

ESPRI Task Force – Meeting Highlights

April 26, 2017 12:00 – 1:30 PM
Watertown Urban Mission – 247 Factory Street

Present: John Bonventre, Community Advocate
Sean Courtney, Community Advocate
Becky Draper, Community Advocate
Joseph Draper, Community Advocate
Teresa Gaffney, Department of Social Services
Melinda Gault, Community Action Planning Council
Kevin Hill, Community Advocate
Cody Horbacz, City of Watertown
Steve Jennings, City of Watertown, Department of Public Health
Kevin Jordan, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Leslie Keefer, Community Advocate
Angie King, Community Advocate
Krystin LaBarge, Community Advocate
Patti LaBarr, Watertown City School District
Mike Lawrence, Community Advocate
Beth Linderman, Watertown City School District
Carolyn Mantle, Community Advocate
Aileen Martin, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
Cheryl Mayforth, Workforce Development Board
Carole McCoy, Jefferson Community College
Stacy Neddo, Community Member
Barb Peck (for Karen Richmond), Children’s Home of Jefferson County
Sam Purington, Volunteer Transportation Center
Charles Pytlovany, Community Advocate
Mike Robare, Watertown Housing Authority
Crystal Roberts, Community Advocate
Don Rutherford, Watertown Local Development Corporation
Jeff Smith, First Baptist Church
Roberto Smith, Community Advocate
Jimmy Stanley, Community Advocate
Orales Stroud, Community Advocate
Kate Troester-Trate, Jefferson Community College
Kate Wehrle for Addie Jenne, NYS Assembly
Denise Young, YMCA

Peter Schmitt, Watertown ESPRI Director
Tobi Darrah, United Way of NNY
Dawn Cole, Watertown ESPRI
Mary Jane Mathewson, Community Action Planning Council

Excused: Sharon Addison, City of Watertown
Michelle Alba, Community Advocate
Roger Ambrose, Community Services
Pam Beyor, Community Member
Heather Blair, Carthage Savings & Loan

Joe Butler, City of Watertown
Erika Flint, Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization
Robin Holmes, Salvation Army
Stephen Hunt, NC Regional Economic Development Council
Myron Jamerson, The Rock Church
Joanna Loomis, Watertown Urban Mission
Katrina McIntyre, Community Advocate
Tammie Miller, Resolution Center
Steve Murray, Holy Family Church
Pam Narrigan, Community Member
Yvonne Reff, Flower Memorial Library
Rafael Reyes, Community Advocate
Tim Ruetten, Office for the Aging
Anita Seefried-Brown, PIVOT / Alliance for Better Communities
Rebecca Shamey, Community Advocate
Steve Todd, Jefferson-Lewis BOCES

Welcome

Peter Schmitt, ESPRI Project Director, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He shared that Bob Gorman sends his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting, as he was traveling back from Africa. Mr. Schmitt also introduced Patti LaBarr as the new Superintendent of Watertown City School District.

Engagement Summary and Survey Update

Dawn Cole shared her perception of the engagement sessions. There have been a total of nine meetings at seven locations with 100 participants ranging from 3 – 23 at each meeting. She shared there are some barriers and interconnections within the four work groups – Workforce Development, Education, Transportation, and Housing – that are intertwined. Common themes coming out of the community engagement sessions include lack of awareness of the availability of existing services, the benefit cliff of moving one step forward and two steps backward, transportation issues and the stigma that individuals living in poverty experience when applying for services.

Ms. Cole reported that overall the community engagement sessions went very well. Participants were enthusiastic about being involved in the process. People shared some painful issues resulting from living in poverty; all meetings ended on a positive note with participants taking the time to consider the good in their lives. Ms. Cole expressed that it was a great experience and thanked all who hosted meetings and encouraged participation.

