

# THE PARK STREET T



**An Examination of the Employment and Training System  
within the Park Street/West Beltline Corridor**



RISING TIDE INSTITUTE 2010

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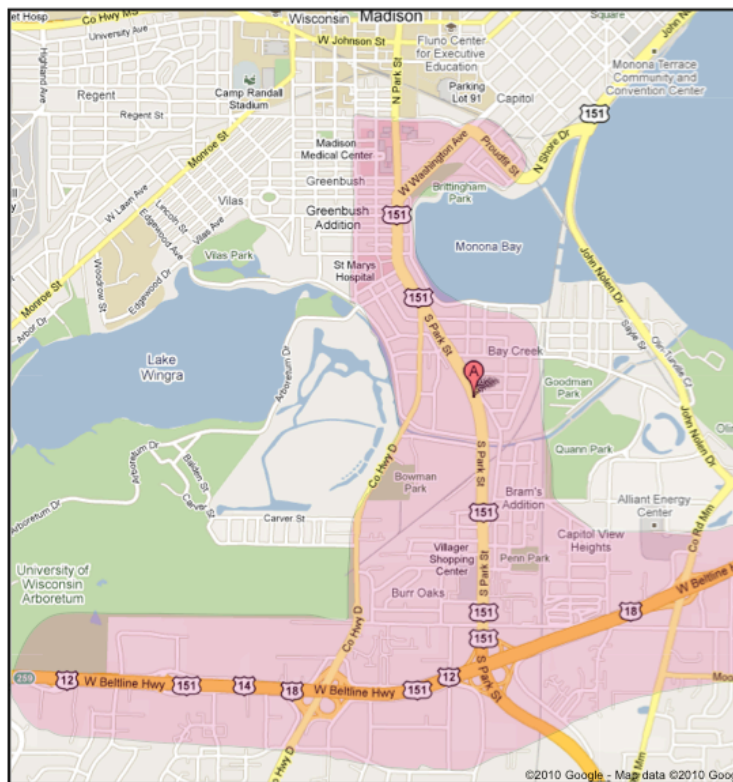
**IV. PARTICIPANTS ..... 29**

## I. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Rising Tide Institute conducted a community-based study to develop an effective, cross-sector approach to prepare residents to assume living wage jobs within a specific geographic subsection of Madison, Wisconsin called the Park Street T. This area is a T-shaped economic corridor of older neighborhoods that includes areas of high unemployment and under employment despite the presence of major employers in healthcare, construction, small businesses and warehousing, all critical growth sectors in the local economy.

Significantly, the area has a service infrastructure, viable public transportation, and on-going service partnerships with local colleges, universities, technical colleges, and health care providers. It is also the site of historically significant religious, community, benevolent, and charitable activity.

The Park Street T



The planning process included:

- Conducting a cross-sector scan of public and private job training and development activities serving residents and employers within the target area;
- Assessment of both the strengths and the capacity enhancement needs of job training and development service providers;
- Inventorying and evaluating available resources and strategies in the context of local employers' current, near-term, and long-term workforce needs; and
- Developing recommendations for a series of action steps addressing social capital and work, public investment policy, the provision of capacity enhancements to service providers, changes in the scope of investment in workforce development and job creation, and the necessary relationships among individuals, corporations, service providers, and public resources.

Investigators conducted an extensive review of available local reports and plans related to employment activities and workforce projections including:

- Census bureau demographics and demographic projections;
- Department of Workforce Development Job Prospects Data for South Central Wisconsin, Occupation Projections for South Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Area, 2004-2014;
- The Dane County Snapshot and related industry projections;
- Extracted target area reports of employers provided by the City of Madison's employer database;
- WETAP Livable Communities program transportation data for Dane County;
- 211 System listings for employment and training programs;
- Contracts between Dane County and its primary employment and training provider;
- Various Workforce Development reports from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy; and
- A variety of program specific reports such as Wisconsin's Regional Industry Skills Education guidelines, guidelines for financial literacy curriculum in the Madison Metropolitan School District, the State of Black Madison, CAC's Dane County Needs Assessment, MATC planning studies, municipal documents related to the Villager Mall Redevelopment District and more.

The work included an extensive series of structured interviews with employers, and service providers located in the target area or providing significant service to the Park Street T. In addition, supplemental interviews were conducted with key elected officials and local leaders with relevant expertise. Interviews within the service sector were designed to illicit self-assessment information and to identify barriers that existed in the connective tissue between agencies as well as internal to those respondents.

Investigators attended regular meetings of area service providers at the Harambee Center, and other related meetings including a municipal summit on poverty, a South Madison Planning Council meeting, and local meetings addressing closely related issues within the target area.

Because this project took life as the national economy went into crisis, additional interviews were conducted to understand the shifting funding and employment issues that ensued.

## II. FINDINGS



### Strengths of the Current System

The Park Street T area is rich with individuals who demonstrate remarkable commitment to improving the lives of area residents, certainly including their efforts to engage as contributing and rewarded workers. These individuals anchor many small but successful initiatives, work to advance effective policies in their own businesses or service agencies, and often recount examples of creating unique employment solutions for particular customers or clients. These leaders have clear, evidence-based opinions about barriers to advancing employment grounded in years of direct experience.

On the employer's side of the equation, there are a few target area businesses whose own organizational values and policies drive pro-active engagement in cooperating to train and employ area residents. There are many cases of individual small business owners who view the hiring of particular segments of the target population, for example ex-offenders, as an important community contribution. There are a few employers in the target area who are seeking both skilled and unskilled employees on a fairly regular basis creating a steady stream of employment opportunities.

Within area service providers, there is considerable tenure among many key organizations' executive leadership, providing strong institutional memory and a deep connection to local populations. These leaders hold a clear view their organizations' purposes and niches. They evidence a deep knowledge of the conditions and concerns of the populations they serve. In addition, providers often report the presence of at least a few highly committed board members working to support their missions. A regular meeting of area service providers is convened by the Harambee Center, providing a loose network of connectivity among participating service providers.

There are a variety of important academic education resources in the target area including Omega School, Dane County Transitional High School, the Literacy Network (which offers both reading and English language learning programs), and cooperative continuing, community, vocational, and higher education offered at Villager Mall by partners UW-Madison, UW-Extension Dane County, and the MATC South Madison Education Center.

