



Putting the East Bay to Work

PART TWO: PARTNERING WITH EMPLOYERS



April 2014
Executive Summary
East Bay Community Foundation

EAST BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Catalyzing Public & Private Partnerships

The East Bay Community Foundation is a leading resource for mobilizing financial resources and community leadership to transform the lives of people in the East Bay with pressing needs. We have identified two, inter-related issues that can lead to this transformation:

- Support for young children to succeed with a focus on the critical period of birth to third grade.
- Enhancing economic opportunities for adults and families, particularly those with significant barriers to achieving employment and financial stability.

The link between these two issues is the reality that those who are successful in the education system are more likely to encounter economic opportunity. We aim to fill these needs and achieve this transformation by combining forces with others who have financial and leadership resources. This means bringing together the financial resources and leadership capabilities of the Foundation's charitable-fund holders with those of government, business, private foundations, and non-profit service providers in coordinated and integrated grant making, campaigns, and programs to make change.

We are committed to leveraging all of our assets — including but also beyond grantmaking — to support our mission to speed the transformation of disadvantaged people in the East Bay. We serve as a community convener that leads through coordination and brokering as well as through direct grantmaking. This study and report build on the East Bay Community Foundation's past successes in collaborating with businesses, nonprofits, and government for the benefit of underserved East Bay residents. By pooling the knowledge and resources of the Foundation and our community partners, we strive to achieve meaningful change in creating new economic opportunities for East Bay residents overcoming barriers to employment.

Our Thanks

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Written by Sara Kimberlin and Cassandra Benjamin of csb consulting
for the East Bay Community Foundation



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Chevron Corporation

Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Alameda County Workforce Investment Board

Alameda County Social Services

Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County

Executive Summary

The full report is available online at www.ebcf.org

“Employment is a vital path to economic self-sufficiency and social integration. Most individuals have the capacity and desire to work, but some individuals face unusual challenges in securing and maintaining employment. The East Bay Community Foundation is committed to supporting the successful transition to work for East Bay residents who are overcoming barriers to employment.” — East Bay Community Foundation

Introduction

As the East Bay economy slowly recovers from the Great Recession, now is a pivotal moment to ensure that individuals facing significant barriers to employment have greater access to emerging job opportunities in the region. In January 2013, the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) launched this regional inquiry into promising practices and opportunities for job placement, retention, and promotion for individuals overcoming barriers to employment* in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Building on a 2009 EBCF study—*Putting the East Bay to Work: Sustainable Jobs for the Underemployed*—the current report investigates the needs and perspectives of East Bay employers that have the potential to hire a significant number of individuals with employment barriers. Representatives from East Bay businesses and job training programs were interviewed to learn what employers need and what they find useful and effective in hiring, retaining, and promoting entry-level workers. Interviews and focus groups also identified the information employers need to become more engaged in hiring and supporting entry-level workers who are overcoming employment barriers.

This report draws on these local perspectives as well as national workforce development research to identify promising strategies for increasing employment, retention and promotion of people overcoming barriers to employment. The strategies outlined in this report focus on employer-identified

needs and promising practices, offering an important perspective to encourage investments in workforce development by public and private funders at this opportune moment.

Jobs Accessible to Individuals Overcoming Barriers to Employment

When making hiring decisions, employers rarely consider whether job applicants are members of groups that face particular employment barriers. Instead, they focus on whether potential new hires have the preparation and skills necessary to succeed on the job. Success at any job requires a basic foundation of job readiness, including reliable attendance, appropriate workplace dress and language, and the ability to communicate effectively with supervisors and co-workers.

“We can provide training in technical skills, but before that, potential employees have to have a basic level of job readiness—attitude, appearance, and the ability to navigate life issues like childcare or transportation.”
— Employer

Assuming this basic foundation, three types of jobs are generally accessible to individuals with limited work qualifications:

- Minimal-skill entry-level jobs, consisting of routine manual labor

* This report looks generally at workers with low skills and educational attainment, including groups that have been the focus of recent EBCF studies and grantmaking: residents with limited English proficiency; those with a history of incarceration; young adults exiting foster care; and welfare-to-work (CalWORKs) participants.

