help residents achieve their economic goals: 1) job creation; 2) job training and workforce development; and 3) wealth creation. As a result, community partners had developed key job training and placement programs and other supportive resources that turned out to be critical elements of the city's effort to provide transitional jobs.

The *Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Service Corps* provides the opportunities and support for at-risk youth to become productive and contributing members of the community. The Corps' activities include paid work experience on a work crew, remedial and high school equivalency training, and on-the-job training, as well as basic life skills and pre-employment work maturity skills training. The Service Corps operates in cooperation with the municipal police department, the state probation and parole system, the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the court system, and Forsyth Technical Community College. Contracts completed by program participants bring in ongoing funding, which is supplemented by funding from the Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the *Brownfields Program* provides classroom

training followed by paid work experience to participants, who are trained to provide environmental education to residents. Forsyth Technical Community College, the creator of this program, provides training to participants, while local employers collaborate to offer on-the-job training through transitional employment.

The City of Winston-Salem, through Forsyth Technical Community College, operates a special *Construction Training* program. Crews of participants apply their new skills in the areas of carpentry, painting, roofing, flooring, and electrical wiring to rehabilitate homes and other buildings in the community. The Home Builders Association of Winston-Salem gives advice to program administrators regarding necessary hiring and skills training needs of contractors and sub-contractors. Program funding, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and housing services funds, comes from the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department.

As part of a violence reduction initiative, the Center for Community Safety launched *Project Fresh Start* in collaboration with several community partners, including Vision Works, the Urban League, and the Winston-Salem Police Department. Project Fresh Start offers job readiness, job training, and vocational skills, and employer recruit-



The City of Winston-Salem and its partners sought

help from the National League of Cities to bring existing transitional jobs programs into a community-wide network to facilitate resource sharing and streamline efforts to build employer support. At the same time, they hoped to use best practices from research and other programs around the country to improve program operations.

ment and job placement for at-risk individuals and those returning from incarceration. This program includes ongoing drug screening and access to substance abuse and mental health treatment. After the initial grant funding for Project Fresh Start expired, it became the responsibility of the Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board, which has integrated parts of Project Fresh Start into the Construction Training Program of Housing and Neighborhood Services.

Finally, the *JobLink Career Center*, administered by the Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board, is a one-stop career center that employs job training coaches to help residents navigate through vocational assessment, training, job readiness preparation, and attainment of employment. With staff members from eight partner agencies, residents are able to access several different employment and training opportunities through a single port of entry. The Center also serves as a point of contact for business and industry to communicate their workforce needs and obtain assistance in developing a trained and/or skilled employee base.

All of these programs provided important services to the at-risk youth in the target area, providing a strong foundation on which to build.

Launching a Pilot Project

The city used this base of support to develop a more integrated approach to transitional employment for at-risk youth in early 2003. As a result, participating young people would have the opportunity to serve on a work crew at a number of jobs provided through the various local programs.

Within the first six months of the program, the collaborative had placed five youth in jobs through the Service Corps Program and the Brownfields Job Training and Development Program. By the end of the

first year, the Winston-Salem TJ Project placed thirty-nine youths into jobs, moved nine of these individuals from transitional to permanent employment, revitalized the existing Project Fresh Start, and hired a Service Corps Crew leader to run a new Service Corps Crew designed specifically to serve the TJ Project's target population.

One success story was a participant that received Brownfields environmental training and was placed in a three-month work experience with a local engineering company. The company made a commitment to hire the TJ participant permanently after the three-month trial period.

Garnering Employer Support

In addition to their programmatic efforts, the TJ Steering Committee decided to tackle one of the critical gaps that they saw in the current programs serving at-risk youth: inadequate employer support.

In April 2003, the local paper published an article promoting the city's TJ efforts and encouraging employers to get involved in the initiative. The TJ team built on this visibility by working with a local marketing group to produce an informative CD about the project designed to boost employer support.

In mid-May, Mayor Joines invited a diverse group of major local employers to attend an informational breakfast to learn about the city's TJ initiative and the various ways they could become partners. In addition to distributing the newly developed CD about the project, the mayor personally encouraged employers to consider hosting TJ participants during their transitional work experience; hiring program graduates; or donating time, expertise or resources to the project.