This partnership, called the Campus Community Partnerships in South Madison, provides services that include financial literacy, coaching, planning and tax preparation assistance; vocational preparation in health, administration, ESL, high school completion/adult basic education, and business start-ups; college transfer classes and career-ladder certificate programs; a multicultural business resource center; special community project assistance; and direct assistance in health, writing and legal matters. Certainly, the presence of these resources constitutes a major strength that warrants expansion and a keen effort to ensure the seamless delivery of services .

The area is noted for the presence of two collaborative centers, the South Madison Health and Family Center-Harambee and the Genesis Enterprise Center. Partner agencies located at Harambee include the Dane County Parent Council, Access Community Health Centers, the Madison Public Library, and the City and County Public Health Department. The Genesis Enterprise Center is home to several start-up businesses including Henshue Construction, TeachingBooks.net, Sentinel Technologies, ENSYS Engineering Systems Analysis, and Home Grown Wisconsin.

Many important educational programs and services devoted to strengthening families and promoting self-sufficiency collaborate in locating or delivering programs at the Villager Mall. Adjacent to Harambee, the Urban League of Greater Madison and Planned Parenthood recently initiated a joint building effort, creating a shared facility with a branch of the Madison Public Library.

Several other organizations bring critical programs to the south side. These include The YWCA's employment programs, Family Enhancement's family strengthening programs, Madison Urban Ministry's programs for re-entering ex-offenders, and Porchlight's services to the homeless.

Additionally, the area is home to employers such as Group Health Cooperative, Meriter Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and Dean Clinic as well as and non-area based employers like CUNA Mutual Group and its companion, the CUNA Mutual Foundation that have dedicated considerable corporate resources to strengthening the Park Street T community.

Finally, the area has an array of vehicles that could assume the leadership role in building community among employers, employment and training providers, and residents in need of living wage employment including the South Madison Planning Council, the South Madison Federation of Labor, Park Street Partners, the Urban League of Greater Madison, the African American Black Business Association of Madison, the South Metropolitan Business Council, the South Metropolitan Business Association, the South Madison Rotary, and the Câmara de Comercio Latina.

### Limitations of the Current System

Despite the area's many strengths, at present, the service delivery system can be incoherent and baffling to those who work within it, to those who try to utilize its programs, and to those employers who might otherwise create affirmative relationships with it. Some service providers specialize by functional area (such as family support), some by geography (where the client lives), some by categorical classification (based on W-2 participation, for example), and some by cultural identity.





Despite the limited geographic area, wayfinding is extremely challenging within the target area's system. And, since Dane County's main employment and training provider is located twelve miles across town from the target area, on Aberg Avenue, employment development in the target area is even more challenging.

Underfunding of services and programs can cause despair for both people in need of work and the service providers who work to assist them. An investigation into the current system reveals a set of organizations upon which unreasonable burdens are placed in relationship to the human and material resources currently made available to them.

Just as public agencies are constrained by their financial resources, non-profits find that limited income constrains their output. Target area resources are simply spread too thin.

Public dollars to support education and training for employment have fallen sharply since the welfare reform era, while expectations from the public sector and the numbers of individuals in need of service have both risen sharply. The current economic decline has exacerbated the disconnect between real system inputs and output expectations. The dramatic imbalance of expectations with real resources feeds lack of accountability and nurtures a culture of defeatism.

There are five key limitations in the current system:

1. The connections between employment and training service providers and area businesses are not strong enough;
2. Connectivity between and among employment and training service providers themselves is not strong enough;
3. The relationship between funders and employment and training service providers is not optimal;
4. Employment and training programs are severely undercapitalized in both human and material terms, resulting in deficits in the service system; and
5. Critical ancillary services including quality childcare, transportation, financial literacy, appropriate housing, and complete healthcare are strained resulting in frequent and long waiting lists and detrimental delays. Too often, these services are simply not available to customers of the employment and training system.

## Understanding the Population in Need of Living Wage Jobs

Before discussing the public/private system in place in the Park Street T target area, it is useful to present a portrait of those workers or work seekers who are most frequently associated with local employment and training programs. While each person is, of course, an individual with complex



strengths and limitations of capacity or circumstance, the service providers in the target area have a remarkably consistent view of the issues confronting clients who need support in attaining economic self-sufficiency.

The service providers regard their clients as resilient, capable of enormous personal growth, and in the best cases profoundly determined. But the service providers also see patterns of specific barriers to success. Common obstacles include skill deficits in personal financial management, balancing work and family responsibilities, work etiquette, business culture, dispute resolution and negotiation, specific job-related technical skills, understanding of the employment system, academic mastery, and, for some, English language proficiency and literacy.

Situational barriers to successful participation in the workforce can often include:

- Untreated mental health or substance abuse issues;
- Chronic, untreated medical conditions;
- Single parent status;
- Lack of a reliable automobile or convenient transportation;
- Homelessness;
- Absence of extended family support, including familial equity, to call on in times of trouble;
- Growing up and living in a family and/or peer group hostile to a working lifestyle;
- Having a criminal history;
- Being an undocumented worker;
- The absence of quality childcare; and
- Experiencing social isolation in the workplace often based on cultural, educational, economic or academic background.

For each of us, advancing to economic self-sufficiency depends on comprehensive management of many challenges in several areas of daily living. To assist individuals who must assume control over the many issues in their own lives, real help means holistic engagement in selecting an employment goal, planning the route to that goal, aligning support systems necessary to make training and preparation feasible, troubleshooting engagement in that preparation, assisting in the job search process, and coaching the new worker in their initial, extended period of employment.



## Connectivity Gaps: employment and training service providers and area businesses

### *The Employers' View*

Sharply limited connectivity between employment and training programs and area employers means many employers do not know of specific employment and training resources and do not have any information about them as potential resources. There are a series of interconnected reasons why this disconnect exists.

For those area employers who are small, capacity to spend time in community-centric activities is highly variable.

For many employers, absent a direct solicitation to become involved coupled with a strong rationale describing the benefit of engagement with employment and training initiatives, such connectivity often seems a waste of time. A few employers recounted lack of success in previous efforts to work with employment and training agencies and are reluctant to pursue participation for fear of "wasting everyone's time." And several local employers reported having participated in targeted hiring programs only to give up because of frustration with the lack of soft skills of those hired.

For larger employers, awareness of these community-based programs is generally grounded in their own organizational commitments to related issues, notably diversification of their workforces.