- Soft-skill entry-level jobs, which require customer service, English language, or other general basic or interpersonal skills
- Hard-skill entry-level jobs, which require job-specific skills obtained through prior training or work experience.

East Bay job training providers and workforce funders emphasized the importance of programs that:

- Assess individuals for job readiness, and consider the match between the skills of particular clients and the requirements of particular types of jobs.
- Provide training and concrete support to develop job readiness, including soft and hard skills.

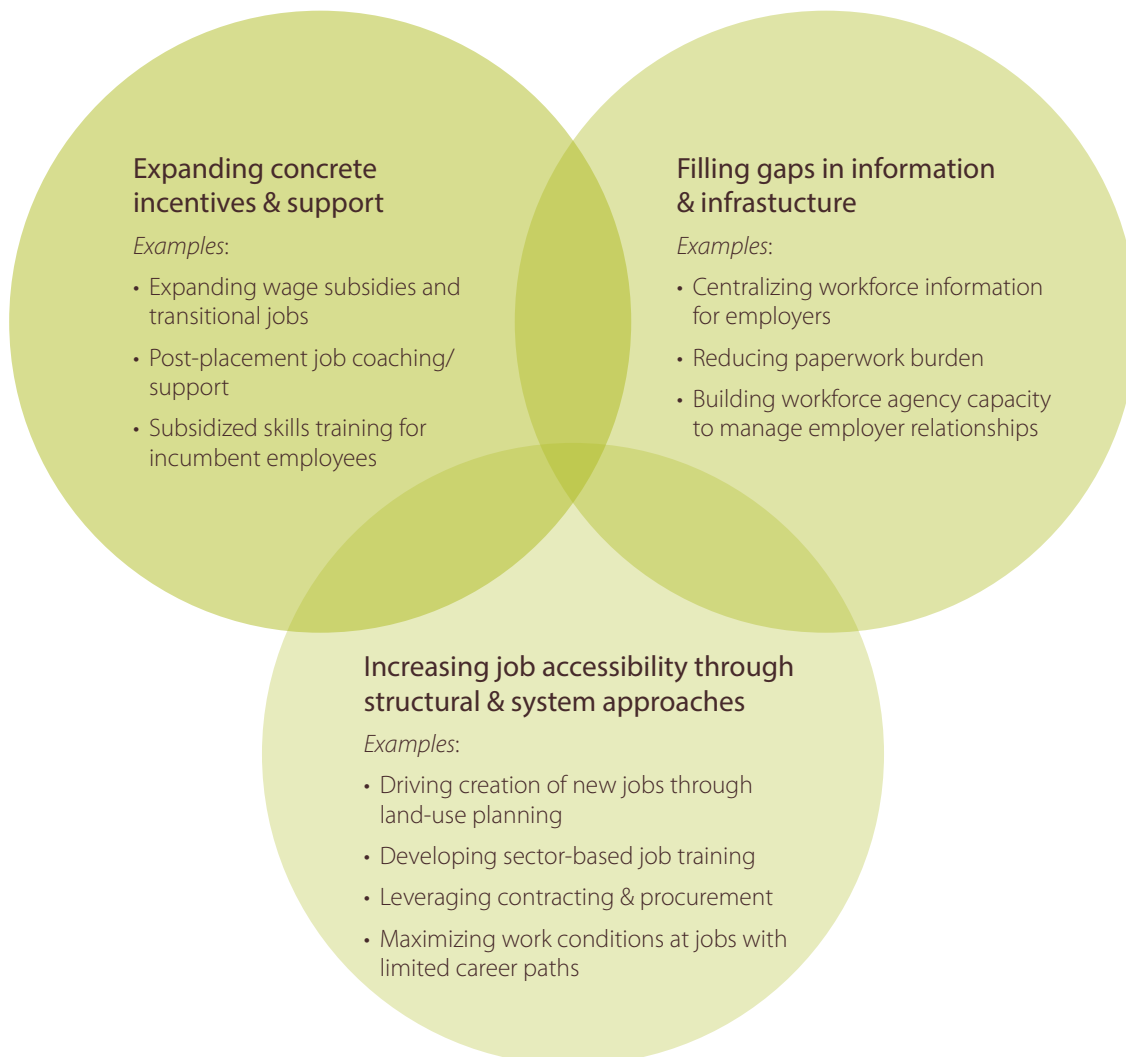
Many individuals with substantial work barriers may be unable or unwilling to participate in extended pre-employment training. For these individuals, a

“work-first” approach may be most successful, with immediate placement into jobs followed by post-placement support and training.