A diverse group of companies attended, including representatives of major local employers such as Krispy Kreme Donuts and Reynolds Tobacco Company. This breakfast



Project leaders remain committed to providing meaningful work opportunities to some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

was a particularly important opportunity for the Winston-Salem TJ team to engage employers that were previously unwilling to work with youth with criminal records.

To better serve the target youth population and better match clients with employers, the Winston-Salem team also created a survey for employers that explored the reasons employers typically shy away from hiring youth former offenders and what the TJ Project could do to alleviate concerns. Due to budgeting and staff constraints at the Center for Community Safety, this survey was never administered, but has now been revised by the Violent Crimes Working Group and may still be used with employers in the future.

Addressing Economic Challenges

During the pilot phase of the project, Winston-Salem witnessed massive local layoffs. More than 4,000 people lost their jobs in a single month as four major companies made drastic budget cuts. Due to the layoffs, local employment programs were oversubscribed and Workforce Investment Act funds, which had already been allocated, were stretched thin.

Over the next several years, the situation in Winston-Salem did not change substantially for low-skill, entry-level workers with most growth occurring in high tech manufacturing, such as within a new Dell Computer plant. The TJ team worked hard to identify areas of job growth and target

their program activities to these burgeoning industries. For instance, they have worked with the National Hotel and Hospitality Association and local hoteliers to bring an entry-level training program for the hospitality industry to Winston-Salem. They also added entry-level landscape training to the city's construction training program under Housing and Neighborhood Services. Finally, the Service Corps added a floor maintenance program to its curriculum.

Finding Resources

Although each of the components of Winston-Salem's TJ program had its own funding at the start of the project, these programs all continue to struggle with funding and staffing issues in the wake of community-wide layoffs and steep competition for grant money.

While Winston-Salem did receive \$160,000 from the state to assist offenders in returning to the community, it was targeted primarily to adult offenders. The team was able to use some funds for those TJ participants who were over the age of 18 and were receiving services through WIA programs, but this did not cover their overall needs.

Over the course of the project, several grant applications were rejected and federal support proved difficult to obtain. Despite these challenges, the local TJ team remained unified in its mission to provide employment services to the vulnerable young people in their target population.

Moving Forward

After achieving many of its initial goals, the TJ team is turning its focus toward: 1) developing social enterprise opportunities; 2) garnering more funding for paid work experience; and 3) enhancing efforts to encourage employers to hire former offenders. While

the TJ Project was limited to two years, project leaders remain committed to these efforts to provide meaningful work opportunities to some of the most vulnerable young people in the community.

Lessons Learned

LESSONS LEARNED



Vicki Coons/The Virginian Pilot

In the course of working with ten cities participating in the Transitional Jobs Project, the YEF Institute gained a wealth of insights into how cities can play essential roles in developing and launching transitional jobs programs. We also learned a great deal about what works — and what does not work — as local officials set out to provide employment and support opportunities for hard-to-serve individuals. Based on those experiences, we offer the following lessons learned for other municipal leaders:

1. New transitional jobs (TJ) initiatives are most successful when their missions connect to the goals of a local champion.

Mayors, city councilmembers, and other prominent local officials have the credibility and influence to identify pressing problems in their cities and towns and mobilize the community to tackle them. If key municipal officials see a new TJ program as a solution to an identified problem – whether it emerges as a result of their leadership or arises separately but is clearly aligned with a public priority – the program will benefit from greater visibility, new partners, and increased access to resources.

In a number of the cities in the TJ Project, the mayor had already set out a platform or

appointed a task force to tackle issues related to the emerging TJ programs. In Syracuse, Mayor Matthew Driscoll formed an Intervention Task Force to identify the causes of youth violence and develop realistic recommendations for promoting positive youth development. When the Task Force identified unemployment as a contributor to violent crime among youth, the transitional jobs model emerged as an appropriate way to help counter the rise of youth violence in the city.

A prominent local champion can serve as a connector, bringing high-level stakeholders to the table. Whether through personal requests to participate or an officially appointed task force, local officials have the influence to engage business executives, nonprofit and for-profit employment services, social service agencies, transportation directors, and other key players. In other

cases, these players already work together as part of a task force on a related issue, and the champion can ensure that the development of a transitional jobs program becomes a part of that group's mission.

