

## JOB CREATION

### **Context:**

- “The fact is, we cannot serve people out of poverty, no matter how much we might want to...So, how will we move the poverty needle? Profitable business creation.” – *Charity Detox*.
- Non-profit jobs programs require additional funding to provide under-resourced folks with paid work and education/training.
- Childcare and transportation are two of the biggest barriers to folks getting and/or holding a job.
- Opportunity is needed in low income neighborhoods, if there is no opportunity then there is no ambition.
  - In January, the U.S. unemployment rate for black Americans was 6.8%, the lowest level since 1972 when the government began tracking that data. However, the unemployment rate for African-Americans in IL was 10%, the highest of any state and more than 40% of 20-24-year-old black males in Chicago were out of work & out of school.

**Criteria Fit:** A properly selected jobs project could certainly fit all our criteria (proper scale, multifaceted, good fit for our congregation, attractive to our community, measurable outcomes, transformative)

### **Sample ideas:**

- 1) Either partnering with an existing organization or beginning a new program (after building the relevant relationships) we could launch an employment and mentoring program specifically aimed at a target population (e.g. people formerly incarcerated, young people at-risk of gang involvement, girls who drop out of school). This could either be focused on existing job possibilities or entrepreneurship, or both.
- 2) In addition to an employment program, the “...ability to provide both jobs and free support programs in one location vastly increases the likelihood of a client taking advantage of all services offered, and completing the program successfully” – Homeboy Industries (services include education, therapy, trauma recovery, tattoo removal, substance abuse treatment, legal help, and childcare).
- 3) Some nonprofits picked up work that had gone overseas. There is opportunity in the trades: plumbers, truck drivers, construction workers, forklift drivers, etc. Culinary programs? Recycling programs? Urban farms? Silk screen printing?

### **Traps:**

- Falling for the myth that people don’t want to work: “All people were created with a desire to be useful.” *Charity Detox*
- Believing charity is the only way to make a difference. Creating opportunity through employment is a blessing.
- Believing we know the solutions. “Go as a learner, not as a server. *Charity Detox* We have just as much to learn as the folks we interact with.
- Misidentifying the goal. We must be outcome focused, not output focused, measuring our success not by hours spent but by change in employment numbers.

**Possible impacts:** Carefully developing the scale of our work would be important, but the payoff could be great.

- Following sample idea 1) above – I. C. Stars provides a technology-based workforce development training program for low-income adults. The initial placement rate for graduates is 90%, the industry retention rate is 81%. The average 12-month earnings before the program is \$10,790, while the average 12-month earnings after the program is \$44,010.
- Following sample idea 2) above – Homeboy Industries has helped 80,000 gang at-risk people find employment, focusing on both jobs and personal/social development.
- Following sample idea 3) above – RecycleForce is a social enterprise offering innovative recycling services while providing life-changing workforce training to nearly 1200 formerly incarcerated men and women since 2006.

### **Connections with other areas/issues:**

- Healthcare, stable housing and social services are needed in addition to employment: “A decent job with the potential for advancement and adequate benefits is essential if a family is ever going to escape poverty” – *Charity Detox*.
- “Nothing Stops a Bullet Like a Job” – Fr. Greg Boyle, Homeboy Industries
- A quality education leads to much better job prospects.
- Huge % of the unemployed had contact with the justice system & convictions are a big barrier to employment.
  - Recidivism rate in Illinois after 3 years is 55%, but with employment this number drops dramatically.
  - Lack of education and lack of employment opportunity are major drivers of crime and thus incarceration.
  - Many people in prison suffer from mental health issues due to stress and trauma from generational poverty.
  - Criminal justice reform is a jobs issue. Improving how society treats the formerly incarcerated is a jobs issue.