Industries of Opportunity

Recent research has identified East Bay industries that offer relatively higher-quality jobs accessible to individuals with work barriers. These include health care, transportation and logistics, construction, customer service, clean/green technology, and manufacturing. By concentrating funding and resources on programs that place individuals in these industries, East Bay workforce development funders could increase the number of entry-level job opportunities with career pathways for individuals overcoming barriers to employment.

Strategies for Promoting Job Placement, Retention, and Pathways for Individuals Overcoming Barriers to Employment



Employer-Identified Needs and Effective Practices for Promoting Job Placement, Retention, and Pathways for Individuals Overcoming Employment Barriers

The primary aim of this investigation was to learn from East Bay employers about the resources, incentives, and supports they perceive to be most effective and/or necessary to facilitate hiring, retention, and promotion of entry-level workers overcoming employment barriers. Three basic approaches emerged, each incorporating specific workforce intervention strategies highlighted by employers. For each strategy, promising practices are noted that help to ensure that workforce interventions meet the needs of employers, while also promoting the best interests of individuals overcoming employment barriers.

STRATEGY 1: Expanding Concrete Incentives and Supports

Public and nonprofit workforce service providers in the East Bay already provide a number of concrete financial incentives and in-kind supports for hiring individuals with barriers to employment. The employers interviewed for this study encouraged expanding the scale and scope of some of these incentives and supports, particularly:

Wage Subsidies and Transitional Jobs:

Wage subsidies typically pay partial to full wages for enrolled employees of private industry employers for the first few months of employment. Subsidies compensate employers for the extra attention and on-the-job training that individuals with work barriers often require. Short-term wage subsidies also can be coupled with supportive services for new employees to create transitional jobs, which are time-limited subsidized employment opportunities designed to convert directly into longer-term jobs or prepare individuals for unsubsidized positions with other employers.

Promising Practices

- Working with committed employers
- Obtaining upfront assurance that employers will retain employees after the subsidy expires
- Offering partial rather than full subsidies to secure employer investment in employees
- Coupling wage subsidies with job coaching and case management, following the transitional jobs model

Post-Placement Job Coaching and Support:

Individualized coaching and support for newly hired workers can help address challenges that arise in the workplace or in workers' personal circumstances that create problems with job attendance or performance. These services increase the likelihood that new entry-level workers will retain their jobs over the long term.

Promising Practices

- Providing holistic support
- Offering adequate duration and intensity of services
- Building strong trusting relationships between job coaches and newly hired employees
- Offering multiple coaching, mentoring and support resources to individual employees

Subsidized Skills Training for Incumbent Employees:

Promotion to jobs beyond the entry level often requires employees to upgrade their skills. Continuing training for incumbent entry-level employees is an important pathway to career advancement for individuals who enter the workforce with limited skills. Subsidies incentivize employers to offer training for job-specific skills, and for more general skills such as English language proficiency.

Promising Practices

- Providing training that is directly tied to promotion opportunities or transferable skills
- Promoting employer partnerships with external public or nonprofit training providers
- Supporting development of Employer Resource Networks (ERNs), consortia of small to mid-sized companies that work together to offer joint training programs and other employment supports for entry-level employees



Orientation for Unity Council medical assistant

STRATEGY 2: Filling Gaps in Information and Infrastructure

Employers noted several areas where existing workforce development infrastructure and access to information could be enhanced. Three areas where investment or improvement would be particularly valuable were identified:

Centralizing Workforce Incentive and Support Information for Employers:

Information about East Bay workforce incentive programs and potential workforce development agency partners is dispersed among various public and private agencies, including local, state agencies, and nonprofit service providers. There is no single location where employers can find clearly organized, comprehensive, and up-to-date information about available incentives and supports that might match their workforce development interests, needs, and eligibility. A centralized one-stop information resource would facilitate employer action to support individuals overcoming employment barriers.