Aligning a TJ program with a local leadership priority can also pay off financially. In some cases, the city may allocate additional resources to further this public goal; in others, the mayor may get involved in pushing for state or federal funding. The personal involvement of Mayor Johnson in Jackson, Miss., led to dedicated federal funding to start up two transitional jobs programs serving disadvantaged youth and homeless individuals.

Finally, linking a developing transitional jobs program to an existing leadership initiative can heighten the visibility and strengthen public support. Mayor O'Malley of Baltimore, for instance, declared that public safety was his number one priority. His leadership on this issue gave significant momentum to the efforts of the city's TJ team as they sought to reduce recidivism by helping former offenders achieve stable employment.

While municipal officials typically played the role of champion in the TJ Project cities, in some cases this role was filled by another prominent figure: a county commissioner, a judge, or a business leader. The lesson: projects whose goals are aligned with the agenda of a key community leader have an easier time getting partners to the table, raising money for the program, and generating broad public support.

2. Sustained efforts to build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders yield multiple dividends.

Cultivating relationships with key stakeholders enriches developing TJ programs and lays the foundation for long-term sustainability. Local partners bring needed expertise and resources to program design and development. In addition, their involvement lends credibility to the effort and helps foster community support.

Successful transitional jobs programs must incorporate multiple perspectives into program design to meet participants where they are, help them access the work supports they need, and to prepare them to meet the expectations of their future employers. Therefore, the cities in the TJ Project included a wide variety of stakeholders in their local planning efforts drawn from the following categories:

- Potential participants;
- Public and nonprofit agencies that currently work with the target population (e.g., homeless shelters, the criminal justice system, the public welfare system, etc.);
- Agencies that offer supports necessary for participants to work (e.g., childcare, transportation, substance abuse programs, housing supports, etc.);
- Education and workforce development practitioners (e.g., Workforce Investment Boards, GED programs, ESL programs, job training providers, local colleges and universities, job readiness and job search programs, etc.); and
- Employers (e.g., executives, human resources directors, professional development specialists, etc.).

Partners not only bring helpful perspectives, but can bring resources crucial to the developing program. After gathering a team of key stakeholders, the City of Detroit, Mich., recognized that many of the pieces of a transitional jobs program were already available but remained disconnected. Because the team had the right players at the table, they were able to forge meaningful partnerships to address the needs of former offenders in the city, including recruitment, housing, supervision, case management, employability and life skills training, 90 days of paid work experience, jobs placement, and transportation to work.

Finally, partners bring access to new TJ programs with various constituents. In Winston-Salem, N.C., the mayor was able to reach out to the business community, the Northwest Piedmont workforce development agency brought strong connections with job training providers and funders, and two existing employment programs (Weed & Seed and Project Fresh Start) had credibility with the target population.

While partnerships are critically important, they do require time and careful management. Cities in the project noted three major challenges of collaboration: too many partners; overextended partners; and competition among partners. To help keep the planning group manageable and reduce the strain on some participants, cities often created subcommittees (or at least a smaller design team) and used large group meetings or separate focus groups to include partners who could not be involved as intensively. Turf issues at times proved troubling, but strong leadership by someone perceived as a neutral broker helped ease, if not erase, these concerns.

3. A strong, diversified funding strategy requires creativity, collaboration, and tenacity.

Research demonstrates that the TJ model yields excellent results for participants who have significant challenges to employment. The focus on wage-paying transitional employment and comprehensive supports, however, translate into a relatively large budget. While finding funding was one of their biggest challenges, the cities in the TJ Project showed that there are many ways to fund a new program by thinking outside of the box, engaging new partners, and persevering despite early disappointments.

Local leaders launching new TJ programs are encouraged to think about a wide range of possible funding sources, including but certainly not limited to traditional employment and training resources. Some cities looked to funding specifically for the target population, such as resources for ex-offender housing or for high school dropouts. Others looked for funding from other sources – such as housing rehabilitation, road construction, and environmental cleanup – that offered resources to cover training and wages for participants who work toward these desired outcomes. Still others sought to design TJ programs based fully or in part on the social enterprise model, in which employees' work not only develops their skills, but also helps generate revenue to maintain the program.

