

NORTH SARASOTA WORKFORCE INITIATIVE (NSWI)



How To Guide for Local Area Hiring

The following information provides a comprehensive overview of the North Sarasota Workforce Initiative (NSWI) as a best-case model for effectively improving local area hiring in underserved communities. It also gives valuable strategies for success toward key partnerships and implementation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Sarasota Workforce Initiative (NSWI) was created in 2009, in the midst of the “great recession” when unemployment rates were at record levels. The impact was felt even more from our community with outcries for more jobs, echoing throughout the nation.

The Newtown- North Sarasota Redevelopment staff of the City of Sarasota was tasked to develop a process to rectify the existing unemployment issues and assure future equitable local hiring practices. Along with a team of dedicated businesses, community advocates and workforce partners, we developed the process and training toolbox to prepare applicants to be “qualified” candidates for available jobs.

Our community was fortunate to have three major construction projects (public and private) taking place simultaneously which allowed us the opportunity to refine our NSWI methodology and process. NSWI focused on creating local jobs, in a sustainable manner that can be duplicable by others. To accomplish this, it was essential to have the “buy-in” of all partners/stakeholders through the entire process, conveying clear and concise communication to both the contractors (employers) and potential employees.

Within this guide, the following key elements of our process are outlined:

- Develop a work plan with local hiring benchmarks, timelines, and measurable outcomes
- Identify champions to own the process and setup task forces represented by key stakeholders
- Pinpoint capacity gaps (barriers) and find ways to resolve them through partnerships and resources.
- Develop a communication plan which includes project updates, local hiring statistics, economic impact and community success stories.

The North Sarasota Workforce Initiative (NSWI) started as a project to address the local hiring gaps and after testing and tweaking during three construction projects, it’s now a proven and successful model to share with the public. The true measure of success is in the people. We have seen individuals’ lives changed beyond what we envisioned, but through a community that takes pride in their accomplishments while building stronger households financially.

By putting the NSWI process in this guide, we believe it will help others successfully navigate local hiring challenges and strengthen public-private partnerships in their communities.

PURPOSE

The **Workforce “How to Guide”** is created and presented as a model program to implement strategies for local area hiring based on the success of the North Sarasota Workforce Initiative (NSWI). The following contents are comprised of an overview of the NSWI and the key components that work toward the overall improvement of the unemployment rate within underserved communities.

The How to Guide, in addition to supporting documents, will provide other agencies, municipalities, and communities with an organized flow of recommended action steps and empirical insight on potential pitfalls to avoid when planning their own local area hiring program or initiative.

OVERVIEW & HISTORY

Overview

The **North Sarasota Workforce Initiative (NSWI)** represents a strategic alliance among the Newtown – North Sarasota community, City of Sarasota, Sarasota County, Sarasota County School Board, Sarasota Housing Authority, CareerSource Suncoast (formally known as Suncoast Workforce), and various construction companies. The primary goals are to create jobs and provide training opportunities for local area residents on construction projects within the targeted area. The NSWI results from the hiring goals were far exceeded with additional opportunities for career growth. The initiative has now become a best case model for local area hiring and is utilized by other communities.

History

NSWI was established in 2008 when disparities in local hiring practices were identified during the development of Janie’s Garden Phase I, a Sarasota Housing Authority redevelopment project. The project included the redevelopment of low-income housing into 86 stylish mixed-income units with modernized amenities. The local hiring concerns resulted in the creation of multiple community taskforces for the Janie’s Garden, Robert L. Taylor Community Complex and Booker High School redevelopment projects. The taskforces played vital roles toward the monitoring of job placement opportunities for local residents.

CareerSource Suncoast was and continues to be an integral partner with the NSWI. The company helps to keep track of job placement and hiring statistics of registered individuals, as well as being a central location for contractors to conduct onsite interviews. The actual hiring was done specifically by the construction companies and/or subcontractors, based on the requirements set forth within the contract. Career laddering and various ongoing hiring opportunities, from project to project, is another success factor within the workforce initiative.

The City of Sarasota has now adopted a Local Hiring Clause within their bidding documents which “encourages the hiring of local residents for all bids, quotes, proposals, and solicitations within the Sarasota area without the intent of terminating existing employees.”