Promising Practices

- Organizing information by employer-relevant categories (such as geography, industry, type of incentive or support, and target population for hiring outreach)
- Integrating information about in-kind supports offered by nonprofits with information about incentives and services provided by public workforce agencies
- Highlighting the specific information employers need to assess whether incentives and supports meet their needs

Reducing the Employer Paperwork Burden for Workforce Incentive Programs:

Many publicly-funded workforce incentive programs require extensive paperwork for the initial application and for follow-up reporting. Employers often view this paperwork burden as a disincentive to participate in workforce programs. Making application and reporting processes less burdensome could encourage more employers to participate.

Promising Practices

- Streamlining and digitizing reporting processes
- Providing external staff to help employers complete paperwork and set up reporting



Warehouse forklift driver moving boxes for shipment to local supermarkets.

Building Capacity of Workforce Development Agencies to Manage Employer Relationships:

Well-developed partnerships with nonprofit and public workforce development service providers can provide employers with referrals of viable job applicants from disadvantaged populations, and sometimes help with troubleshooting job performance issues after hiring. Strengthening the capacity of nonprofit and public workforce agencies to develop and manage relationships with employers can make these partnerships more successful.

Promising Practices

- Dedicating adequate and qualified staff
- Investing in strategies to support and retain qualified staff
- Adopting a dual-customer approach, where both employers and individual employment-challenged clients are viewed as important customers
- Following up with employers after new workers have been placed in jobs

STRATEGY 3: Increasing Job Accessibility Through Structural and System Approaches

Structural and system approaches have the potential to create new jobs that are accessible to individuals with work barriers, and to increase the number of existing jobs directed to such individuals on a larger scale and a more permanent basis. Three systems-oriented strategies particularly resonated with employers:

Creating New Entry-Level Jobs Through Land-Use Planning:

Prioritizing the creation of entry-level jobs through local land-use planning can promote creation of new accessible jobs. Land-use regulations and incentives can be designed to encourage expansion of commercial or industrial land use, targeting industries that involve large numbers of higher-quality entry-level jobs.

Promising Practices

- Using zoning regulations to encourage commercial and industrial land development
- Offering subsidies for commercial and industrial property acquisition and improvement
- Fostering public and nonprofit ownership of commercial or industrial property

Developing Employer-Driven Sector-Based Job Training:

An important current focus of workforce development efforts nationally is fostering industry-specific job training programs that are designed and implemented with significant input and leadership from employers. When employers are directly informed of the skills that are taught and how training is implemented, the individuals who complete the training are immediately employable in available jobs, and training providers have strong connections to employers to facilitate job placements.

Promising Practices

- Fostering in-depth engagement by employers
- Ensuring that targeted entry-level jobs include opportunities and support for meaningful career pathways

“We’ve seen a lot of value in creating partnerships with workforce development organizations. Strong communication and direction are required to make these partnerships successful.”

— Employer

Leveraging Jobs Through Anchor Institution Contracting and Procurement:

Anchor institutions such as universities and hospitals can be an important source of career path employment opportunities for individuals with work barriers because they generally support a large number of accessible entry-level jobs through their procurement of supplies and contracts for services (e.g. construction).

Promising Practices

- Reaching out to companies with targeted employees to encourage bidding on contracts
- Including indicators of target population employment in criteria for rating contract bids
- Supporting local contract stipulation ordinances that institute “local hire” and “first source” requirements

A fourth system-oriented strategy emerged through research on national trends in workforce development

Maximizing Work Conditions at Entry-Level Jobs With Limited Career Potential:

For individuals with very limited skills, the most realistic or immediately available employment options may be entry-level jobs in service industries that fall outside the focus of this study — jobs with lower wages and limited opportunities for advancement, in sectors such as janitorial, landscaping, food service, and security. Upgrading work conditions and long-term employment prospects for these types of jobs can be another important strategy for improving the employment experience of individuals overcoming barriers to work.

