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Cultural Competence in Workforce Development: The Jobs Initiative Experience

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Introduction

In 1995, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched the Jobs Initiative, a \$30-million investment over eight years in six cities to help disadvantaged, low-skilled workers secure jobs earning family-supporting wages. As the Jobs Initiative unfolded, issues quickly arose demonstrating that race, ethnicity and cultural perspectives mattered for job seekers, employers and others – particularly workforce development organizations – involved in connecting these two groups. To share what the Jobs Initiative sites were learning about how these issues emerged in workforce development, the Foundation published *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race (2001)*, a report which offers a perspective about how to think, talk and act about the complexity of race and regional labor markets, particularly for low-skilled workers.



Since that report, the Jobs Initiative experience illustrates that issues of race, ethnicity and culture arise along every point on the continuum of workforce development. Paying attention to these issues enhances the likelihood that workforce development efforts will achieve their desired results. Those involved in the Jobs Initiative knows firsthand that these issues merit attention not only because of what they have learned but because these are timely issues worldwide. As the world economy becomes more global and as the U.S. becomes increasingly ethnically diverse, the world of work is changing. The demographics of America's workforce historically have influenced the structure and evolution of this nation's economy. Today, as the nation's ethnic minority population grows, it is virtually impossible to overlook or ignore issues of race, ethnicity and culture, especially if workforce development efforts aimed at supporting low-skilled, entry-level workers are to succeed. By sharing lessons learned, the Jobs Initiative seeks again to contribute to a wider discourse about how to strengthen the success of America's workforce by acknowledging and using to everyone's advantage diverse racial, ethnic and cultural perspectives.

As the Jobs Initiative reflects upon its experiences since 1995, this report is a sequel to the 2001 report and aims to document what the Jobs Initiative has learned about issues of race, ethnicity and culture in workforce development throughout the course of implementation. This report aims to:

- share what the Jobs Initiative has learned about how race, ethnicity and culture affect workforce development;
- demonstrate how the Jobs Initiative approached cultural competence and highlight some of the tools and strategies developed during implementation; and
- identify what worked and what challenges arose the Jobs Initiative implemented its approach to cultural competence.

The Emergence of Cultural Competence Issues

Framing of Jobs and Race

The genesis of cultural competence work within the Jobs Initiative can be traced to its twofold aim – improving the ability of young, low-income workers to connect with meaningful jobs in the regional economy, and identifying national models for reforming workforce development systems and policies. When the Jobs Initiative was launched in 1995, the theory and framework acknowledged that racial barriers to jobs would likely be an impediment. Disparities in employment rates, earnings and career advancement in the U.S. based on race, ethnicity, gender and age have been well documented. The Jobs Initiative targeted urban minority men between the ages of 18 and 35 as a population of job seekers and entry-level workers whose labor market outcomes would require particular attention for improvement. Urban men of color were more likely than other job seekers to have high unemployment rates and low wages, yet these men were heads of households and fathers responsible for the well being of their children, youth, and families in many low-income neighborhoods. Through the Initiative, the expectation was that these young men would have better opportunities for labor market success by connecting with meaningful jobs in the regional economy.



Within the Jobs Initiative sites¹, low-income areas designated for recruiting job seekers included neighborhoods with high numbers of out-of-work people of color. An explicit aim of the Jobs Initiative from its inception was to stimulate connections between the regional economy and low-income communities that often are geographically and socially isolated. As the Jobs Initiative was launched, the investment strategy was designed explicitly to determine how low-income neighborhoods would benefit from policy and system reform in workforce development.

While the Jobs Initiative framework recognized the existence of racial barriers to employment, and the need to target minority men and communities of color, those involved in implementing it were not prepared in advance with strategies specifically designed to address issues of race, ethnicity and culture that arose. As sites launched their jobs projects, they found they needed to directly address

¹ The six Jobs Initiative sites included Denver, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Seattle.

such issues to effectively implement their jobs projects. Sites also needed to integrate these strategies as components of the broader effort to reform regional workforce policies and systems. Jobs Initiative sites needed to focus on how these issues arose in preparing workers on the “supply” side of workforce development, and understand the perspectives of employers engaged in jobs projects that represented the “demand” side of workforce development.

Cultural Competence Issues Emerge in Jobs Initiative Sites

In 1996, JI sites were one year into implementing targeted jobs projects in selected growth sectors of their regional economies. In Philadelphia, the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation (OARC), a community development corporation was a key partner and referral source for the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative. After several months of successfully placing low-skilled job candidates in employment, the JI project manager at OARC noticed that he was not having the same success placing men of color. Concerned that employers might be discriminating against urban minority men in his program, the OARC project manager approached the Jobs Initiative Manager at the Annie E. Casey Foundation requesting technical assistance for all JI sites in effectively engaging men of color in their programs. Based on similar interest expressed by other sites, the Foundation and sites began hosting a series of annual conferences specifically to address issues of race, ethnicity and culture as they arose in sites.

