



THE EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION CENTER

Two-Year Report, April 2015- April 2017

Mayor's Office of Employment Development
1410 Bush Street, Baltimore MD 21230

Background

The Employment Connection Center (ECC) is a collaboration of the Mayor's Office of Employment Development and the Baltimore Casino Local Development Council, located at 1410 Bush Street in the Carroll-Camden Industrial Area, and financed with Local Impact Grant funds from Horseshoe Casino revenue. Since opening in April of 2015, the ECC has provided access to employment, training, and career development opportunities to residents of the Casino Impact Area (CIA) or "South Baltimore Gateway." This area includes Washington Village/Pigtown, Cherry Hill, Westport, Lakeland, Mount Winans, Sharp-Leadenhall, Riverside, and other neighborhoods, and is home to approximately 16,000 residents age 16 or over, with an average unemployment rate of 11%.

Visitors to the ECC benefit from career exploration, resume-building, assistance with online job applications, job-readiness workshops, computer literacy classes, and more. The ECC also assists area businesses in finding qualified local candidates to build their organizations. Employers who partner with the ECC receive free help with recruitment, candidate assessment and pre-screening, and labor market analysis to foster informed hiring decisions and increase local investment.

Outcomes

In its first 24 months of operation, the center has enrolled 1,748 individuals seeking assistance with employment, training, education, or career development. In total, the center has hosted over 6,500 visits, or about 270 unique visits each month of operation, and an average of 3.8 visits per individual served, indicating that many customers develop a sustained engagement with the ECC.

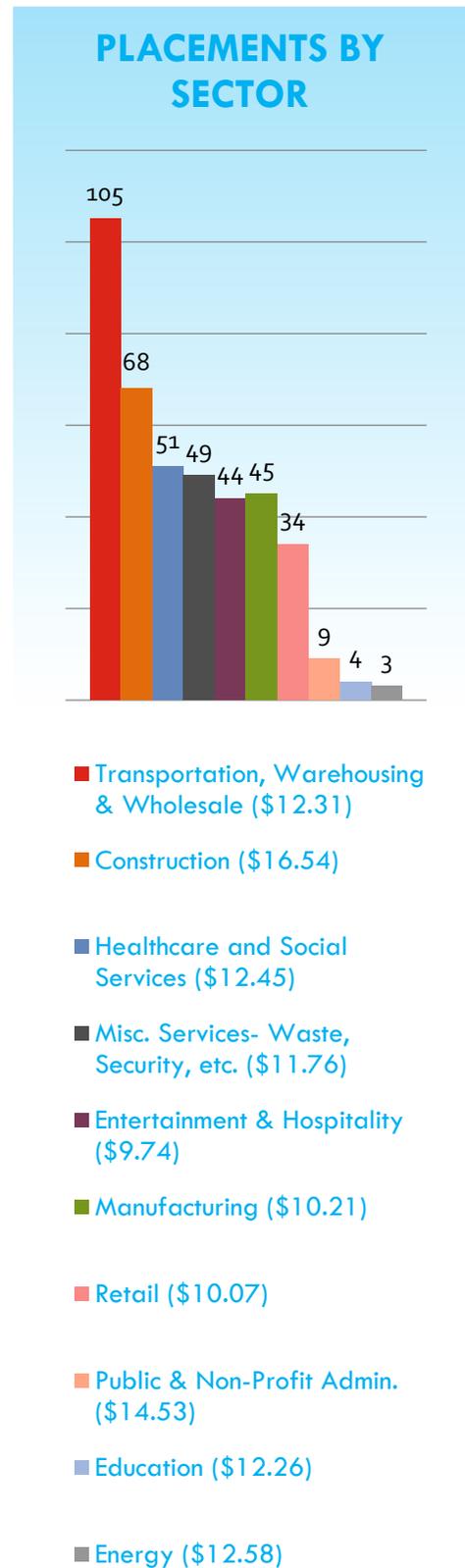
As of April 2017, the center has facilitated 412 unsubsidized job placements (during the first and second full fiscal years of operation, the ECC had goals of 200 and 225 placements per year, respectively.) ECC customers have been placed at over 200 different companies, with an average wage of \$12.31, well above the project goal of an average hourly wage of \$10.50. Strong relationships with businesses in the Carroll-Camden Industrial Zone and in the CIA more generally have meant that many of these jobs are local. In keeping with a 2015 assessment of area industries in the *Environmental Scan and Needs Assessment* conducted by Field Guide Consulting, the ECC has

primarily connected residents to careers in Transportation, Warehousing and Wholesale (25% of all placements), Construction (16%), Healthcare and Social Services (12%), Entertainment & Hospitality (11%), "Miscellaneous Services" (including waste management, landscaping, and security services- 12%), and Manufacturing (11%).