It is often necessary – and more sustainable over time – to combine funding from multiple sources to cover the costs of running a TJ program. While there are certain funding sources that cities may be able to designate directly for a TJ program, such as Community Development Block Grant dollars or the city's temporary worker line item, others require the support of outside partners at the local, state, or federal

level. In some cases, these partners are able to apply for different funding streams than the city; in others, they may already be funded to provide some of the services needed to round out the TJ program. The City of Waco, Texas, for example, paired some municipal temporary worker slots with funding through their local workforce development board to get their TJ program off the ground.

Finally, local leaders seeking funding must expect to face a number of dead ends in this quest and have the tenacity to keep trying. Even when things go smoothly, it can take over a year to go from planning to implementation, especially if a community is seeking federal funding. Many sites choose to begin by seeking seed money for a pilot project to demonstrate that the model works before securing more sustainable, long-term funding. Once a program is underway, data and participant testimony can more effectively convince potential funders to invest in the project than research on the model in general.

The City of Jackson, Miss., offers a good example of this type of perseverance. After the city was twice denied federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development based on a narrow interpretation of how the money must be used, Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr., lobbied for two Congressional earmarks that enabled the city to move forward with TJ pilot projects serving out-of-school, low-income youth and homeless individuals. Jackson is using their funding earmarks to point to success with the pilot projects in hopes of garnering future federal resources.

The struggles of the cities involved in the TJ Project inspired NLC to publish a TJ financing guide, with overall strategic advice and a catalog of relevant federal funding sources, which is now broadly available (www.nlc.org/iyef).

4. TJ programs that are aligned with employer needs achieve better outcomes for participants.

Aligning a TJ program with private sector interests leads to more marketable employees and more receptive employers during both the subsidized and unsubsidized placements. By consulting with employers from the start, participants will receive training that is more transferable to the workplace. Moreover, employers who have been involved in the design process will look to the program as a source of reliable workers.

Mayors and other local officials can help get business leaders engaged in the design and implementation of a TJ program. In Winston-Salem, Mayor Joines hosted an employer breakfast to brief local business leaders on the city's efforts to expand transitional employment opportunities for disconnected youth who had been or were at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. His leadership brought the business community to the table and reassured many executives who may have otherwise been hesitant to get involved in such a program. Their input also influenced the direction of the developing project.

Employers can provide valuable insights, such as why they do not hire certain workers or why those workers tend to turn over quickly. When these issues are identified, the TJ program can address these issues explicitly, through bonding for former offenders, assistance developing back up childcare plans for working parents, or mentors for youth. Employers can also help identify the specific hard and soft skills that entry-level workers must have to succeed in their industry, skills on which transitional workers should focus during their temporary employment and supplemental training.

Involving employers up front also sets the stage for critical, ongoing relationships between the program and local employers who may serve as hosts to transitional workers or who may hire program graduates. At each step, programs should assess participants' employability and work-readiness to ensure that employers' and employees' needs are well matched.

Coordinating participant placement desires with the needs of businesses creates a win-win for all parties involved and builds the credibility of the program with participants and employers alike.

Finally, some cities noted the importance of balancing the needs of participants and employers. Despite the urge to involve every interested business, existing TJ programs counsel that it is not worth building relationships with companies that only seem interested in the subsidized labor or that have firm barriers to hiring individuals targeted by the program (e.g., former offenders).

5. Successful programs incorporate strong data collection systems and ongoing evaluation.

Data collection and ongoing program evaluation are valuable tools for strengthening and selling TJ programs. In order to achieve and maintain high-quality services, TJ programs need to know what is working – and what's not – and why. This information is also a vitally important tool for attracting participants, engaging partners, securing funding, and convincing employers to hire participants.

Data analysis and evaluation can pinpoint problem areas and lead to needed mid-course corrections in the program's design. For example, if most participants are successfully placed in unsubsidized jobs, but few are retaining those jobs after six

months, a program can begin to work toward better results through longer temporary placements to help work through employment challenges, better access to childcare and transportation, or more intensive post-placement supports. These types of corrections can help the program run more efficiently and boost future results.

