



Equity Advisory Group Findings, Community Discussion

Presented at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, October 20, 2021

Workforce Development

What the Advisory Group Found

Barriers:

- Employee/Employer Relationships:
Employee side:
 - Worker dignity and respect
 - Understand the purpose and function of an employer
 - Career development services/appropriate education
 - Mentorship and coaching
 - Self-marketing skills
 - Discerning a career versus a jobEmployer side:
 - Pay transparency
 - Worker dignity and respect
 - Understand the needs of the workers
 - Improved ways of promoting your company and your needs for workers
 - Biases in requested application information, job requirements, and protocols
 - The desire and ability to reach out and help people rise up
- Infrastructure:
 - Transportation
 - Childcare
 - Understanding/belief in the education/training system
- Entrepreneurship:
 - Encouragement
 - Coaching:
 - First mile – from idea to startup
 - Second mile – from startup to established success
 - New business capital
 - Connections to like-minded people and support agencies
 - Funding

Suggestions:

- Develop employee/employer mentorship programs
- Establish and advance a coordinated workforce investment strategy with nonprofits and other partners



- Focus on Entrepreneurship, new business capital, growth, and sustainability

What the Community Told Us

Need to recognize and address systemic racism as it relates to all workforce issues. Examples of racism include:

Hiring practices

- Companies and staff do not see the value in hiring a diverse workforce
- Flexible job requirements are not allowed for People of Color (POC) relative to education and prior experience
 - Entry level positions requires extensive qualification
- Immigrants and other ethnicities hired first; Black People are hired last/first let go

Post hire issues

- Unable to be authentic self; differences constantly perceived as a liability
- Limited support, mentorship, and promotions once hired
 - Source of stress and a negative impact to overall quality of life and mental health
 - Must work harder to be considered for promotions
 - White males usually promoted ahead of black female/male
 - Nepotism
 - POC do not have same affiliations, connections, mentoring via relatives and/or others

Employers can do the following:

- Use both traditional and nontraditional methods of advertising to inform of hiring and to welcome diverse applicants
- Reevaluate hiring practices and consider the following:
 - Why are my requirements so strict? What happens if we modify the rules?
 - Is a degree necessary?
 - Are re-entry policies in place? Are they fair and non-discriminatory?
- Ensure all point of entry contact with company representatives are positive and welcoming
- Create and implement a blind application process. For example, assessing candidates without knowing their name or race.
- Understand the needs of a new employee
- Invest in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
 - Ensure the Board of Directors is diverse
 - Invest in DEI Education for Board Members and Employees
 - Mandate DEI across the board within the organization
- Communicate economic benefits of being a diverse company
 - Connect tax breaks to truly incorporating diverse practices and hiring
- Upon hiring a POC:
 - Ensure orientation, training and continuing mentorship programs are in place



- Understand the vulnerable position of first-time/only black employee
- Schedule routine 1:1 follow-up and mentoring sessions
- Ensure POC are promoted to leadership positions
- Build an authentic pipeline of potential applicants and start when they are young
 - Begin preparing children with skills/mindset to enter the workforce when they are in grade/middle school culminating with job opportunities when they are sixteen

Entrepreneurship

Obstacles:

- Limited businesses owned by POC
- Inadequate access to:
 - Information, capital, support, mentorship, training such as SBDC, Thincubator and Young Entrepreneurs
 - General and positive support at resource sites

Solutions:

- Use different methods for sharing information and resources
 - Adjust days and times, include weekends
 - Direct mailings, Facebook, Mobile van
- Additional Training/Access Ideas:
 - Create grade and high school entrepreneur training programs that provide grants, investors, or start-up capital upon completing the program

Quotes:

“How can I/we do the right thing to make it easier for the next person/applicant/new business owner?”

“We can fix the system.”