

MEETING NOTES: Project GAIN

Heartland United Way

Thursday, August 6th

Attendance: John Hoggatt, Cindy Johnson, Randy Kissinger, Don Smith, Dave Taylor, Thomas Walker, Jr., Rob Winter, Jennifer Worthington, Audrey Lutz & Karen Rathke

- The Kellogg Foundation is not currently reviewing funding requests for programs that are not in their coverage area. When we have more details from Austin and Michigan, we may be able to re-approach the Kellogg Foundation—especially with data about our underemployed.
- Lincoln completed a workforce survey in conjunction with Labor and Workforce. The University compiled and analyzed the data. Grand Island representatives have met with the Lincoln group twice. Because Grand Island is not entirely different in core needs from Lincoln, a similar survey can be used for our area. They utilized two different surveys, one identifying the perception of workers and the other the perception of employers. Employers were not as responsive as might be expected. A key takeaway was the perception of salary and benefits between workers and employers.
 - There was a discrepancy between workers not feeling they are paid what they are worth, and employers who felt employees were paid what they were worth.
 - It is important to filter out worker desire versus the reality of an actual gap.
 - Do workers overvalue their skill set?
 - What are the market comps?
 - The University felt there was value and relevance to the gap within different focus areas. For example, a significant factor of nurses felt they were not paid what they were worth.
- Key questions about GAIN: Is the period of eight to ten weeks enough time to create significant skill increases? Would employers be okay with increases in elementary skills?
- What is our “bite of the apple”? If we target underqualified, undereducated individuals with minimal skill sets, and start out with ten families, one \$15/hour job moves the needle for these families.
- Four months of training would be better than two months.
- Another key question: Who is doing the training?
- The Law Enforcement Training Center has an effective model. A city sponsors a trainee and the trainee has a job with that city at the end of training. The trainee’s earning power increases with the successful completion of the program. The city is investing in a better force.
- Maintenance Engineers are in high demand, and can make \$25/hour. Usually they have a high school diploma, but have experience with boilers, schematics, specifics of different presses, etc. The training is usually on-the-job, like apprenticeships.
- What jobs are needed in which there is available training?
 - Automotive
 - Diesel Engineering
 - Plumbing
 - Welding – six to eight weeks
 - Hydraulics
 - CDL – every day for six weeks
 - Maintenance
- Workforce Development has a grant through September of 2016 for four million dollars for long-term unemployed, dislocated workers or unemployed veterans returning from service. This could be short-term funding to test the

different elements of Project GAIN. It pays for on the job training, as well as classroom instruction. It does not cover existing employees.

- The financial component could be from Kristen Rogers through the Department of Labor. Her focus area is for veterans, but she may be able to do classroom style instruction with veterans and others.
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development has identified our prominent industry clusters: manufacturing, information technology, bioscience and biotechnology and transportation, distribution, warehouse and logistics.
- CCC is working with agribusiness, which includes drone technology.
- While area agencies have elements of the Project GAIN program, as well as possible participants, but we should be consistent with the training and the first group of participants. They should receive the same financial education, classes, etc. for consistency.
- For the simulated work experience element, it may have to be on-the-job experience or a combination with a “certificate of attendance” from the training at CCC.
- Would Goodwill be able to serve as case management for the program?
- If we have veterans, chosen from veterans’ services professionals, they may be able to contribute case management to the program.
- Veterans complete at a higher rate at CCC because of their work ethic.
- We have to keep in mind that veterans have different barriers to success than other groups, namely PTSD.
- Before we begin recruiting participants outside of veterans, we need to “knock it out of the park.” We need to go one direction with this participant group, before we can go many directions.
- Which employers are “screaming the loudest” for trained employees?
 - JBS
 - McCain
 - Different Carriers
- Veterans’ services professionals are a key part of the program, and they are crucial in having employer buy-in. Everyone has biases to overcome with veterans, including employers. If we have a few champions, these biases would be easier to overcome. These professionals could also be the mechanism to connect participants with the support they need to be effective in the positions attained through the program.

Next Steps

- Dave, Randy, Cindy, Jennifer and Thomas will evaluate which three trades are in demand, including any projections from Labor.
- United Way will conduct a meeting with Don, Rob, John and Randy along with veterans’ service providers to determine the feasibility of beginning Project GAIN with a cohort of veterans.
- The Project GAIN infographic will be re-evaluated before the next meeting.