Showing strong local results – and when possible comparing them to national standards – can help a program gain momentum. Highlighting results through the media (via press releases, newsletters, mailings, or press conferences) and local officials can raise the visibility of the program with potential funders and partners. Operating TJ programs have also found data on the success of their participants to be a selling point as they court new employers to host transitional workers or hire program graduates.

Programs should consider collecting data such as the number of participants enrolled, placed in transitional employment, placed in unsubsidized employment, and still employed after six months in unsubsidized jobs. A list of ten recommended basic data collection elements designed by the National League of Cities and the National Transitional Jobs Network helped several of the cities in the TJ Project develop evaluation plans. Moreover, surveying current and potential program participants and employers can provide more thoughtful and nuanced insights into the program's successes and weaknesses.

Some programs find it helpful to hire an external evaluator or to ask someone with appropriate skills to be part of the design team. In Detroit, for instance, the team brought in a researcher from the University of Michigan to work with the project right from the start.

6. Existing TJ programs can help new programs adopt proven strategies and avoid common pitfalls.

Currently, TJ programs exist in cities of varying sizes across the country, as well as in several states and rural regions. The TJ Project sites visited several operating initiatives to witness the model in action and hear first hand the lessons they had learned over time.

Existing programs often have insights into serving particular populations, such as former offenders, long-term welfare recipients, or youth. They can help new programs navigate funding streams, prime recruitment channels, and ways to overcome barriers to employment unique to these populations. Several of the project sites attended a special gathering in Baltimore, Md., to gain expertise from transitional jobs programs serving the former offender population. Program speakers from the Center for Employment Opportunities in New York, the Safer Foundation in Chicago, and the Ready, Willing & Able Program in New York gave a variety of perspectives on what they have found challenging and what has worked well.

In addition, by turning to the wealth of experiences available from existing programs, cities in the project were able to compare different ways of implementing the TJ model. For example, at the NLC 2002 Your City's Families Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., representatives of several of the cities in the TJ Project visited the Lifetrack Resources to learn more about their combination of a packaging plant, in which participants' transitional work activities help raise revenue for the program, with individual placement of more highly skilled participants in selected work sites.

Finally, cities in the project benefited in many specific ways as they sought advice from peers in other programs. Many

programs turned to the Transitional Work Corporation of Philadelphia for specific advice on designing a program budget, staff job descriptions, and data collection. At the final cross-site meeting of the TJ Project, the director of the YouthBuild program in Portland, Ore., shared strategic methods to increase funder interest and garner increased media attention, including utilizing youth to host visits to work sites to "sell" the program.

In order to make the most out of these resources, NLC facilitated the participation of the ten TJ Project cities in the National Transitional Job Network. This Network provides tremendous learning and networking opportunities for any community or state seeking to create a new TJ program.

7. The most successful TJ programs respond quickly and flexibly to emerging opportunities and challenges.

No matter how much a city can learn from national experts or existing programs, the success of a new program comes, in large measure, from the ability to respond quickly and flexibly to opportunities and challenges as they arise at the local level.

One way to look for such opportunities is to identify potential funders and partners whose missions align with the mission of the TJ initiative and figure out how they can support the effort. For example, the City of Detroit was disappointed that the Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) could not directly fund their emerging TJ program for former offenders. They continued to build a relationship with the Department, however, and learned that they could fund subsidized housing to help former offenders return to the city and enter Detroit's transitional jobs program.

In Fort Wayne, Ind., some leaders in the

business community were initially cautious about throwing their support behind their ex-offender TJ efforts. They were willing, however, to run practice interviews with TJ participants. As a result of their personal involvement with individuals in the program, they became more actively supportive of the overall program.

In Waco, Texas, the Home Depot and Walmart could not offer subsidized jobs because of corporate policies. These two companies were interested in the TJ model and agreed to let the city know when positions were open so that program participants could apply for permanent positions.

Other cities found that they had to start at a smaller scale or with a slightly different population than they had originally planned. The City of Jackson, Miss., initially wanted to

focus on the homeless population, but because of the lack of funding for transitional employment wages for this group, the city piloted a project centered on at-risk youth first. Not only did this assist the young people in the program, but the lessons from this project helped inform the design of a homeless TJ program once the city was able to secure funding.

