

# **Career Development System**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**for**

***the Workforce Development Board of  
Kalamazoo & St. Joseph Counties***

**and**

***the Kalamazoo - St. Joseph  
Michigan Works! Agency***

**June 30, 2002**

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## **Spring 2002**

Since the beginning of the Strategic Plan efforts in Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Counties, our efforts to “work as one” have gained momentum and have incorporated several new refinements. From the beginning, all parties involved in the effort have had the same goal in mind: to develop, sustain, and continually improve a Career Development System that produces workforce members who possess the skills essential to participate in gainful employment and to enhance the region’s economy. The alarming trends identified in our Environmental Scan of the summer of 2000 have resulted in a closer look at what can be refined in our career development system and at some additional approaches to achieve productive and self-sufficient workforce members.

The following report summarizes the highlights of the Strategic Plan effort for the past year: June 30, 2001 – June 30, 2002.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The MISSION is a broad statement of the unique purpose for which the organization exists and the major function it performs.

The mission of the Kalamazoo - St. Joseph Michigan Works! Area is to develop, sustain, and continually improve a Career Development System that produces workforce members who possess the skills essential to participating in gainful employment and enhancing the region’s economy.

## **VISION**

The Kalamazoo-St. Joseph VISION remains the same as stated in 2000-2001: a broad statement of what the organization foresees as beneficial changes to be realized by a predicted date.

By 2004, the vision of the Kalamazoo-St. Joseph Michigan Works! Area is to:

Attract, high tech, high pay jobs and have workers with the skills to fill them

Meet the unfilled demand for workers in positions that are not high skill, high pay with sufficient wages to attract and keep employees

Foster increased coordination between the employer and education communities to prepare future and incumbent workers to find and maintain self-sustaining and meaningful employment

Have all current partners across the Career Development, Workforce Development, and Worker Enhancement Systems view the strategic plan as their own

Work to involve the economic development and employer members of the community in future strategic planning efforts

Maintain/improve the area’s reputation as a good place to live, work, raise a family

## **SIGNIFICANT TRENDS & CRITICAL ISSUES**

***June 2002: Includes those trends for which there is new data***

CRITICAL TRENDS AND ISSUES are those internal and external factors that *must* be dealt with if the organization is to proceed in a manner consistent with its mission.

- a) We continue to live in a new, ever-changing globally competitive economy -- powered by technology, fueled by information, and driven by knowledge.
- b) The Area's employment histories and forecasts show less growth than the State's though the latest forecasts show that the Kalamazoo-St. Joseph Area is slightly better than the projections in 2000.

Industry employment forecasts indicate employment totals (wages and salaries) in the period from 1998 – 2008 are expected to increase by 10.40% across the state. In the Kalamazoo/St. Joseph Michigan Works! Area, the increase is expected to be 10.0%.

Forecasts also indicate the almost 17% (1,720) of the total number of manufacturing jobs Michigan will lose (10,250) will be from the Kalamazoo/St. Joseph Michigan Works Area.

Though the latest forecast is not as dire as in 2000, the area's loss of manufacturing jobs remains disproportionately high as compared to other MI Works! Areas across the state.

- c) The Area's worker earnings and per capita income are not keeping pace with neighboring counties.

While the four nearby counties showed an average growth rate in per capita income of 19.87% in the period from 1994-1998, the Kalamazoo/St. Joseph MWA had an increase of 15.54% for the same time period. Included in the comparison are Ottawa, Kent, Calhoun, and Muskegon Counties.

The latest comparison of two years (1998 – 2000) indicates this trend is continuing. While the same four nearby counties average growth rate in per capita income was 5.11%, the Kalamazoo-St. Joseph Area's average rate was 2.72%. While the gap is narrower than in the 1994-1998 period, the inability to keep pace with neighboring counties remains.

- d) More people are moving out of the Area than are moving in; those moving in have less income than those moving out.

From 1990-1997, Kalamazoo County experienced a net loss of 3,403 persons and a net loss of \$133,823,000 in income. In the same period, St. Joseph County gained 201 persons but lost \$2,292,000 in income.

A 2001 update shows that Kalamazoo County has continued to lose income; however, total population increased slightly due to births exceeding deaths. St. Joseph County lost population but had a net gain in income.