The ECC has filled all slots initially allocated for construction training with JumpStart, with a completion rate above 75%, and ECC staff continue to recruit for further opportunities with training partners in construction, healthcare, and manufacturing. Staff are also in the process of developing a customized deconstruction training program with Second Chance, to start in fall of 2017.

Looking Back

In an area of the city that struggles with transportation and contains several distinct and isolated neighborhoods, identifying a location that would best serve all CIA neighborhoods was a complex undertaking. The final siting of the ECC is accessible by multiple bus lines, within walking distance of the Casino itself, and in close proximity to many local employers, allowing for strong relationships with the business community as well as membership in the Carroll-Camden Business Association. Working with local employers, in turn, helps residents find jobs that they can access reliably. Though the center receives many walk-ins, its location in a business park can make it difficult to stumble upon. To address this concern, residents are



HIGHLIGHTS

- ▲ 1,748 INDIVIDUALS SERVED
- ▲ 412 PLACEMENTS
- ▲ 28 PARTICIPANTS IN PLACED IN OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING
- ▲ \$ 12.31 AVERAGE PLACEMENT WAGE

AMONG ECC JOB-SEEKERS:*

- ▲ 17 % LACK A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA; 77% HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED; 6% HAVE A BACHELORS OR MORE
- ▲ 49% ARE AGE 34 OR UNDER
- ▲ 97% ARE US CITIZENS
- ▲ 60% ARE MALE, 40% FEMALE
- ▲ 92% ARE AFRICAN-AMERICAN 6% ARE WHITE

**All demographic data self-reported*

recruited and introduced to services through aggressive outreach. Staff recruit door-to-door as well as at back-to-school nights, park ribbon-cuttings, community resource fairs, churches, and neighborhood association meetings. Initial introduction to the services available at the ECC in their own communities helps encourage residents to come to the center in person to receive the more in-depth services available on-site.

With many staff in the field conducting outreach up to three days per week, the ECC enjoys strong relationships with neighborhoods groups, schools, and other local partners. Staff have developed regular communication and strong working relationships with groups such as the Cherry Hill Community Action Center, the Westport, Cherry Hill, Sharp-Leadenhall, and Lakeland Community Associations, and the Excel Academy at St. Francis Wood, an alternative high school (a full list of community partners can be found at the end of this report.) Most recently, the ECC leveraged funds with the Southwest Partnership to create a new Career Navigator position. Dividing her time between the ECC, Clay Pots in Pigtown, the Community Engagement Center at the University of Maryland, and the Southwest Partnership Office, the navigator is able to share resources and contacts across the CIA border. Since the staffing partnership with Southwest Development Corporation began, the ECC has enrolled an additional 31 individuals through the partnership.

ECC customer surveys indicate that customers value the services such as the 21st Century Job Readiness course, resume assistance, and access to career discovery tools, and that they consistently find the staff helpful and knowledgeable. Residents express that they find the center a helpful place to focus and work, with many who have already found work still visiting in the hope of continually improving their career prospects. Community leaders in Lakeland have acknowledged ECC staff for their responsiveness to the unique situations of Latina/o community members by addressing their language needs, construction experience, and need for assistance in navigating online applications.

Moving Forward

Recruiting eligible candidates for targeted occupational training

Funding occupational training in targeted fields such as construction was a priority in planning for the ECC, but interactions with customers have revealed that, often, the need for immediate income prevents individuals from seriously investing in training opportunities. This is in line with the finding of the *Environmental Scan and Needs Assessment* that the community ranked “difficulty finding a job that pays enough to cover basic costs of living” as the top barrier to employment opportunities. Although workforce providers identified job training as a top need for the area, residents themselves rank job placement and search services as the most helpful services. In

TOP ECC EMPLOYERS (OVER 40% OF ALL PLACEMENTS)

- ▲ AMAZON FULFILLMENT CENTER
- ▲ TRANSDEV
- ▲ BAYSIDE CLEANING TCS
- ▲ MCDONALD’S
- ▲ KARON MASONRY
- ▲ FEDEX
- ▲ TOTE-IT
- ▲ UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
- ▲ DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
- ▲ HOLLY POULTRY
- ▲ HORSESHOE CASINO
- ▲ SECOND CHANCE
- ▲ STX
- ▲ CARTER PAVING AND EXCAVATING

Stories from ECC Customers

"I can tell you about my own experience using the employment center. You knew that I was a president of a community association. You did not know I was a stay-at-home-mom for seven years. I was a little intimidated to head back into the work force. Honestly, I thought my resume would be overlooked for a younger application. My personal experience with the employment center has been a Godsend. You all make everyone feel welcomed....I can say without any doubt that I have a job today because of getting announcements from you all about city employment. The employment center is money well spent. I hope the opportunities for training and education continue to grow. You all are helping communities, but most importantly, giving people hope for the future."