In Denver, the Denver Workforce Initiative (DWI) recruited job seekers from ethnically diverse low-income neighborhoods, some of whose residents were African-American and others who were Latino, many of first- or second-generation immigrant families. DWI determined a need for a group of culturally and ethnically diverse individuals from those neighborhoods who would serve as recruiters. DWI developed a cadre of “community coaches” who were trained as skilled workforce developers and culturally competent mentors for job seekers. Community coaches’ familiarity and high level of comfort with the targeted neighborhoods and their residents led to improved outreach to job candidates from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

In contrast to the DWI experience and that of the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative, leaders and community partner organizations involved in the New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI) openly acknowledged “race” as an overt barrier to employment when it launched its targeted jobs projects. In New Orleans, members of the Jobs Initiative started with the premise that employment discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity had been a longstanding structural barrier to gaining access to employment, housing, education and other opportunities critical for economic success. Institutions in New Orleans, as in many other cities

in the South, had held onto segregationist policies, resulting in de facto disparities in housing, schooling, and jobs, despite legal remedies aimed at creating equitable access. NOJI openly cited historic barriers to equal employment that kept African Americans from advancing economically alongside their White counterparts. NOJI staff and its partners intentionally created a culture that allowed for open dialogue and self-reflection, which they felt were necessary to honestly and directly address the reality of such “isms” as racism, classism and sexism. NOJI addressed these barriers explicitly by engaging all partners in developing a work readiness curriculum – 21st Century Success Principles – that includes anti-racism training and other learner-centered methods. NOJI practitioners used the curriculum to help people remove the barriers that stood so ominously in their way of economic success.²

In St. Louis, one Jobs Initiative community-based partner, Better Family Life (BFL), described its target audience as representing the “sub-culture” of primarily young, African American men who lived in the community.³ A majority of these young men were chronically unemployed and had so few connections with mainstream public efforts that social service providers rarely attempted to engage them. Many of BFL’s program participants were current or former gang members, drug dealers, ex-offenders, and long-term welfare recipients. As part of its job readiness training program, BFL participants took a cultural competence class in which they learned the history of racial groups with a special emphasis on African and African-American heritage. BFL considered lack of knowledge of history as a factor that contributed to African-Americans’ negative self-image and a tendency to blame their circumstances on the errors of “white folks” without recognizing their own strengths and resources. By affirming the positive contributions African Americans historically have made to build and strengthen the U.S. economy, BFL staff believed participants’ views of themselves improved. By acknowledging the role of their ancestors in establishing this nation’s economy, African American participants felt empowered to succeed in becoming active members of today’s labor force. BFL viewed its readiness programs not about jobs but about changing lives.⁴

Another community-based partner in the St. Louis Jobs Initiative was SSM Health Career Program, which worked primarily with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients who were leaving welfare to work. SSM is a local network of hospitals that established the Health Career

² Community Development Associates (January 2002), “Annie E. Casey Foundation Jobs Initiative: Cultural Competence Documentation Report,” unpublished report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, page 7.

³ Ibid, pages 3-4.

⁴ Ibid.

Program to provide support and assistance to new entry-level workers, mainly welfare-to-work participants, at one of the network's hospitals. Program staff commented that most participants placed in health care jobs were not prepared to address issues they were confronting at work, including racism, classism and sexism. Staff members observed that many participants had been part of a generational cycle of designed dependency, and joining the work world for the first time required a weaning process. The opportunity to work was not enough. Long time welfare recipients tended to need a variety of supports that required delivering them in a manner that would establish mutual trust. The St. Louis Jobs Initiative decided to provide case management supports during training and after placement to improve retention rates.