CATEGORIES OF PARTNERSHIPS:

The Categories of Partnerships section will provide you with a general explanation of the collaborations that are recommended to be formed within a workforce initiative. Each section will give a description of a specific area of partnership followed by an explanation of how that area of partnership was implemented within the North Sarasota Workforce Initiative. When establishing a workforce initiative, this how to guide will help to provide comparisons and options between what you and your partners can do and what was performed through NSWI efforts.

When establishing a workforce initiative partnerships are imperative. The structure of the partnerships is based on key components that create a comprehensive and systematic flow toward a joint and successful outcome.

Categories of the partnership may include:

- ❖ *Community*
- ❖ *Program/Initiative Coordinators*
- ❖ *Employment Agency*
- ❖ *Employers*
- ❖ *Contracting Agency*

The NSWI was centered on 5 key areas of partnership:

- ❖ **Community:** *Newtown Community Advocates*
- ❖ **Coordinators:** *City of Sarasota*
- ❖ **Employment Agency:** *Career Source Workforce*
- ❖ **Employers:** *Contractors/Subcontractors*
- ❖ **Contracting Agency:** *Sarasota Housing Authority, Sarasota County, and Sarasota School Board, and the City of Sarasota.*

The NSWI Partners



Description of Categories

Community:

Community advocates can represent the most valuable aspect of the partnership. The targeted community is a voice of concern for local hiring disparities and is also a vital resource for measuring improved results of the initiative. It is recommended that some form of a community committee, taskforce or partnering members be forged as additional support for providing insight on the hiring needs from a community perspective as well as for monitoring the integrity of the process.

NSWI's partnership with the community:

- ❖ As described above, the NSWI was established with the incorporation of three taskforces that were comprised of diverse community members. Their involvement included regularly scheduled taskforce meetings, dissemination of information related to the job hiring process and training opportunities. Specific to NSWI and the construction projects, the taskforce assisted with defining parameters for contracts written with an agreed goal for local area hiring.

Program/Initiative Coordinators:

The coordinators are the ones who are responsible for the organization, planning, and progression of the initiative as a whole. This role helps to keep all other partners aware of the joint progress and the scheduling of the meetings and creation of reports/presentations on behalf of the workforce initiative. This is usually an organization, municipality or group of people who are familiar with the needs and concerns of the community to be served.

NSWI's Coordinators:

- ❖ As the coordinators, the City of Sarasota's Newtown-North Sarasota Redevelopment Office (NRO) has been a key and ongoing contributor of NSWI since its conception and even prior to. When efforts to address local hiring began, some of workforce oriented services and/or administrative tasks were performed by the NRO staff. As partnerships developed, it was evident that more extensive services were available by CareerSource Suncoast (formally known as Suncoast Workforce) and continued as coordinators, as defined above.

Employment Agency:

Having a professional workforce/employment agency and/or structure in place is the core ingredient to a functioning initiative. It is the central location for identifying, screening, preparing and placing applicants with the appropriate job or training opportunities.

CareerSource Suncoast in partnership with NSWI:

- ❖ CareerSource Suncoast was the agreed NSWI agency for applicant submissions, resume preparation, job placement, job skill training and the tracking of the hiring goals of the various construction projects/companies. The organization participated in NSWI meetings related to each construction project and provided thorough reports of hiring statistics. One representative from CareerSource Suncoast focused on our targeted community and worked directly with each taskforce.

Employers:

Corporations, small businesses, and organizations must be willing and committed to support local hiring initiatives. Each employer must recognize the need to increase economic development within the target area/community by hiring qualified local talent. While it may not be mandatory for employers to guarantee a percentage of their new hires to be locally based, the value and economic benefits of a workforce initiative must be emphasized and implemented with passion in order to see a positive community impact.

Employers' partnership with NSWI:

- ❖ The NSWI employers were represented by the construction companies that were contracted for various redevelopment projects throughout the targeted area. This aspect was structured by an agreement between the employers (Construction Company) and the contracting agencies (City of Sarasota, Sarasota Housing Authority, Sarasota School Board, etc.)

Contracting Agency

The Contracting Agency is represented by an organization, municipality, and business or non-profit that contracts a company to perform a task or service in which additional hiring is necessary. The contracting agency would then encourage, or incorporate within the formal contract agreement, that a specified percentage of new hires be from the local community. It is strongly encouraged that the agency sets concrete local hiring goals with the contractor to ensure measurable outcomes.