Even in those cases where employers have established connections with employment and training development services, the connection is likely to be specific to a particular program associated with their professional sector, rather than broad familiarity with the range of programs by which they are surrounded. For example, up until recently area health care providers have not had an opportunity to draw on a pool of skilled residents to work in non-medical areas. An Urban League of Greater Madison program training individuals in the use of healthcare software may serve as a model for other employers, particularly because of its emphasis on both hard and soft skills.

Many area employers see hiring workers from their own immediate environs as a positive goal, both in terms of protecting the quality of the neighborhood in which their companies are located and in terms of attracting a stable, non-transportation dependent workforce. Unfortunately, too many employers indicate they are not engaged in direct efforts to create conditions in which the hiring of neighborhood residents is made more likely.

The health care community is a notable exception among the employers, engaged in both housing programs and some employment and training partnerships, but their outputs remain modest when compared to the potential for the entire area.

### *The Service Providers' View*

From the service provider agency side of the equation, lack of board members positioned to advance connections, lack of resources to fund job development positions, and limitations in the ability to clearly describe and market core competencies all constrain capacity to improve



employment opportunity. Conversely, the service providers who have the greatest success are those with board members connected to employers, provide training that covers more than technical skills, and include post-placement counseling in their service design.

Often the connections between service providers and employers rely on a particular savvy worker or personal acquaintance rather than truly institutionalized partnerships. This is not to say that strong personal relationships are undesirable. Study interviews confirmed a well-known management principle: a commitment from the leader of an organization has a significant impact on the success of participation in any employment and training partnership. Still, single relationships are not always sustainable since they are prey to collapse with the loss of any one person.

Deep, stable, institutionalized partnerships, characterized by connections between the many vertical levels of partnering organizations, are rare in the Park Street T. They are also essential.

When organizations do not institutionalize their employees' connections, or have a system for capturing individual employee's knowledge, hard won gains can vaporize quickly. A lead staff person captured this problem clearly, saying "We used to have some places where we could send our clients for help, but [name of individual] no longer works here. Now, I don't know many places anymore."

Certainly, a small number of local service providers fall outside this generalization and have systematically worked to identify if not formal partners then certainly willing cooperators. The problem is these organizations are the exception to the rule.

While several target area organizations offer employment and training programs, none is exclusively engaged in that work. Rather, the employment and training work is a part of a broader mission. Examples fitting this description include the YWCA, Centro Hispano, Madison Urban Ministry, and the Urban League of Greater Madison. These organizations, and indeed the majority of Park Street T service providers, have limited capacity to create program level visibility and branding from the vantage point of the business community, leading to a reduced level of business community partnership, presence on area not-for-profit boards and committees, and financial participation.

### *Communication, Information, and leadership Deficits*

Very often, employers are not aware of one another's partnerships with employment and training programs, whether successful or not. To the extent that area employers comprise a community, and several vehicles designed to create that community exist, there has been only limited development of a shared understanding of the area's employment and training promise and needs, and comparably little shared information about partnerships with service providers. Naturally, this lack of communication limits the overall level of interest in participation.

No local, focal process or agency for job development actions uniting employers as a group with employment and training program providers within the target area exists. While the South Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Center provides such opportunities on a regional level, and



while some target area employers are a part of that community of conversation, their work is not designed to build micro-community connections such as those explored here.

There are specific partnership programs, notably Park Street Partners, that link educational institutions to community development including employment and training, but leading specific employer/employment and training program partnerships are not currently a part of their work. A vital link between the target areas' vast, young, diverse, and under-employed workforces base and hundreds of employers within the target area is missing.

Generally speaking, and there are exceptions, Madison's corporations as a group lack urgency, when compared with their peers in surrounding counties, in addressing impending workforce scarcity issues. A variety of individuals involved in county and regional workforce development planning expressed mystification that Madison's employers as a group seem relatively unconcerned about the certain onset of widespread workforce shortages.

This lack of concern may be attributed to current level of unemployment despite the fact that the pending retirement of large number of baby boomers foreshadows a serious shortage of skilled workers.

In those cases where this generalization is correctly applied, employers have diminished motivation to engage in workforce development partnerships. This lack of urgency can be seen as a threat. In the demonstrable cases in which surrounding communities have created advanced employer/employment and training partnerships to meet the anticipated workforce shortages, Madison (and the Park Street T within it) can be reasonably considered to be losing a competitive advantage that may hit hard in the coming years.

There is a need for coordination between these service providers and prospective employers, an effort that could be introduced by individual service providers or businesses or undertaken in a collaborative manner.

While disinvestment has not been a problem in the Park Street T, clearly the area has not kept up with the rate of investment in development enjoyed by other parts of Madison and Dane County. A comprehensive effort to match potential area workers with projected area employment needs over the next decade, and to bolster that effort with local business development strategies including increasing the presence of minority owned enterprises, is critical.

## Connectivity Gaps: employment and training service providers with one another

### Wayfinding

In order to understand the employment and training service system in Park Street T, it is important to note that the Dane County Job Center relies on a single contractor, the Employment and Training Association (EATA), to deliver the vast majority of its employment and training programming to residents of the county. EATA is a tenured service provider. It is located at the county job center, across town from the target area.



EATA's program offerings are framed by various categorical eligibility sets, for example unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents; individuals receiving social security or social security disability; Allied Drive/Dunn's Marsh area parents of young children; recently laid off or dislocated workers; individuals receiving Foodshare benefits; individuals enrolled in Wisconsin Works (W2); and youth and young adults who are economically disadvantaged. Some informational and counseling services are available to any member of the public, and employers are served via job postings, provision of pre-screening services, information and business seminars, on-site recruitment and on-line registration options.

Most of EATA's programs and services are delivered at their east Madison location. They do partner with Madison Urban Ministry, a Park Street T area service provider, in serving ex-offenders. Recently, a computer terminal linking target area residents to the job center including EATA and related resources was installed at the Harambee Center in an experimental approach to increasing accessibility to employment and training programs. The computer terminal is a part of the WorkSmart program, a project of the South Central Wisconsin Job Centers. It may serve to improve the connectivity of target area residents' needs to employment and training resources. The terminal is not, however, in a space generally open to the public and the staff's ability to give guidance in its use was minimal when tested.

