



BOONE COUNTY
UPWARD MOBILITY

Jobs and Workforce Development Workgroup Minutes

April 24, 2024, 1:30PM – 3:00PM

Boone Electric Community Building- Amp Room (1413 Rangeline, Columbia MO)

Attendance: Alvin Cobbins (Minority Men’s Network), Steve Smith (Job Point), Conrad Hake (Love Columbia), Leslie White (Central Missouri Community Action), Tara Shade (Woodhaven), Nikki Carter (MU Healthcare), Natasha Harris (Victory Finances), Daniel Crasnow (Central Missouri Community Action), Lester Woods (The Source Summit), Gina Jenkins (Boone County Community Services Department (BCCSD)), Verna Laboy (BCCSD), Kerby Webb (BCCSD)

Meeting Objective: Define upwardly mobile business practices and plan next steps based on ranked action steps.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Al opened the meeting and welcomed the group. Attendees introduced themselves.

Verna explained that our department is using a new mass email system that failed to share the attachments. Going forward, please let us know if the email received does not have attachments.

2. Group discussion of upwardly mobile business practices definition.

The workgroup enjoyed a healthy discussion of how to define an Upwardly Mobile Business using the [Upward Mobility Framework](#) developed by the Urban Institute as a starting point. Discussion items included:

- Considerations employers could offer to support employees through the benefits package such as training opportunities, upskilling, career paths, and employee tuition reimbursements.
- The workgroup discussed some barriers to job placement and advancement such justice involved individuals and those who were impacted by the “The Benefits Cliff.” A benefits cliff happens when an individual receives a small increase in pay making them ineligible for governmental programs such as housing, social security disability, and other programs. Individuals shared how their organizations address the Benefits Cliff issue. For example, Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) shared that the Benefits Cliff is part of their strategic plan.
- There were examples of employees declining raises because of the fear of losing public assistance. The workgroup discussed this as a bigger issue, with areas where an employer could assist an employee with planning in areas such as financial literacy, childcare supports, community partnerships with programs that build bridges to transition outside of monetary, or stipends to bridge the gap in supportive services. The workgroup provided suggestions for addressing these issues, such as organized business efforts, system level issues to provide fringe benefits vs. salary, or pooling resources to provide supplementary supportive services. Some noted that private business could have more flexibility to change than larger institutions, state, and federal governments. An example was provided about regulatory challenges impacting proposed changes in one department of state government. It was suggested that maybe programs like Love Columbia’s Extra Mile Program/Central Bank’s Prosper U, could offer to train



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employees for businesses for a fee as an employee benefit or that businesses could pool their resources to provide supplementary supportive services, with challenges to moving down this path noted.

- An example from a Leadership Columbia trip to [Amethyst Place](#) in Kansas City was shared as a program that could be researched for our community. This example works with the employers of their participants to help them plan raises/benefits etc.
- It was suggested that having more benefit planners would be helpful as would some sort of calculator. CMCA noted the [Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta](#) has a product they use as part of their Financial Opportunity Program which provides coaching.
- An update about Columbia Chamber of Commerce considering bringing back the Inclusive Excellence for Businesses training this summer was provided. There was a suggestion to request the Community Reinvestment Act Report (CRA) from Central Bank (Prosper U) to get data following their participation in this training.

3. Discussion of Next Steps for Workgroup

- a. Prioritize action steps.

With limited time remaining for discussion, this conversation will be revisited at the next workgroup meeting.

- b. Call to action – How do we move forward?

The workgroup elected to have guided direction for individuals to continue to research and brainstorm what an Upwardly Mobile Business looks like, potentially using SurveyMonkey to compile input. Additional information will be sent to the workgroup.

4. Closing

- a. Partner Updates:

Job Point placed two participants in employment this morning. Love Columbia received news this morning they would not receive ARPA funding for their Career Pathways proposal. CMCA shared that their employment training program with City of Columbia is funded through 2026. Boone County Community Services Department will be offering [Results Based Accountability \(RBA\) training](#) on Friday June 7, 8:30-4:30 and the deadline to submit entries for the Student Art Contest is April 28.

- b. Comments and Questions

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 1:30 – 3:00PM, Boone Electric Community Building



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