In Milwaukee, the Community Career Collaborative recruited job seekers. After discovering that growing numbers of people who attended the pre-training orientation sessions had significant substance abuse, health, physical abuse, and mental illness issues, staff members admitted that they were not set up to address any of those issues well, especially given the rapid pace at which increasing numbers of participants appeared. Frontline staff members of the Community Career Collaborative were spending less time on recruitment and orientation, and more time on case management. The Collaborative decided to adjust its approach by delivering more pre-program training services. To assist with this effort, the Milwaukee Jobs Initiative began working with community-based human and social service providers to address many of the issues presented by this harder to serve population before they entered job training programs.⁵

The Seattle Jobs Initiative confronted a changing population with barriers (i.e., substance abuse, mental health needs, etc.) comparable to those of job seekers in Milwaukee. However, many of Seattle's participants struggled with such additional challenges as speaking a first language other than English, managing cultural differences with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and resolving issues related to immigrant status. During a roundtable discussion, staff members representing five Seattle community-based organizations (CBOs) working with the Seattle Jobs Initiative offered an example to illustrate how collaborating with another CBO proved constructive. A HUD-funded program in the community offered English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and case management. By coordinating with this agency to provide services for clients who needed ESL classes, the community-based organization was able to recruit higher numbers of job seekers who speak primary languages other than English.⁶

⁵ Ibid, page 13.

⁶ Ibid, page 14.

Although the Jobs Initiative sites operated in different contexts in regard to populations served, current and historic issues related to race relations, and local economic conditions, each discovered quite early in implementation that they had to directly address issues of cultural competence. As a result, sites quickly developed various strategies in recruitment, job readiness training, placement and case management to mitigate some of the cultural competence issues faced by participants. However, collectively, they still found they needed more resources and tools to adequately and effectively deal with the complex issues related to race and employment.

Developing an Approach to Cultural Competence

The complexity of the Jobs Initiative and unique characteristics of the sites led the JI Manager and colleagues within the Annie E. Casey Foundation to develop a technical assistance strategy that involved sites in defining and exploring issues of race, ethnicity, and culture as they emerged in the context of practice. The JI Manager wanted sites to address these issues within the context of improving labor market outcomes among participants. In this way, technical assistance on issues of race, ethnicity and culture would become neither a marginalized activity nor a focal point of this workforce development effort, either of which constituted a potential distraction from achieving the



Initiative's desired results. Yet issues of race, ethnicity and culture affected where job seekers lived, what schools they attended, which levels of academic and technical skill they attained, and other factors that influenced their competitiveness in the labor market. Similarly, among employers, perceptions of race, ethnicity and culture influenced how firms made decisions regarding hiring, wages and earnings, retention and career advancement. Whether subtle or blatant, these cultural issues appeared throughout the JI sites' workforce development efforts.

In responding to these issues, the Foundation identified and gathered a group of organizations and individuals whose expertise was relevant for understanding race, ethnicity and culture in workforce development to work with sites. This Jobs Initiative cultural competence team informally developed a methodology designed to highlight and interpret experiences as they occurred firsthand in sites. In retrospect, every step of the Jobs Initiative methodology had embedded within it a guiding principle based on the rationale that workforce development practitioners were the real “experts” able to pinpoint how these issues emerged and why they mattered.

Jobs Initiative Cultural Competence Methodology

The JI cultural competence team informally developed a methodology for responding to issues of race, ethnicity and culture as they emerged while implementing the Initiative. The Jobs Initiative methodology included five key steps.

1. Respond to issues as they emerge “on the ground” while implementing workforce development projects. JI sites are the experts in determining needs.
2. Provide a conceptual framework for JI sites to use in identifying and interpreting issues of race, ethnicity and culture in workforce development.
3. Provide access to a range of technical assistance resources based on expertise drawn from across the U.S. on particular issues emerging in JI sites. Tap these resources to customize a knowledge base that would enable JI sites to “fill in” the conceptual framework based on their interests and needs.
4. Examine issues of race, ethnicity and culture from multiple perspectives, including (a) relevant scholarly literature, including history, sociology, economics, etc.; (b) data, research, and evaluation; (c) effective practice in workforce development and other fields; and (d) implications for policy and system reform.
5. Create incentives and offer support tailored to meet the specific needs of JI sites for generating solutions. Document progress among JI sites. Exchange information with others.

As a result of taking these steps within the Jobs Initiative from 1996 to 1999, several lessons were learned about the importance of identifying and examining each issue related to race, ethnicity and culture, as it emerged within the sites’ local and regional contexts. These lessons are briefly summarized below from *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race (2001)*:

- Continuing employment discrimination coexists with a lack of job readiness and job confidence in many inner-city communities. Thus, it is imperative to address these complexities in designing workforce development programs.
- The need for cultural awareness is present from the workforce intake process through the employee’s job retention. It is a central issue. Everyone throughout the entire workforce delivery continuum must develop cultural competence skills.
- A growing network of individuals and organizations in workforce development has experience in addressing employment barriers related to race, ethnicity and gender. Thus, the opportunity for collaboration and information sharing among these stakeholders should be seized.
- Addressing the many dimensions of race and job readiness, and cultural competence pushes the workforce field into new territory. Therefore, new approaches and tools must be developed to meet the needs of workforce providers.