Director, Lakeland Coalition, Spring 2017

"We have had such a difficult time getting employment support and your center has been a Godsend. Students who had been seeking employment independently and had not been meeting with any success found employment within a few weeks of connecting with the Employment Connection. Thank you also for attending our Career Fair this year. Seeing you in person helps our students see that there is real, live support in the community."

School Social Worker, Excel Academy at Francis M. Wood, Spring 2017

communities where many residents live in constant financial instability and vulnerability, convincing residents to make long-term investments in training takes communication and work. Additionally, most training programs are located far outside the CIA, and interested individuals are often disqualified by their low scores on preliminary assessments.

As a result, finding residents ready and qualified to take advantage of all funded training opportunities has been a challenge. In order to address this, the ECC is now conducting strategic workshops covering importance of training, jobs that offer possibilities for advancement and sectors that offer higher paying jobs, and advertising funded training opportunities through direct presentations to partner organizations and phone campaigns to existing customers. There are indications that this is increasing recruitment for training. Staff have also worked with Second Chance to develop new custom training opportunities better suited to and closer to ECC residents, for whom transportation remains a major barrier. Customers with low test scores are able to increase their grade level or brush up for the Test of Adult Basic Education using PLATO software, and those who need to obtain their GED are connected to the South Baltimore Learning Center and Baltimore City Community College.

Building capacity

In order to increase the center's capacity for community outreach and business engagement, the ECC expanded from three and a half full-time-equivalent staff to five and a half in the second half of 2016, although the onboarding process was complicated by the unexpected passing of a dedicated business service representative in fall of 2016. ECC staff worked to ensure that job-seekers and employer partners were not negatively impacted during this time- for instance, by working with MOED's Business Services Team at the Eastside Career Center to maintain referral networks for school construction-related careers. Since the beginning of 2017, the increased staff capacity and the collaboration with the Southwest Partnership's Career Navigator have allowed for more frequent and sustained direct outreach efforts in Casino Area communities, and for increased awareness of and interest in training opportunities among residents.

An office expansion now underway at 1410 Bush Street will also create opportunities to expand the menu of available services. Staff are exploring options such as EarnBenefits screenings¹, financial literacy workshops, group orientations to services with local partner organizations, and adult education programming in partnership with the South Baltimore Learning Center. The ability to promote these additional services will help increase the center's value to residents of the CIA, bring more community members in to the ECC to enroll directly, and ensure that the ECC builds on the impact of its first two years, continuing to provide vital resources to the neighborhoods of Southwest Baltimore.

¹ EarnBenefits Online is a software tool used by social service providers to help individuals identify their eligibility for benefits programs that they may not have been aware of, including programs in housing, insurance, utilities, energy assistance, food and nutrition assistance, tax credits, and more.

Community Connections

ECC staff have met with, presented for, received referrals from, or arranged activities with the following:

Community Associations

Cherry Hill Community Action Center
 Cherry Hill Neighborhood Association
 Cherry Hill Roundtable Meeting
 Lakeland Community Association
 Sharp-Leadenhall Community Association
 South Baltimore Partnership
 Mt. Winans Community Association
 Westport Neighborhood Association

Schools

Lakeland Elementary School and
 Lakeland Elementary STEAM Center
 Digital Harbor High School
 Benjamin Franklin High School
 Excel Academy
 Morrell Park Elementary School
 George Washington Elementary School
 Charles Carroll Elementary School

Partner Organizations: State and Local Providers

AIRS
 Baltimore City Community College
 Baltimore Housing Authority
 Baltimore Outreach Services
 Bon Secour
 Cherry Hill Safe Streets
 Civics Works
 Dept. of Family and Children's Services
 Dept. of Human Resources
 Dept. of Social Services
 DORS
 Goodwill (Latino Outreach)
 Living Classrooms
 Paul's Place
 Power Recovery
 South Baltimore Learning Center
 Turn Around, Inc.
 Urban Alliance
 VA of Maryland
 Youth-Empowered Society

Churches

10 Church Council Meeting (Cherry Hill)
 Created for So Much More Worship Center (Cherry Hill)
 Freedom Temple AME Zion Church (Lakeland)

Business Associations

Carroll-Camden Business Association

Through Southwest Works

Clay Pots
 Franklin Square Community Association
 Friends of Carroll Park
 James McHenry Elementary School
 Mt. Clare Community Association
 Poppleton NOW! Community Association
 Southwest Partnership
 UMB Community Engagement Center
 Union Square Community Association

