Report: Detroit Job Seekers Living In Poverty Face Multiple Employment Barriers

Staff Writer

DETROIT – A new report finds the referral network for job seekers living in poverty and facing multiple barriers to employment in the City of Detroit extends beyond traditional workforce development activities.

Nearly 260 workforce and related service providers were identified as part of the referral network and approximately half provide some combination of temporary shelter, food assistance, clothing, health services, basic literacy education, and other essential services.

The report was produced for the McGregor Fund and released by the Workforce Intelligence Network for Southeast Michigan (WIN).

Key themes from the research are:
1. Multiple barriers to employment are the most detrimental to positive employment outcomes.
2. The most common barriers to employment are beyond the scope of traditional workforce development system activities, including: safe and affordable housing, accessible transportation, and affordable and accessible quality child care.
3. The most effective strategies for securing and maintaining employment combine initial work experience, coaching, and direct support for basic needs such as transportation, child care, work attire, and housing.
4. System-coordinated referrals are critical in reducing service fragmentation for job seekers.
5. Public funding requirements limit the workforce system's capacity, causing many Detroiters to subsist without access to direct support services necessary to successfully engage in the jobs marketplace.

This research, compiled by WIN on behalf of the McGregor Fund, affirms the focus and findings of Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation's (DESC) workforce system redesign efforts. WIN research and outcomes are consistent with DESC's increased emphasis on poverty reduction and encouraging financial stability for Detroiters.

"We're pleased to be in partnership with McGregor on continuous improvements in the workforce eco-system. This body of work affirms the strategies that our leadership has set, and gives us additional data to help better orchestrate sustainable solutions for Detroit's workforce," said Nicole Sherard-Freeman, President and CEO of DESC. Consideration of the conclusions in this report can also inform future efforts to engage more individuals in the labor force. Incorporating these themes can also ensure that the

recent growth is accessible to all Detroit residents, and indeed residents throughout the region.

"Identifying key players within workforce development and supporting human services nonprofits not only allows us to see who is already working together, but also who *should be* working together. This kind of analysis provides replicable and measurable data that moves us away from anecdote and urban legend, toward leveraging the strengths of our community for the benefit of our neighbors, the city, and this region," noted Michele Ureste, executive director, WIN.

"As a relatively new workforce funder, the McGregor Fund is pleased to partner with WIN to better understand the network of providers and approaches for reconnecting the most disconnected jobseekers to work," according to Kate Levin Markel, President.

"We hope that this research helps to advance community dialogue about what it takes to end poverty through employment."

The full report titled *Supporting Job Seekers Facing Multiple Barriers to Work: Key Considerations from Research, Funding, Provider Insights, and Referral Patterns in Detroit,* as well as social network maps showing the identified service providers can be viewed at: winintelligence.org/report/detroit-workforce-system/