Within the target area, a wide range of organizations are engaged in employment and training services. These include educational institutions such as Madison College (formerly MATC), Edgewood College, the University of Wisconsin, Omega School, the Literacy Network, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension. Advocacy and development organizations focused on specific cultural groups including the Urban League of Greater Madison, the Catholic Multicultural Center and Centro Hispano are also engaged in advancing employment.

In addition, the Madison Urban Ministry works with ex-offenders in their efforts to re-establish themselves on release from prison; their work includes employment and training assistance via the EATA partnership referenced above. The YWCA provides a variety of programs designed to advance economic self-sufficiency including a transportation program, a clothing dispensary focused on women's professional wardrobe needs, a driver's license recovery program, a training program preparing workers for entry level road construction positions, apprenticeships in the skilled trades, and a structured training/internship/employment search program.

Another significant contributor is the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Readiness Program (S.T.A.R.T.) supported by the South Central Federation of Labor and Centro Hispano. The Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin operates its Workers' Rights Center within the Park Street T, and while not an employment program, its efforts are designed to empower workers and resolve workplace problems. The Dane County Department of Human Services' Joining Forces for Families program provides neighborhood-based family support services, including referral for employment assistance, within the target area. The Genesis Enterprise Center serves the area as an incubator for start-up and expanding small businesses and as such supports emerging entrepreneurs.

A simple review of the above list of employment and training providers reveals the challenge faced by area employers in determining where to go if they are interested in utilizing local agencies as partners in preparing candidates for employment. Viewing the system from an employer's perspective, it is neither user friendly nor intuitive.



This view is shared by the employment and training service community, many of whom consider the overall delivery system to be incoherent. As mentioned above, there is no shared principle by which individuals in need of service are logically allocated or assigned across service agencies. Some agencies specialize by functional area (such as family stability), some by geography (where a client lives), some by categorical classification (based on W-2 participation, or ex-offender status, for example), and some by cultural identity or native language.

Way-finding is baffling, not only for the individuals at whom services are targeted, but also among the service agencies themselves.

### *Mutual Understanding*

Park Street T service providers do not have a clear grasp of one another's services. In part, this problem is associated with the earlier observation that employment and training services are, generally speaking, either embedded in service provider agencies with broader missions. This arrangement is not necessarily bad. For example, the work of service providers who focus on the needs of specific gender, culture, or affinity groups can be critical for the success of the individual. But it has a price. The current array lacks intentionality when viewed through the lens of community-wide needs and easily understandable access to employment and training services.

Consequently, Park Street T service providers working in the full array of support services for impoverished residents report limited capacity to follow up on interagency referrals, including determination of the appropriateness of the original referral itself. Often, referring professionals worry that the program resources to which they are referring have been exhausted by exploding demand, a not infrequent reality. This issue is broader than just the employment and training sector, impacting virtually all Park Street T service providers and worsening as the employment economy stagnates.

When this most fundamental aspect of connectivity between organizations working to serve the same individuals is absent, coherent and effective suites of necessary and complimentary services are rarely developed for individual clients, and the correct sequencing of services is unlikely at best. Case managers, the kind of service employees who play this role, are now rarely available to provide guidance. Public funds to support this role have very nearly vanished.

Quite simply, there is insufficient understanding among employment and training program providers of one another's services and strategies.

### *System Shaping Deficits*

The overall employment and training system lacks resources to tend to its own capacity, practice, and institutional health. While organizations focused on housing and broad economic development issues constitute the exception to this generalization, the relatively low levels of informed board participation reported by service providers in planning and on-going organizational development are a likely contributing factor. Highly engaged and effective boards often serve internally as a source of trusted critical review, regularly assessing programs, identifying competencies and deficits, and formulating plans to correct deficits when they impair the organization's ability to accomplish its mission. They also engage in regular scanning of the broader system context in which their organization must function.



This “external insider role” is critical in helping organizations develop and maintain an honest view of core competencies. Reports of such activity among board members in the target area are almost nonexistent. Mirroring this observation is another, concerning the external role of board members: there were very few reports of board members serving as ambassadors to peer programs.

The overall provider system accomplishes a great deal given the degree to which it is currently resourced. However, chronic undercapitalization is a crippling, daily reality making it very difficult for providers to reach, think, or act beyond their own organization’s walls.

When every available moment must be devoted to an urgent struggle to maintain services for a growing number of clients, time to contemplate and plan broader system-wide improvements vanishes and even those leaders who can clearly see deficits in the current system’s design are hard pressed to devote energy to addressing new problems. While some leaders do, of course, participate in interagency initiatives, time for really forging deep understanding among providers is not available.

Partnerships are often program based and funder driven, rather than organization to organization mutual commitments. There is little evidence of partnerships grounded in a well-examined effort to increase mutual organizational health or create on-going mutual capacity enhancement. Nor is there evidence of whole system advocacy work being done.

Critical system level work is currently a luxury that exhausted providers cannot afford. In order for a community of resources to function well, its individual organizational members must have clear missions that align with companion efforts and the larger community. The time to do that strategic work is beyond the grasp of the extant system.

## **Unbalanced Relationships: funders and employment and training service providers**

### *Tension Among Allies*

Many providers expressed concern that the relationship between providers and local government does not work like a partnership of equals. Rather, they find government controls the relationship via the power of the purse string. Further, they note that the current service system is built on a model that was heavily funded during the W-2 implementation years. Now funding is profoundly reduced while expectations remain the same or have increased. Meanwhile, customer numbers are soaring. The dramatic imbalance of expectations with real resources feeds lack of accountability and nurtures a culture of defeatism.

Living in a financial survival mode makes providers captive to external program drivers. Their missions are overridden by outside demands for particular program models, including externally imposed definitions of target groups for service. Within the target area, most participating organizations believe the current system has evolved without sufficient attention to organizational health. Rather, cost control has driven funding decisions that over time are undercutting effective practice. The current funder-service provider relationship creates strong fiscal incentives to operate in an historically safe niche, rather than move toward new ideas even in times of change.





Several not-for-profit leaders bemoan a tendency among funders to support the proliferation of new organizations with new ideas rather than helping established providers experiment with new program models. Established service providers resent this approach, since the proliferation of agencies only exacerbates the shortage of resources in the broader system.