Promising Practices

- Promoting the growth of employers that provide strong support for entry-level employees — including fair wages and wage practices, employee benefits, worker-supportive scheduling, and opportunities for employee training and promotion
- Providing public recognition of supportive employers in consumer-based industries such as food service or accommodation
- Encouraging anchor institutions to contract with supportive employers in operational support service industries such as janitorial or security



City and Port of Oakland

Implications for Workforce Funders: Coordinating Resources for Maximum Impact

A combination of expanding existing concrete subsidies and supports, filling gaps in information and infrastructure, and systems-oriented strategies is likely to be most effective in promoting employment prospects for individuals overcoming barriers to employment. Better coordination across public and private workforce funders can create a balanced regional approach and increase the impact of limited workforce development resources. Partnerships between public and philanthropic funders have particularly strong potential for leveraging resources effectively.

There's the funding, the workforce agencies, the employers — the challenge is bringing it all together so that things really move forward.

— Employer Intermediary

Conclusion

With the rebound from the Great Recession under way, productive strategies are needed to improve the prospects for job placement, retention, and promotion among East Bay residents overcoming barriers to employment so they will not be left behind by the ongoing economic recovery. Employers are key partners in any effort to enhance job opportunities for these individuals. The strategies outlined in this report focus on employer-identified needs and promising practices, offering an important perspective to inform workforce development investment by public and private funders.

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EAST BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Research & The Power of Many

As a leading resource for philanthropy and making change, the East Bay Community Foundation publishes research — and funds research published by others — as part of our strategy to create the Power of Many through partnerships.

RECENT RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIPS:

Special Report on the East Bay Workforce (2013). An analysis of major shifts in the demand for and supply of the East Bay workforce. Published by the **East Bay Economic Development Alliance**, with support from the East Bay Community Foundation.

East Bay Economic Outlook (2013). Trends in the East Bay Economy. Published by the **East Bay Economic Development Alliance**, with support from the East Bay Community Foundation.

East Bay Indicators 2010. Joining with the **East Bay Economic Development Alliance**, we co-published research on the condition of the economic and social fabric of the East Bay, including recommendations for joint efforts to improve the region's economy.

California's Early Learning & Development System: A Review of Funding Streams and Programs (2010). Collaborating with **Children Now**, the **California Community Foundation**, and the **Mimi & Peter Haas Fund**, we helped to fund the first-ever guide for legislators, advocates and journalists to the state's myriad early learning and development programs, services, and funding streams.

It's Not About You...It's About Them (2010). How artists and art groups find creative ways to engage new donors. Co-published with the **San Francisco Foundation**.

Putting the East Bay to Work — Sustainable Jobs for the Underemployed (2009). Leveraging financial support from the **Ford Foundation**, we conducted and published important research on job opportunities for those facing “extraordinary barriers to employment.” The study compiled recommendations for employers, training institutions, service providers and policy makers to provide employment for limited English speakers, those emerging from the foster care system, and those re-entering society following incarceration.

East Bay Community Needs Assessment (2008). Examines a wide range of quality-of-life indicators with a focus on barriers to justice and on equity and inclusion in the fabric of civic life for East Bay residents.

East Bay After-School Strategy (2006-09). Strategies for ensuring young people in the East Bay are able to benefit from California Proposition 49, providing seed money to support universal after-school programs for public elementary and middle schools.

Leading a partnership with the *West Contra Costa Unified School District*, the *Chamberlin Family Foundation*, and *Bring Me A Book*, we brought early literacy resources and training to all 4,200 kindergarteners enrolled in Richmond's public schools.

Partnering with *Bank of America Charitable Foundation*, *Kaiser Permanente*, *Chevron Corporation*, *OneCalifornia Bank*, *PG&E*, and *Give Something Back*, we engaged in a common effort to provide millions of dollars in emergency economic relief for those affected by the Great Recession in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties.



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