Note: Negotiations may vary between projects and hiring opportunities as agreed between the employer and the employment agency. However, this element of the partnership structure may not be applicable to all situations.

Contracting Agencies within NSWI:

- ❖ NSWI's contracting agencies were parties responsible for overall process of a construction project which included the coordination of the funding sources to execute the project. For example:
 - **Sarasota Housing Authority (SHA)** contracted Tandem Construction for the Janie's Garden Phase I, II, and III redevelopment projects. Tandem Construction agreed within their contract that 20% of the total hours worked to be from local residents.
 - **City of Sarasota** contracted Manhattan Construction for the Robert L. Taylor Community complex. Manhattan included within their contract an agreement that 25% of their total hours worked would come from local area hires.

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING A WORKFORCE:

The need to start a workforce collaborative project depends on many factors. Some of the main reasons are based on the unemployment rate and disparities within a given area and the voices of concerned citizens. In this section, we will provide five areas of criteria and key tips to consider utilizing when a group is establishing a workforce initiative.

1. Criteria: *Defining a Target Area*

To create and maintain an organized initiative, it is imperative to identify a target area that meets the criteria for addressing the unemployment crisis. The unemployment rate in a given area in comparison to the overall city and state should help to recognize the target area for starting local hiring efforts.

- ❖ Other factors to consider when defining a target area:
 - U.S. Census Tract
 - Community voices
 - Criminal activity/crime rate
 - Income level
 - Level of education

NSWI Target Area:

To ensure the recruitment of qualified individuals, the boundaries set for “local” hires were created in two categories; local area residents and local residents.

1) **Local Area Residents:** The immediate target audience representing the 34234 zip code. The term Local Area Residents shall mean a person who resides within the Newtown boundaries, which are from:

- From the North: *Myrtle Street*
- From the East: *Tuttle Avenue*
- From the South: *17th Street*
- From the West: *Orange Avenue*
- Then back South: *10th Street and to the West: U.S. Highway 41 (Tamiami Trail)*

2) **Local Residents:** Hiring individuals who reside in Sarasota, Manatee, Desoto, or Charlotte Counties. With the need for qualified workers, we understand that some positions may need to be filled outside of the target boundaries.

Tips to consider:

- ❖ **Community Involvement:** Community participation is key to understanding what the job needs are for local residents. Realizing such needs will help to better coordinate available resources or a lack thereof.

2. Criteria: Identifying/Resolving Barriers

When establishing a workforce partnership, all parties involved must understand that even with working with a solidified plan, there will be unexpected circumstances that will arise that may impact the program in a way that requires midway modifications.

Identified Barrier	Resolution
<p>Creating and maintaining a systematic flow of the hiring, interviewing, job placement, and tracking process.</p>	<p>For best results, agree to one central workforce program in which such services are already in existence. Collaborate with 2-3 of the workforce staff members who are familiar and consistent with the overall effort. It is important that the community can have a sense of trust and reliability by having a direct contact person.</p>
<p>Recruiting qualified workers to employers hiring needs.</p>	<p>Assess the qualification needs of the employer and match them with applicants who have registered with the workforce association. For applicants lacking such skills for the job, create and/or connect them with job training opportunities. Identifying employers who also provide on-the-job training will also assist with resolving this barrier.</p>
<p>Community disengagement and frustration due to transportation issues, jobs denied and pay scales.</p>	<p>Create communication channels and clear expectations to the community of what employers are seeking when hiring and the challenges related to retention. Be realistic and upfront with the need for “qualified” and skilled workers. Having some form of a job fair within the target area would assist.</p>

3. Criteria: Technical Resources

When establishing your workforce program, consider the additional elements that need to be in place in order to have a sustainable program with progressive results.

- **Educational Center:** Finding a facility that provides access to computers for public use is beneficial for job search, application submission, and direct coordination with job seekers.
- **Information Location:** Have a location where interested parties and job seekers can go to find more information about the workforce initiative and job opportunities. It is important for the community to gain a sense of loyalty and consistency as they pursue employment. Market this consistently throughout the process.