Adding to this frustration is the often expressed belief that providers are expected to do what government cannot do, even though they cannot compete with government for salaries or benefits. Hence, there is a constant drain on their staff longevity and quality as their best workers are siphoned off by better compensated government jobs. Several organizational leaders expressed the opinion that this is especially true with regard to emerging professionals of color. While provider agencies laud the public sector's commitment to diversifying its workforce, they feel they are carrying the burden of training and developing young professionals, only to see them lured into the public sector. The disparity of public and not-for-profit sector salary levels is simultaneously one of the main reasons government engages in contracting as a vehicle for creating a service system and a fact that undermines the quality of services delivered.

Some leaders report that funding competition puts pressure on service providers to hoard successful or promising clients (often called creaming) and discourage participation by less optimal participants, since success counts are generally the driver for the next year's funding.

### *Standards and Measures*

As mentioned above, too many employment and training programs have a limited ability to clearly articulate their core capacities, either to themselves or the broader professional community. This is a complex problem with roots in several factors.

First, program funders, notably including United Way and Dane County, often require service providers to conform to either externally imposed program models, particular program constraints, and/or outcome measures. Agencies dependent upon these funders are required to defend externally defined competencies and strategies. When real consonance between organizational mission and capacity and these externally defined approaches exist, that relationship works well.

But when the funder is, for example, providing a decreasing share of actual cost while caseloads are rising (as is very often the case at present), or imposing program models that are not truly consonant with organizational mission or approach, a false conversation emerges, eroding over the months and years all parties' clarity around specific service provider's actual core competencies.

Clearly, the development of standards and measures must be a collaborative effort between the funders and the recipient organizations based on agreement around what is measured and the relevance of the information gathered to both funder needs and organizational management and practice. Evaluative information that does not advance the practice of the reporting entity, or that is so burdensome as to be unmanageable in the face of actual resources, is highly susceptible to inaccurate reporting, benefiting no one.

Our community must not fall into the trap exemplified by the Houston Public School System, where in a quest to increase the percentage of high school seniors who graduated, the district



encouraged the lowest performing students to drop out before their senior year. While the percentage of seniors graduating increased, the community was ill served.

While it is laudable that funders work hard to invest in programs that report success, it is important that success be measured in context. Most would agree, for example, that it is harder to find gainful employment for an ex-offender with a criminal record than a similarly qualified individual absent a criminal history. Such differences must be meaningfully accounted for in investment decisions.

Few service providers interviewed described patterns of on-going and helpful evaluation imbedded within their own organizational structures. In general, providers believe United Way and government required evaluations are not structured in ways that help them improve their own practice. Rather, they see the required evaluations as tools the funders have the power to compel as a condition of funding, and a process of use only to those funders themselves. This gap, not uncommon in under-resourced service systems, is another symptom of distance between the service providers' internal definition of mission and the program requirements imposed by funders.

### **Undercapitalized Service Providers: program deficits**

The chronic undercapitalization of the Park Street T's employment and training system has created a series of specific gaps. There is considerable agreement among target area leaders in both the business and the service provider communities around what these system deficits are.

#### *Case Managers*

For example, both groups make frequent reference to insufficient numbers of qualified case managers in the system. This absence leads to problems with cross-service sequencing and coordination, undermining employment seeker's success and allowing inefficiencies system-wide.

Not every agency is able to provide the job seeker with the array of services needed for successful employment. These services include seeking assistance in developing skills, enrolling to gain those skills through the training period, the job search, and the post employment period of adjustment. A case manager's guidance in organizing needed services is fundamental.

#### *Job Coaches*

In addition to a lack of case management, representatives of service providers, local governments, and the private sector share a recognition of the concomitant need for more job coaches, who could support the new worker's transition, assist the employer in solving any emerging problems that threaten the worker's continued employment, and gather feedback about the employer's experiences to use in fine-tuning the service provider/employer partnership.

Employers engaged with employment and training programs are more likely to detect post-hiring problems, as newly employed workers struggle to adapt to the demands of balancing family and work roles and responsibilities with workplace culture. And, with a new job and steady paychecks



comes greater demands for financial literacy and discipline. In addition, the very demands of the job separate the new employee from the support group and counseling that lead to successful employment.

Job coaching, as this post-job placement support is often called, is one example of a kind of service that was available fairly broadly during the early, well-funded welfare reform era. Public sector representatives join employers and service providers in bemoaning the loss of those resources. All understand that removing this critical function is penny wise and pound foolish, since it means that the current system makes considerable investment in developing the capacity for self-sufficiency, but fails to protect that investment at the very moment when its value could begin to provide a return.

### *Job Development*

Job development work is generally considered a core function of employment and training programs. In this work, providers seek partnerships with employers who are interested in hiring the provider's clients. These agreements can extend to include the development of very clear agreements with regard to employer needs and the criteria they use in selecting employees.

Trusted relationships between partnering employers' human resources professionals and employment and training providers are cultivated. These relationships often lead to specific accommodation of employer needs in the training programs themselves, improved preparation of employment seekers, and precise, successful placement of training program participants. Within the Park Street T, there are too few job development staff and the few job development staff within different provider agencies are only just beginning to connect with one another. At present coordination among providers in cultivating jobs and referring customers is rare.

The lack of sufficient numbers of job development professionals working in the target area, and the comparably early state of their efforts to coordinate is based in part on a shortage of resources to hire such staff and in part on the lack of available local training for job development professionals. This double deficit sharply limits prospects for successful identification and cultivation of employment opportunities that meet employers' real needs and results in too few job opportunities for employment and training program graduates.

### *Soft Skills Training*

The current system has too few service providers capable of supporting the development of soft skills among employment seekers. These skills include developing a personal understanding of self-presentation, verbal style, attitude, motivation and motivational barriers, artificially limited self-expectations, passive self-defeating behaviors, internalized victimization, emotional literacy, and personal agency. They also include the less personal, but professionally important questions of business culture including regular attendance, proper dress, cooperation with the employers standards of practice, and workplace etiquette. Naturally, these skills alone do not make a person work-ready. But neither do the technical skills which the system has a stronger capacity to deliver.

In fact, several employers reported a reluctance to participate in job placement programs because they do not find that technical preparation to be the main issue. These employers explain that an unskilled worker who showed up on time, every day and accepted supervision, was



welcomed in the workplace. For some employers, then, on the job technical training is an expected cost of business, but soft skill development is not. One employer explained his reliance on evidence of soft skills in making hiring decision this way. "If I could only look at one factor to make a hiring decision, that would be previous job history. That tells me all I need to know. Frequent employment changes and I never consider."