As with other counties containing urban areas, the same challenges are created by higher income families moving out of the city to a less urban environment while younger, poorer families move to the city for its education, job opportunities, and services.

- e) K-12 Education test scores (MEAP) are not keeping pace with State averages.

In the past 5 school years beginning with 95/96 and ending with 99/00, area scores have met or exceeded state results in at least 50% of the areas compared with the exception of the 99/00 school year when only 25% of areas tested were better than the state.

Based upon the testing of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in January 2002 in reading, social science, and writing, the Area surpassed the state in 67% of the categories. Math was not tested in January 2002 nor were 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Whether or not this comparison will hold for the future is unclear.

- f) Although slightly less than State averages, persistent and significant poverty levels continue to exist in the Area with over 16% of the children in both counties living below the poverty level. The future cost in lost potential for the children of poverty is immeasurable and tragic. Current approaches to reduce poverty strive for a more coordination and collaboration to improve parents' economic self-sufficiency.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS**

STRATEGIC GOALS are statements defining the desired, measurable outcomes resulting from the organization's efforts.

*By 2004*

**Goal 1. Enhance workplace readiness skills.**

Improve Work Keys scores of the number of high school and community college students and/or incumbent workers taking the Work Keys assessment by an average of at least one level on 3 assessments (e.g. Reading, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information).

**Goal 2: Improve employment and income circumstances for Workforce Development Program participants.**

Increase average hourly wage at placement of Workforce Development Program from, \$7.50 to \$7.75 in year 1, \$8.00 in year 2, and \$8.50 in year 3.

2000-2001 result: The overall average hourly wage for Workforce Development Program participants was \$9.07 with a program breakdown as follows:

Welfare Reform Participants:	\$7.24
All WIA Programs	\$9.68

## **LONG-TERM STRATEGIES**

STRATEGIES are significant, multi-year, general efforts toward which the organization (is or) will be dedicating resources in order to achieve its strategic goals.

### **REFINEMENTS TO THE PLAN'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIES**

#### ORIGINAL GOAL #1: Enhanced Workplace Readiness Skills

1. We will promote and implement valid approaches to objectively assess and thoughtfully advance workplace readiness.
2. We will refine and expand programs and services for children, youth, and adults designed to positively influence the development of productive workplace readiness skills.

#### **NEW STRATEGY/REFINEMENT**

- **YOUTH-AT-RISK:** Kalamazoo County's desire to assist youth-at-risk has begun by recognizing that at-risk youth can "fall through the cracks." A study commissioned by the Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency (KRESA) has resulted in recommendations and a mission to create action steps to address the problem. A subcommittee of the Workforce Development Board is charged with accomplishing one of the recommendations of the study. As this project unfolds, many different youth projects are surfacing. The overall goal is to find a way to coordinate the services and to provide as seamless a system as possible to serve families. Similar to our MWA's one-stop employment service centers, a one-stop for youth and their families, either real or virtual, is envisioned for our area. The group's vision is to use a case-management approach beginning at the site where the family's problem(s) first surfaced. Through the one-stop concept, the case manager would have access to programs and resources in the community and would be aided by the convenience a one-stop method provides.

#### **NEW STRATEGY/REFINEMENT**

- "Building Bridges to Our Future" (St. Joseph County)

Since the kick-off event on January 30, 2002, (described in the Interim Status Report of March 15, 2002, the ad hoc committees designed to address workforce readiness issues have met.

The workforce readiness issues are:

1. Availability of well-trained employees
2. Character issues in the workplace
3. Transportation
4. Safe and affordable childcare
5. Economic concerns
6. Health care/Insurance costs

The April 30, 2002 meeting included thirty-three people including private industry, city and county government, elected officials, the intermediate school district, Michigan Works!, Glen Oaks Community College, Employment Services, the St. Joseph County Economic Development Corporation, community mental health representatives, and several school districts.