Business Connections

Aaron's Furniture
 Absolute CARE
 Aerotek
 Amazon Fulfillment
 AMPORTS
 Anchor Staffing
 ARAMARK Dining Services
 Bakery Express
 Barco Enterprises
 Bayside Cleaning Service
 B-Green Cash and Carry
 Bindagraphics
 Bon Secours Health Systems
 Bond Distributing Company
 Broadway Services (JHU Security)
 Cain Contracting
 Calspan Air Services
 Construction Labor Contractors
 Crusaders Chemical
 Daco Construction
 DAR Healthcare Service
 Deitz & Watson
 Delaware North

Domino Sugar
 Easy Rest
 Express Employment Professionals
 FedEx
 First Transit
 Flagger Force
 Flik Independent School Dining
 Franklin Square Hospital
 Future-Care Cherrywood
 Gilbane/RAM Construction
 Harbor Manufacturing & Design
 Horseshoe Casino
 Kelly Services
 L&M Staffing Services
 LaborMax Staffing
 Lifebridge Health
 Manor Care Woodbridge
 Mercy Hospital
 Mt. Washington Conference Center
 Northwest Healthcare
 Parking Authority of Baltimore
 Peapod
 People Ready

Pipeway Energy Construction
 Priority Construction
 Progress Unlimited
 RCI Independent Computing
 ReciproCare, Inc.
 Royal Farms
 Ruppert Landscaping
 Signius Communications
 Sinai Hospital
 Skill Force, Inc.
 St. Agnes Protection Services
 Steinweg
 STX, LLC
 Sue-Ann Office Supply
 SuperValu
 TAI Engineering
 TechnoPref
 Tribute Home Care
 Veolia
 Walgreens
 Waste Management
 Westgate Rehabilitation Center
 WF Delauter & Son

Employment Connection Center- Menu of Services

1410 Bush Street ♦ Baltimore, Maryland 21230 ♦ 410-396-1052

Registration: Monday through Friday 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Center hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30

► **Registration & Orientation** ♦ To registered with the Center and learn about available services, drop in any morning Monday through Friday, no appointment necessary. **Monday through Friday 8:30 AM -11:30 AM**

► **One-on-One Job Readiness Assistance** ♦ Make an appointment for individualized assistance with creating a resume, opening an email account, applying online for jobs, assistance with cover letters and more! **Monday through Friday by Appointment**

► **21st Century Job Readiness Workshops** ♦ Get the skills and tips you need to compete in the 21st Century Job Market.

♦ **Job Search 101** ♦ Find out how to Ace your Application, Refine your Resume, and be inspired in your interviews. **Wednesdays at 9:30 AM**

♦ **Skill Specific Workshop** ♦ For an individual resume consultation, upcoming job interview prep session, or industry specific guidance, the CDF is available to schedule a topic specific workshop upon request. **By Appointment**

► **The Digital Learning Lab** offers computer courseware for learners on all levels. Self-paced courses cover computing basics, Microsoft Office Applications, and safety on the web. Courses can also prepare learners for IC3 Certification, an internationally recognized credential that demonstrates technical knowledge and skills.

♦ **Orientation for new students** ♦ **By Appointment**

♦ **Trainer on-site** ♦ **M, W, F**

► **High-Tech Computer Lab** is open for self-guided computer literacy coursework, job search and applications, and skills brush up for assessment takers. **Tuesdays/Thursdays & M, W, F based on availability**

► **Career Training Workshop:** Funding is available to help job seekers upgrade their occupational skills and gain new opportunities. To find out how to qualify for Customized and On-the-job training, Apprenticeships and Individual Training Accounts, sign up to attend a Career Training Workshop. **Tuesday at 2:00 PM and Thursday at 10:00 AM**

► **Case Management:** Individualized assistance is available for career guidance and planning. If you want to start a new career, change your career field, or take the next step to enroll in career training, appointments are available to meet one-on-one with the Career Development Facilitator. **By Appointment**

► **Job Placement Services:** The Business Services Representative (BSR) works with local employers who are looking to grow their workforce. Job ready customers can meet with the BSR for job matching and placement assistance.

By Referral Only

♦ **One-on-one with BSR:** If you meet the 21st Job readiness standards, you can make an appointment to meet with the Business Services Representative for individualized consultation. **By Appointment Tuesdays and Thursdays**

♦ **Job Club:** (*One-on-one with BSR required first*) After meeting one-on-one with the BSR, come to Job Club any Wednesday to successes and challenges, hear about upcoming recruitments, and get info on the latest job openings. **Wednesdays, 2:00 PM**

► **Partner Services** ♦ Ask any staff member or check the calendar to find out the latest about other services and resources coming to the Employment Connections Center now and in the near future. **Days and Times Vary**