### *Financial Literacy Training*

Workers in training and new workers are often undermined by a lack of financial literacy. Failing to understand how personal financial planning works, the period of new employment is especially risky. New workers often contract debt that is out of scale with their new income, frequently for household electronics, cars or other work related expenses, and not infrequently through pay day loan operations.

They are ill-equipped to correctly project their actual take home wage, to foresee the need for work related emergency funds for things like sick child care, and to understand the actual cost of loans. The ability to calculate the difference between 7% and 17% interest and the accompanying service charges on \$1000 loan over a period of months is absent. When new wages drive novice workers to create greater debt pressure, rather than creating a better standard of living, the worker can become discouraged and may give up entirely.

There are several heroic cases in which employers have learned of the plight of employees ill-served by pay day loans. They have paid off those loans in exchange for an employee's agreement to allow repayment by deduction from wage at a reasonable rate without interest. Sadly, in a fair number of the cases reported, the employer and employee came to tension over these agreements, again because the employee lacked the financial literacy to understand the nature of the repayment agreement. These employees came to resent the amounts deducted from their wages, even though very favorable compared to what the pay day loan would have required. In one unfortunate case, as soon as the employer provided an advance to pay off the loan, the employee took out a new one.

While the Park Street T area does include some program capacity to assist in the development of financial literacy, the services available are modest, mostly short term, and not generally directed at creating overall financial literacy for beginning workers. The Madison Metropolitan School District has adopted the state standard for financial literacy training but at present cannot provide information about how, how frequently, or if this standard is being employed at the classroom level. Unquestionably, many recent graduates of the local school district are without basic personal financial literacy

### *Discrimination Against Ex-Offenders*

Discrimination against ex-offenders is against the law, except in certain cases in which the history of offense has a direct connection to the job in question. Strong target area anecdotal evidence suggests many national franchises systematically disqualify all ex-offenders. Employer's use of unreliable, outsourced background checks can exacerbate this problem and create additional liabilities for employers, too. As increasing proportions of entry level work slots are concentrated in nationally franchised retail and service industries, discriminatory practices<sup>4</sup>



becomes ever more detrimental to the community.

Employment and training providers have no viable means of intervening when employers systematically discriminate against ex-offenders in violation of law; their modest resources do not provide for expensive litigation against large corporations. Individual employment candidates against whom discrimination has occurred are extremely unlikely to litigate on their own behalf. This problem is emblematic of the way in which under-resourcing service providers causes system-wide problems to persist unchallenged.

### *Response to Temporary Employment Agency Growth*

A growing percentages of entry level jobs are being filled by temporary employment agencies, none of whom have formal partnerships with target area service providers. This gap constrains opportunity for target area residents. New models for working with this reality are sorely needed. One such model, a proposed worker-owned cooperative temporary agency, has been advanced locally.

### *Wage Subsidies*

There is an absence of wage subsidies to encourage employers to participate in employment development programs or even take on the risk of hiring novice workers who the employer is willing to train at their own expense. Once a widely available aspect of public employment and training funding programs, such subsidies reduce risk for employers launching targeted hiring programs.

### *Organizational Development Resources*

This report makes frequent mention of the issue of organizational health among not-for-profit service providers. Strong services come from sustainable organizations. Sustainable organizations are born of strong leadership and clarity of mission. This work revealed many capable executive directors but too little evidence of highly engaged boards of directors. It is fair to say that few Park Street T service providers have sufficiently trained, active, skilled, and resource producing boards and that staff expectations for board participation is low.

Several executive directors spoke with candor about their interest in improving the diversity and skill sets of their boards. Many indicated they are unsure how to proceed in tactfully informing their boards of a need for collective improvement in areas such as management, role, or level of engagement. In fact, Madison on the whole has a rather modest tradition of expectation for its board members, so this finding is not surprising.

Many target areas service providers do take advantage of board training opportunities provided by United Way of Dane County, but more development programs and more participation in them is needed. Very few providers reported connections to on-going leadership development programs as sources for board recruitment. The Urban League of Greater Madison is now providing leadership development programs; perhaps they would, in future, consider taking a lead role in solving this problem. Since effective boards are, in general, the locus of an organization's commitment to mission they become a key element in producing organizational sustainability both



ideologically and in terms of counter-balancing external pressure from seductive “outside of mission” or “beyond core capability” dollars available.

### *Outreach and Education to Employers*

Additionally, since Madison area employers as a group generally lack an understanding of the near term threat of worker shortages, it is reasonable to conclude that a broader system deficit involves the lack of effective outreach and education programs for employers on projected workforce sufficiency issues.

### **Ancillary Deficits: shortages in critical supporting resources**

Virtually every person interviewed as a part of this study identified critical shortages of, or long waiting lists for, mental health and substance abuse treatment and aftercare as major barriers in advancing self-sufficiency among the many employment seekers affected.

One significant, particularly destructive exemplar of this problem is that ex-offenders with mental illness are released from prison with about a week’s psychotropic medication, and waiting time to see a mental health professional averages about six months. That means the community’s de facto plan is for mentally ill ex-offenders to suffer untreated for the first half a year of their re-entry period. That puts not only the individual’s ability to secure employment, but also community safety at risk.

Residents of the target area, new to work or engaged in employment related training, also face shortages of affordable child care including sick child care and transportation alternatives. Either of these problems can and do truncate individuals’ plans to attain self-sufficiency.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS



#### Government, Charitable and Corporate Investors

1. Convene funders and funded partners regularly to identify and find means to address system-wide barriers to employment, training and workforce development activities in the target area. Invest in system-wide solutions, not just organizations. A series of roundtables for the funders and funded partners that focused on aligning organizational goals with community goals is a good place to start. The discussion could move on to specific structural issues focusing on how the funders and funded partners work together.
2. Become more sophisticated about fostering and evaluating collaboration among service providers. Recognize that effective collaborations, with true depth and meaningful partnership, take time and effort to build, fine tune, and maintain. Invest in these costs when projected outcomes warrant. Recognize that collaborations can strengthen services to individuals, raise practice standards, close gaps, reduce duplication, and overcome certain system barriers but that they are unlikely to reduce costs when undertaken among dramatically under-resourced organizations and systems. In fact, there may be an initial period of increased investment necessary to do the work of coming together for longer-term benefits. True collaboration is built on compatible, clearly delineated missions and shared goals but must also focus on professional working relationships and egalitarian partnership between cooperating organizations.
3. Become more intentional in evaluating the difference between duplication of effort and cases in which the overall system capacity is being filled by a series of parallel or similar services. If confronted with requests for support that are truly duplications of service within the target area, convene duplicating entities and discuss options for partnership, mergers, or focusing resources in one or another of the entities as alternatives preventing duplication.
4. Value funding requests that provide means of serving the whole person, from assurance of basic family needs being met, on to employment and training planning and

implementation, to the job hunt and on into the first post-hiring year. This means taking inventory with the client and providing appropriate and correctly sequenced referrals when and where appropriate. Case management services are the critical core.