- Finally, vigilance is required at every step of the way. Complacency about progress made and our understandings of what happened in the past may blind us to new ways that young adults are disadvantaged in labor markets because of race, ethnicity and gender.⁷

By acknowledging and taking seriously the request by sites to address issues of race, ethnicity and culture as they emerged on the ground, the Foundation provided committed leadership, the single most essential factor that enabled the emergence of cultural competence in the Initiative. By engaging sites to lead the effort in identifying, examining and responding to these issues, the Foundation avoided the risk of prematurely anticipating the ways in which race, ethnicity and culture might have emerged in the Jobs Initiative. Attempting to identify these issues in advance might have led to prescribed solutions based on analyses that may or may not have matched realities occurring in sites. The decision to be responsive rather than prescriptive led the Foundation to involve sites in designing and hosting a series of technical assistance sessions held annually to achieve the following objectives:

- examine how issues of race, ethnicity and culture emerged in JI sites based on actual “on the ground” practice during JI implementation;
- enable sites and a resource network of individuals and organizations with relevant expertise to jointly provide and synthesize information about emerging issues with the aim of generating solutions;
- design strategies, tools and solutions for addressing issues within sites; and
- develop a knowledge base upon which experienced sites and members of the resource network would draw for documenting lessons valuable for the workforce development field.



In response to issues sites identified, this practical, hands-on approach led to the formation of a knowledge-based resource network whose members contributed expertise on a range of related issues. The JI cultural competence team informally began to orchestrate technical assistance to sites on issues of race, ethnicity and culture as they affected workforce development. The team included the sites, JI leaders and colleagues within the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and a resource network of individuals

⁷ Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001. *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race*, page 19.

and organizations from across the nation. Through interaction with the sites, the team identified issues as they occurred on the ground, compiled information about how to address those issues, and selected a conceptual framework that would encapsulate knowledge and lessons learned. Later the team adopted “cultural competence in workforce development” to frame this way of thinking about how issues of race, ethnicity and culture could be addressed effectively in any workforce effort.

By 2000, it became apparent that addressing cultural issues as they arose was essential, but examining situations one-by-one did not provide sites with a lasting way of understanding how to act proactively. Based on this experience, the Jobs Initiative explored the potential for “cultural competence” theory to help frame these lessons learned.

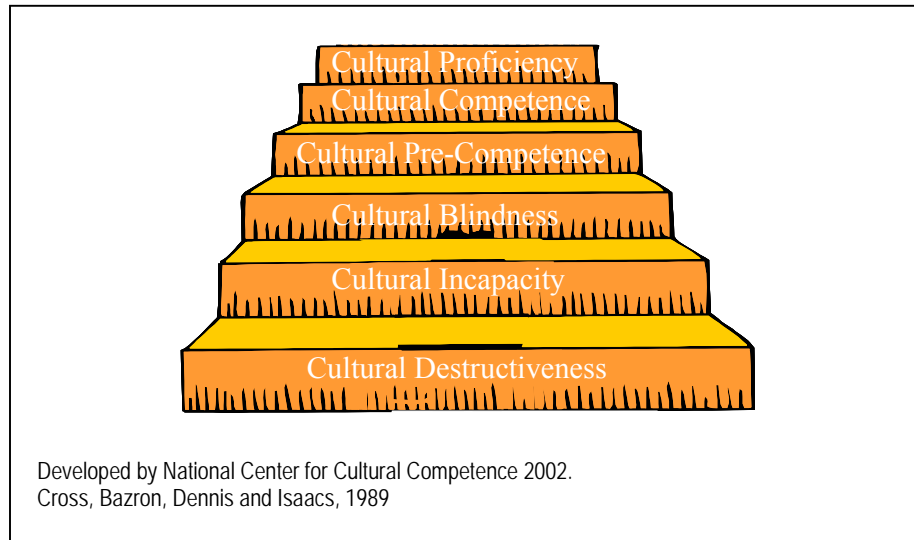
Cultural Competence in Workforce Development

The Jobs Initiative turned to *cultural competence* as a concept that would help frame issues of race, ethnicity and culture as they continued to emerge within sites. In the human service field, ***cultural competence*** is defined as “a set of congruent practice skills, attitudes, policies and structures, which come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in the context of cultural differences.”⁸ Although the concept of cultural competence developed as an approach for improving human service delivery, it can be applied to guide the integration of race, ethnicity, culture, language, class, gender, age, power and other perspectives, into any field of practice. The National Center on Cultural Competence offers a “cultural competence continuum” (*see Figure 1*) to depict the progression that occurs when organizations increase their effectiveness in paying attention to issues of race, ethnicity and culture.