The cities in this project demonstrated that with a will to succeed, there were ways to turn even challenging situations to their advantage. The result: nearly all of the cities in this project created new TJ programs to serve individuals with barriers to employment in their home communities. At the same time, their experiences provide new insights and guidance for other cities to do the same.

Appendices

Transitional Jobs Project

City Contacts

Baltimore

Karen A. Pearson
Vice President, Workforce Development
Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc.
222 East Redwood Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Ph: (410) 837-1800 x 146
Email: kpearson@goodwillches.org

Detroit

Joe Evans
Director, Detroit Career Center
Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit
3111 Grand River Avenue
Detroit, MI 48208
Ph: (313) 964-3900 x 505
Email: jevans@goodwilldetroit.org

Fort Wayne

Anthony Hudson
Director
Blue Jacket, Inc.
3702 South Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46806
Ph: (260) 744-1900
Email: ahudson@bluejacketinc.org

Jackson

Michael Raff
Deputy Director, Department of Human &
Cultural Services
City of Jackson
P.O. Box 17
Jackson, MS 39205
Ph: (601) 960-0335
Email: mraff@city.jackson.ms.us

San Antonio

Dennis Campa
Director, Department of Community
Initiatives
City of San Antonio
115 Plaza de Armas, #210
San Antonio, TX 78205
Ph: (210) 207-7209
Email: dcampa@sanantonio.gov

Syracuse

JoAnn Coria
Director of Research
City of Syracuse
233 East Washington Street, Room 419
Syracuse, NY 13202
Ph: (315) 448-8020
Email: jcoria@ci.syracuse.ny.us

Virginia Beach

Barbara Brinson
Coordinator, Youth Opportunities Office
City of Virginia Beach
800 Monmouth Lane
Virginia Beach, VA 23464
Ph: (757) 385-0464
Email: BBrinson@vbgov.com

Waco

Larry D. Groth, P.E.
City Manager
P.O. Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702
Ph: (254) 750-5640
Email: larryg@ci.waco.tx.us

Winston-Salem

Mary Anne Forehand, GCDF, CWDP
Program Operations Supervisor
Northwest Piedmont Workforce
Development Program
400 West Fourth Street, Suite 400
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
Ph: (336) 761-2111
Email: mforehand@nwpcog.org

Collaborating Organizations

The following organizations were active partners with NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families in providing information, resources, and on-site technical assistance to the participating cities of the Transitional Jobs Project.

Transitional Jobs Network

Melissa Young, National Transitional Jobs Network Coordinator
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1818
Chicago, IL 60604
Ph: (773) 728-5960 x 6286
Email: myoung@heartlandalliance.org
Website: www.transitionaljobs.net

The Transitional Jobs Network is a dynamic network of existing city and state transitional jobs programs staffed by Heartland Alliance. Heartland maintains the network's website, provides research and technical assistance to network members, and provides opportunities for cross-site sharing.

Center for Law and Social Policy

Abbey Frank, Senior Policy Analyst
Center for Law and Social Policy
1015 15th Street, N.W., #400
Washington, DC 20005
Ph: (202) 906-8008
Email: afrank@clasp.org
Website: www.clasp.org

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) houses several resident experts on transitional jobs, welfare to work, and other social policy issues, providing critical information on program design, funding, and federal regulations. CLASP has been a pivotal player in the growth and success of the transitional jobs model across the country.

Transitional Work Corporation

Richard Greenwald, President/CEO
Transitional Work Corporation
100 South Broad Street, 7th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19110
Ph: 215-965-8156 x 310
Email: rcg@transitionalwork.org
Website: www.transitionalwork.org

The Transitional Work Corporation (TWC) was founded in 1998 in Philadelphia. TWC uses city, state, and private foundation funding to operate a model transitional jobs program for city residents. TWC has also consulted with other sites interested in launching similar programs and provided technical support to sites during the design and early implementation phases.

For more information, please contact Abby Hughes Holsclaw, Program Director for Early Childhood and Family Economic Success at holsclaw@nlc.org.



**Institute for
Youth, Education,
and Families**



National League of Cities

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1763
202-626-3000
www.nlc.org