5. Work with target area service providers and employers to protect other investments in employment and training by increasing support for case management services, job development functions, and pre and post-placement job coaches.
6. Invest in employment and training programs that address academic attainment, soft skills and technical work skills. Increase overall Park Street T area capacity in such programs.
7. Invest in a collaboration network among job development workers. Consider developing a cross agency system that intentionally delineates specific employer/job developer relationships with clear standards for interagency matching of clients to employer needs.
8. Invest in organizational development including staff development, management assessments and support, and planning and evaluation functions. The not-for-profit community needs more organizational development work in general. But organizations focused on job training and placement also need a program specifically targeting their specialty. By doing collaborative training these not-for-profits will benefit as individual organizations, but will also learn more about each other and gain greater insight into system issues such as common roadblocks, duplication, and omission through simultaneous learning.
9. Create a Park Street T area leadership development program, board training, and supported system of board recruitment. Focus these efforts on diversifying target area service provider boards, providing increased skill sets to those boards, and engaging target area employers' leaders in organizational stewardship.
10. Invest in expanding the mental health and substance abuse treatment slots available in the Park Street T. Create the capacity for immediate assessment and care for ex-offenders with mental health problems upon their re-entry into the community as a first priority.
11. Reevaluate current evaluation requirements with the participation of funded partners. Create evaluation systems that both meet the providers' needs for data leading to improved practice and the funders' needs for accountability. Focus on outcomes, not processes. Readers may wish to review a report titled "Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact (Kramer, Parkhurst, Vaidyanathan; July 2009) available for download at [http://www.fsg-impact.org/ideas/item/breakthroughs\\_in\\_measurement.html](http://www.fsg-impact.org/ideas/item/breakthroughs_in_measurement.html) to explore new models of mutually beneficial systems of evaluation.
12. Base expectations on a realistic assessment of service provider capacity and an understanding of their unique missions as well as your own. Do not encourage stepping beyond mission or core capacity lightly. Avoid expectations for performance levels that are unrealistic. Funders should think very carefully about encouraging not-for-profits to enter areas already addressed by other providers. Preference should be given to enhancing the





capacity of extant providers. Mergers are sometimes warranted and wise but should be carefully thought out and not externally imposed.

13. Identify funds for innovative programming including evaluation of same.
14. Create avenues for discussing new program ideas with funded target area organizations; avoid systems that encourage reliance on previous performance alone.
15. Encourage those proposing new organizations to meet with appropriate extant service providers to consider joining forces as a way of welcoming new approaches while encouraging non-proliferation in the number of new service providers. Support the emergence of new organizations only when it is clear that an approach outside the mission, aspiration, or competence of extant service providers is proposed.
16. Support small business development within the Park Street T, especially approaches creating ownership opportunities for communities of color.
17. Support the search for alternative models of engagement with the temporary employment system, including exploration of the C-Team (Cooperative Transitional Employment Agency of Madison) model proposed by Charles Uphoff.

### Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin

1. Enhance communications with target area employment and training funders and related service providers as well as businesses to clarify Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin's role and services. Many from these sectors had a loose picture of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin as a distant, comprehensive agency but no specific picture of how or why to connect.
2. Create methods of on-going communication between the South Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and Park Street T area employment and training service providers and those agencies engaged with employment and training.
3. Deliver specific training to Park Street T area employers to increase their understanding of looming workforce shortages.

### Employers

1. Create a group of willing businesses and target area employment and training service providers where mutual interests can be explored on a regular basis. This group could be formed as a new part of an existing structure such as Park Street Partners, the South Madison Planning Council, the Urban League of Greater Madison, the African American



Black Business Association of Madison, the South Metropolitan Business Council, the South Metropolitan Business Association, the South Madison Rotary, or Cámara de Comercio Latina.

2. Learn more about anticipated workforce capacity and shortages in your field and become active participants in target area programs to address worker shortages. This might be most easily accomplished with assistance from the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin which has an excellent data collection ([www.wdbscw.org/](http://www.wdbscw.org/)) and works to keep abreast of these trends. COWS, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy ([www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org)) also has excellent information.
3. Commit to active engagement in diversification of your workforce, and engage in partnerships with employment and training providers in the target area to help accomplish diversification goals. Learn about the Urban League of Greater Madison's partnership area health care providers to build a workforce skilled in information technology. This model could be easily adopted to fields outside of health care.
4. Provide opportunities for staff to engage with employment and training providers in the target area through volunteerism including service on boards. Place special emphasis on participation among those employees who actually do the hiring.
5. Participate in sustaining target area employment and training programs with dollars and in-kind donations, purchase of service agreements, and corporate sponsorships.
6. Advocate for meaningful financial literacy curriculum implementation within the Madison Metropolitan School District.
7. Check your hiring policies for unwarranted reliance on outsourced background checks. Work with knowledgeable employment and training service providers to learn more about the unforeseen consequences of such reliance.
8. Do a health check on your organization's approach to hiring ex-offenders. Learn the difference between justified exclusion and illegal discrimination. Eliminate illegal discrimination practices. Seek affirmative solutions to problems that may occur with bonding and security.
9. Contact local estate attorneys and learn about their practices concerning advising donors regarding bequests to not-for-profits. Learn what kinds of information they use or would use in presenting options for gifts to their clients. Feed the information back to Park Street T area service providers. Encourage bequest giving to employment and training service providers.