In an overview session, several facts were presented:

- Manufacturers recognize there is not a large pool of skilled laborers.
- Employers are very concerned about soft skills and how to teach/strengthen them.
- K-12 education is only a part of the solution for the workforce of the future. The community must send a consistent message regarding work ethic, skills, loyalty, etc. Internships are too few at the present. The project needs to look at relationships for ALL children.
- Character issues are critical. Many are hired because of their hard skills and later fired because of their lack of soft (or behavioral) skills.
- It is advantageous to build bridges between businesses and their communities.
- St. Joseph County has great collaboration, leadership, and assets.
- Maintaining community assets is essential for economic development to go forward.
- Childcare providers are the most poorly paid employees, yet early childhood is the most critical time for brain development. This time is the child's earliest educational experience; we need to invest money in this area.

#### ORIGINAL GOAL #2: Improved Employment and Income Circumstances for Workforce Development Program Participants

We will design and implement intensified job placement services focused on yielding optimum wages and benefits for Michigan Works! Clients.

#### NEW STRATEGY/REFINEMENT

- **POVERTY REDUCTION:** As noted in our area's Interim Status Report of March 15, 2002, special efforts have been aimed at reducing poverty. The Kalamazoo County Comprehensive Community Initiative on Poverty is anticipated to impact Goal #2, "Improve employment and income circumstances for Workforce development Program participants." Work continues on this highly collaborative project with wide participation from organizations throughout Kalamazoo County. Included are nine institutional systems in the county: health, housing and neighborhood development, the legislative system, (i.e. elected officials,) the legal system, economic development, the human services system, education and literacy, the employment system, and faith-based systems. At the present time, the initiative has drafted a document outlining its purpose and proposed governance. The initiative intends to achieve a "systemic integration" of "delivery of services."
- **A 211 PHONE LINE** for all social service information/referral: Concurrent with the youth-at-risk initiative and the poverty reduction initiative is a plan to establish the 211 information and referral service. One of the tasks of the Youth-at-Risk Committee is to explore and possibly support the establishment of 211. Several communities in Southwest Michigan, including Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, are making important strides toward having 211 operational, perhaps as soon as the fourth quarter of 2002.

- **INCUMBENT WORKERS:** While serving incumbent workers is not a priority goal of the area's strategic plan, new monetary resources from MDCD will allow for some services for incumbent workers. A plan is currently being developed to seek out and serve incumbent workers and their employers.

#### OUR ASSETS: ARE THEY STILL VIABLE?

The following assets merit special mention in this summary report:

##### **The St. Joseph County Human Services Commission:**

A long-established collaborative group, the Commission seeks to improve the quality of life for all citizens of St. Joseph County through collaborative efforts.

Its members serve on the "Building Bridges to Our Future" effort. Its vision is to "...be known for its ability to foster a community of healthy, productive, caring, and contributing individuals and families."

##### **Our Work Keys Testing Centers:**

Both centers are more firmly established than one year ago. Both are fully functional and are performing both testing and profiling functions.

##### **Our Partnership for Adult Learning (PAL) programs:**

The Kalamazoo-St. Joseph Michigan Works! Agency chose to focus on adult basic education (ABE) and English as a second language (ESL) exclusively in this performance-based program. In the first year of the PAL, the St. Joseph County program achieved a 48% success rate with its completers. The Kalamazoo County program achieved a 51% success rate.

Contracts for the second year require higher enrollments and achievements over those attained in the first year.

Providing ABE and ESL classes with flexible schedules and year-round programming has resulted in an excellent opportunity for working individuals or those with child care needs who wish to improve their skills.

In Kalamazoo County, an innovative partnership between Goodwill Industries of Southwest Michigan and an employer, the Radisson Plaza Hotel, provides non-English-speaking hotel employees with an English as a second language (ESL) program on site and an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program as well. Non-employees are welcome. The program offers flexible hours including Saturdays and other program sites at three churches in the community. Site at the free health clinic at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Kalamazoo and at two other churches in the Kalamazoo area have paid dividends in referrals to other agencies and better health care for non-English speakers and their families.

In St. Joseph County, after the first year's performance, an agreement in St. Joseph County between the Sturgis/Three Rivers PAL training consortium and Glen Oaks Community College will provide a training ladder toward jobs in banking and health care. While not funded by PAL, this innovative planning recognizes the benefits of providing a clearly defined and user-friendly career path for PAL completers. The initiative is exemplary in its ability to secure hiring commitments from the eventual employers.

NOTE: Efforts to build and invigorate strategic partnerships for career development will continue to go forward after this document's date of submission (6/30/02)