❖ **NSWI Technical Resources:**

- Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI)
- CareerSource Suncoast (formally, Suncoast Workforce)

4. Criteria: Defining Benchmarks

The workforce group must agree to terms that are beneficial for the target community and the employers doing the hiring. Setting benchmarks and goals may be determined by hours worked or the number of new employees from the target area or other agreeable methods. For the North Sarasota Workforce Initiative, the following measures were set forth:

❖ **NSWI Measuring Results**

- Hiring results were calculated using the amount of hours worked versus the number of individuals hired. This method has a significantly higher economic impact.
- CareerSource Suncoast maintains track of the number of individuals interviewed, hired and in which zip code the hired employees reside.

NSWI RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED::

Here are the results based on the last report of the NSWI. As you can see, improvement in local area hiring was and continues to be made through various collaborations. After this report, the partners of NSWI met jointly to discuss elements considered to be lessons learned and below are the recommendations for how to address these areas for future reference.

RESULTS FROM FINAL REPORT PROVIDED BY CAREERSOURCE SUNCOAST

<u>Construction Company</u>	<u>Total Local Hires</u>	<u>34234 Hires</u>	<u>Local Area Residents hours worked</u>	<u>Exceeded Goal</u>	<u>Report as of:</u>
Tandem (<i>Jamie's Phase II</i>)	48	42	25,016 of 119,891 hrs.	24%	Oct. 2011
Manhattan Kraft (<i>RLT Complex</i>)	32	20	23,123 of 77,479 hrs.	30%	July 2011
Suffolk (<i>Palm Ave Garage</i>)	28	10	No required by contract	38%	Dec. 2010
W.G. Mills (<i>Ed Smith Stadium</i>)	4	2	No required by contract		Dec. 2010
Willis A. Smith (<i>Booker High</i>)	55	52	103,575 of 439,325 hrs.	25%	July 2013
TOTAL	167	126	151,714 of 636,695 hrs.		

Results: Community Testimonials

Results cannot fully be measured without input from those who benefited from local area hiring:

"I was fortunate to be part of the graduating class of the 2010 Introduction to Construction course that offered by SCTI. Then I registered with CareerSource Suncoast to begin the employment process and soon after, I was hired to work on the demolition phase of the Booker High School redevelopment project. This experience led to an opportunity to be hired long-term with Trident Building Systems, Inc. Coming from a background of substance abuse, this local hiring program gave me the chance I needed to get back on my feet. With the NSWI process you have to be patient but it works." - Willie Cromer

"Within 3 years from being hired through the NSWI efforts, I went from room housing to living and providing a home for my family. It's essential for people in our community to feel like they have a chance to be hired without being stereotyped. The program helped me to regain my pride and become a productive member of society. Being hired was more than just a job but a new opportunity for me. Now, I have a steady job at Crowther Roofing. – Charles Johnson

Lessons Learned:

- ❖ **New Hire Work Ethic:** With the survey results from our construction company partners, some of them shared their concern regarding the following:
 - Tardiness (This could be based on limitations regarding transportation.)
 - Wrong contact information
 - Lack of ambition to work their way up the career later
 - Dissatisfaction with wages
 - Poor communication

 - ❖ **Recommendation:** The highest recommendation for addressing work ethic issues with new hires was to incorporate a mentoring arm of the partnership. The mentorship aspect could be provided by a church, wellness center or professional volunteers who can extend training skills in the areas of accountability, self-esteem, and more.
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Additional Key Elements:

- ❖ **Communications & Community Outreach:** The process for improving local area hiring must include direct communication and relationship building with the community members. It is advised to create an overall communication plan for the initiative in which each partner is aware of the process and goals, thus establishing shared values and deliverables. This also includes ways to market the program and bring awareness toward the employment process and requirements.
 - **Ideas:**
 - Ongoing updates on job opportunities through email, social media, etc.
 - Identify a communication liaison
 - Hold job fairs
 - Connection with existing neighborhood associations and present local hiring updates at regularly scheduled meetings.
 - Presentations and updates to City and/or County Commission

Closing:

The North Sarasota Workforce Initiative could not achieve ongoing success without partnerships and understanding the community's needs. It is our belief that shared knowledge of this effort will help to not only enhance our local economy but to build bridges between the gaps in socialism and employment opportunities. With the above information, any group can tailor their own initiative to the local hiring needs of their community.

For more information:

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