## Park Street T Service Providers

1. Explore employment and training models that serve the whole person, from assurance of basic family needs, to employment and training planning and implementation, to the job hunt and on into the first post-placement year. Restructure services as necessary to create a comprehensive approach. The Center for Working Families, on line at [www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/FamilyEconomicSuccess/CentersforWorkingFamilies.aspx](http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/FamilyEconomicSuccess/CentersforWorkingFamilies.aspx) is a good starting point. Explore national funding opportunities with foundations engaged in this work.
2. Explore means of enhancing job retention including provision of post-placement job coaching, and stipends for achieving tenure. Provide credits for specified terms of retained employment via MATC/Madison College, or other credit granting educational institutions, offer career ladder training as a reward for tenure in a job, individual development accounts, programs providing guaranteed raises after specified periods of employment, and use Operation Fresh Start's graduates as mentors/coaches model.
3. Learn about the South Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board's work in creating sector-based career pathways. Determine ways to participate in this effort, especially as related to translating its regional ideas to specific application in the Park Street T.
4. Work to establish and expand communication with target area employers in general. This work should be undertaken on both collaborative and individual organizational levels. Train board members to serve as conveners and ambassadors for these partnerships.
5. Raise organizational awareness of particular employers' workforce needs and opportunities and shape partnerships and services for mutual benefit. Create mechanisms for two-way communication. Seek fee for service arrangements with collaborating employers.
6. Create a collaborative approach among target area job developers to foster deep, unduplicated relationships between specific job developers and employers. Create a meaningful system of referral of suitable clients from any participating service provider. Consider development of a shared access data base for tracking collaborator's employer links, job vacancies, and client referrals.
7. Adopt intentional practices to develop a better understanding of related service providers. Simple things like mutual site visits, quarterly job-alike meetings, sending ambassadors from one board to another, and sharing printed materials or web links to annual reports is a good beginning. Whatever methods are chosen, be certain that the mutual learning involved reaches both the administrative and direct service levels.
8. Do a realistic assessment of core capacities regularly. Know the organization's strengths. Know which groups of individuals your agency is most likely to succeed in supporting. Document capacity, in terms of annual numbers of persons who can be served within



current resource levels. Prepare a frank written statement of same, and share with it with other Park Street T service providers.

9. Use the assessment of core capacities to work together to establish a coherent system of employment and training support for Park Street T residents, mapping and clarifying specific services available.
10. Educate board members, funders and business partners concerning the need for case managers, job developers, and job coaches. Work across provider agencies and with the funding community in developing a plan for filling these gaps.
11. Convene a job-alike gathering of job coaches so that they can identify their professional development and instruction materials needs. If a need for instructional video/DVDs exists, share up the job of reviewing available materials on free websites ([YouTube Job Coaching](#), etc.)
12. Pursue a continuing relationship with the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin in order to understand how to fit into their regional flow of employer/employment and training activities. Utilize the Board as a resource in reaching out to Park Street T area employers.
13. When recruiting board members seek skills and relationships that further connections to Park Street T area employers, enhance communications capacity, and contribute to specifically identified organizational development needs including fund development.
14. Engage board members in advocating for meaningful financial literacy curriculum implementation within the Madison Metropolitan School District.
15. Test the success of creating interagency programs such as speed dating for employment and arena hiring, and expand job fairs for students and parents. Maintain the test period long enough to measure the impact of regular offerings in one or more of these program types.
16. When system-wide problems are identified, engage funders to frame guidelines and priorities that address those deficits. Engage in collaborative (multiple service providers) grant development and grant writing. Use the grant development process to clarify roles and expectations and to identify outcomes for all participating organizations and those they serve.

## IV. PARTICIPANTS



### Employers

Lisa Ableman, Human Resources Director, B&J Electrical Supply

Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, Director of Community Partnerships, UW Hospitals and Clinics and Alder, Madison Common Council

Vernon Blackwell, Employment Development Manager, Urban League of Greater Madison

Jostein R. Brekke, Proprietor, Madison Taxi

Craig Brenholt, Human Resources Director, St. Mary's Hospital

Gerald Brew, CFO, Mental Health Center of Dane County

Frank D. Byrne, MD, President, St. Mary's Medical Center

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Kris Holmes, Employment Manager Meriter Hospital

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### **Target Area Service Providers and Community Organizations**

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Gerald Brew, CFO, Mental Health Center of Dane County  
Mary Burke, President and Acting Director, Boys and Girls Clubs of Dane County  
Reverend Alex Gee, President, The Nehemiah Community Development Corporation  
William Greer, MS & LCSW, Executive Director, Dane County Mental Health  
Dr. Richard Harries, Executive Director, Genesis Development Corporation  
Marcia Hendrickson, Chief Professional Officer, Boys and Girls Clubs of Dane County  
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Steve Maurice St. Martin Coordinator, Catholic Multi-Cultural Center  
Oscar Mireles, Executive Director, Omega School  
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Laura Parker, MSSW, ARC Community Services  
Kristen Petrosious, YW Transit Program Coordinator, YWCA  
Lillian Post, Bilingual Program Coordinator, Catholic Multi-Cultural Center  
Anna Purnell, Development Director, Child Development Incorporated  
Brian Solomon, Director, Wisconsin Bureau of Job Services  
Lisa Subeck, Second Chance Programs Coordinator, YWCA  
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### **Broader Community Service Providers Engaged in the Target Area**

Deedra Atkinson, Senior Vice President, Community Impact, United Way of Dane County  
Gabrielle Banick, Coordinator, Career & Technical Education, Madison Metropolitan School District  
Bettsey Barhorst, President, MATC  
Darrell Bazzell, Vice Chancellor for Administration, University of Wisconsin  
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Steve Goldberg, Executive Director, CUNA Mutual Foundation  
Liz Green, Division Administrator, Economic Assistance and Work Services Division  
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Elizabeth Tyron, Community Partner Specialist, Edgewood College  
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## **Elected Officials and Issue Leaders**

Jennifer Alexander, Executive Director, Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce

Gladis Benavides, President, Benavides Enterprises

Tim Bruer, President and Alder, Madison Common Council

Dave Cieslewicz, Mayor, City of Madison

Kathleen Falk, Dane County Executive

Pat Gadow, former director, Madison Public Health

Brenda Gonzales, Deputy Director, New Routes to Community Health

Wayne Harris, CEO, Harris, Glowac + Harris + Madison

Lori M Kay, Director of Community Partnerships, University of Wisconsin

Julia Kerr, Alder, Madison Common Council

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