Ms. Cole reviewed the Watertown ESPRI survey which is being made available online (on the Watertown ESPRI site) and distributed in paper form at Community Action Planning Council, Watertown Urban Mission, Salvation Army, Workplace, Department of Social Services and the Children's Home. To date, 46 online surveys have been completed. Ms. Cole asked that agencies make the survey available through May 3, after which the data will be entered into a database and summarized for the group.

Mr. Schmitt shared that the Jefferson Leadership Institute Class of 2017 is holding "Race Against Poverty," a fundraising event scheduled to take place on May 6, 2017. All proceeds will benefit "Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin'-By World," a workshop series

coordinated by Community Action Planning Council, Watertown Urban Mission, and the Volunteer Transportation Center.

Initiative Summary Review

Mr. Schmitt provided an overview of the ESPRI initiatives that have been discussed in work groups. He shared that the proposed initiatives are talking points and do not represent the final version. With input from the Task Force, initiatives will be further defined and brought back before the group in a few weeks. Mr. Schmitt reviewed each initiative and opened the floor for discussion. Key points summarized as follows:

Workforce Development – Employer Resource Network

Overall, feedback from the group was positive. The program was described as sustainable over time and effective in terms of improving retention and reducing employers' hiring / training costs. It was suggested that more research be conducted to determine whether Schenectady ERN could provide consulting services and at what cost. Questions were asked regarding track record (measurable outcomes) associated with ERN, how to determine appropriate number of hours for success coaches to be at each site, average caseload of a success coach, and inclusion of part-time and temporary staff. It was also suggested that success coaches be provided with access to resources to address immediate barriers.

Transportation – Wheels to Work

A question was asked regarding requiring small no-interest payments which would go into a fund to help sustain future vehicle purchases. A recipient of the Wheels to Work program shared that the current model requires payments of \$50 / month for a period of one year. It was suggested that local automotive dealers would be ideal partners for the program. A point was made that not all vehicle owners have the knowledge to maintain their vehicle and perhaps education in routine maintenance would be beneficial (oil changes, tire pressure, etc.). A question was asked regarding whether ancillary costs such as insurance, registration and inspection fees could be incorporated into the program.

Education – Bridges Out of Poverty Trainers

It was noted that there are currently three certified Bridges Out of Poverty trainers in the local community. Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization sponsored the cost of two trainers and is planning to make Bridges training available to the healthcare community. Bridges training can be offered in different formats, ranging from two hours to two full days, depending upon the audience. It was suggested that more research be conducted to determine the cost effectiveness of bringing a national Bridges consultant to the community to provide certification training to a number of individuals.

Education – Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin'-By World Workshops

Feedback was positive with two members of the Task Force sharing their experience in the area's first Getting Ahead cohort.

Education – Navigators

There were many questions associated with the idea of navigators, especially in terms of differentiating the model from Employer Resource Network. Mr. Schmitt described the program as dealing with individuals outside their places of employment in target neighborhoods, helping them in whatever way is necessary. It was suggested that the navigation model be tied to education, helping individuals to ameliorate barriers to achieving their educational goals. Other ideas presented include positioning a

navigation model to help individuals who are “stuck” and unable to move forward due to the benefit cliff and developing a plan to support gaps in training by offering informal training in small two hour blocks. Mr. Schmitt agreed to research other navigation models and bring information back to the group.

Housing - Homeownership

Advocates present shared their experiences with subsidized rentals and how subsidies limit their ability to generate more income for fear of increasing rents. Financial coaching and case management were discussed.

Target Audience / Outcomes

Consensus of the group was that the target audience should not be limited to parents but should also include single individuals. Mr. Schmitt suggested that all programs be designed to help those living at or below 150% of federal poverty guidelines.

It was agreed that outcomes would be identified by the organizations submitting proposals.

Timeline

Mr. Schmitt reviewed a draft timeline. Subsequent to the meeting, the timeline was revised with the next meeting of the Task Force scheduled for May 24, 2017 at 12:00 PM at Watertown Urban Mission.