In the Jobs Initiative, the cultural competence team of individuals and organizations providing support to sites on these issues expanded to include professionals with expertise in cultural competence who assisted in interpreting and adapting this framework for application within the workforce development field. The Jobs Initiative refers to this work as “cultural competence in workforce development,” which means *understanding and integrating the web of behaviors, attitudes and policies that foster effective work in cross-cultural situations*. Partners likely to benefit from effectively using this approach include job seekers, training and employment organizations, educational institutions, employers and employees.

⁸ Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs, 1989.

Figure 1. Cultural Competence Continuum



Making A Difference: Putting Effective Cultural Competence Tools and Strategies in Place

Jobs Initiative sites, with assistance and support from the Foundation, developed numerous cultural competence strategies and tools they believed would make them more effective at dealing with issues of race and work. The focus of their tools and strategies included not only participants but also employers, site staff and other partner organizations. While sites certainly did not want to reinvent the wheel, they elected to develop many of their own tools and strategies because, when they searched for existing ones, they found few well suited to the workforce development and cultural competence issues they encountered. From their initial experience, sites understood that no one tool could eradicate the negative and counter-productive web of behaviors, attitudes and policies that prohibit cultural competence. They understood that they needed multiple tools and strategies in their “tool kit” to effectively address the many challenges of race and work with their various partners as well as internally. Here we profile several effective tools and strategies implemented during the Initiative (*see Table 1 for a complete list*).

Reaching Participants and Preparing Them for the Workplace



The Jobs Initiative sites understood they were dealing with job seekers who were isolated in many ways from the workforce and the larger economic system. During the economic boom years of the 1990's, these target communities and residents were not experiencing the rising tide of that economic prosperity. Given economic and cultural isolation, sites had to find effective means of reaching these groups to recruit them for participation in the Initiative. In New Orleans and Denver, sites developed models for reaching community residents and recruiting them as enrollees in the Initiative. NOJI utilized “walker/talkers,” participant counselors who came from similar backgrounds and shared some common life experiences with participants. Because participants identified with and trusted them, walker-talkers had more credibility with potential participants and could more effectively recruit and counsel them. Similarly, Denver’s model used “community coaches” – people from inner-city neighborhoods who could assist residents in gaining employment and also provide on-

going case management services. The premise of this model was that communities already had individuals who were informally helping fellow residents get jobs, and DWI could create a network of such individuals to recruit participants for the Initiative.

Once sites recruited participants, they used several tools to prepare job seekers for employment. Most sites developed some type of job readiness training that focused on workplace expectations such as work habits, behaviors and attitudes, and communication skills. In Denver, the site developed “*Workin’ It Out*,” a job readiness training program that focused on teaching entry-level workers about the formal and informal rules of the workplace. While this training does not have a specific cultural competence component, it addresses such issues as problem solving, coping skills and anger management – all of which bridge cultural competence and workplace issues. In Seattle and St. Louis, sites created cultural competence components within their job readiness training. These components addressed issues of different workplace cultures, feelings of isolation, and strategies for coping with workplace challenges and barriers. New Orleans also developed a job readiness training that fully reflected its anti-racism philosophy as well as the broader context of race in New Orleans. The training, known as 21st Century Success Principles, is a 21-day curriculum that includes a full day entitled “Coping with Racism in the Workplace.” By first acknowledging and validating participants’ experience with racism, NOJI’s training is designed to then develop participants’ coping skills and methods for overcoming employment barriers – whether those barriers come from personal circumstances or the workplace.

Making Sites More Effective at Issues of Race and Work

While a primary focus of sites’ work was on participants, in dealing with issues of race and work, they also reflected on their internal capacity to carry out workforce development efforts in a manner that was culturally competent. In the course of doing so, most sites elected to conduct some type of staff training to address this challenge. For Seattle, working with CBOs on issues of jobs and race prompted the site to conduct an internal assessment of its cultural competence. Site staff felt challenged to “walk the walk, talk the talk” of cultural competence that they were advocating to CBOs and participants.⁹ They also wondered if they would be viewed as hypocritical if they did not take steps to address their own cultural competence. As a result, SJI engaged local consultants with expertise in diversity management and cultural competence to conduct a series of internal workshops,

⁹ Community Development Associates, *Seattle Jobs Initiative Site Report, Cultural Competence Documentation Report for AECF*, April 2002, unpublished; also, interview with Anne Keeney and Sherman Wilkins, October 21, 2003.

enabling staff to share concerns, perceptions and experiences that shaped their views on issues of work and race. While participating in the workshops challenged site staff, it also provided them with a more concrete understanding of how deeply embedded these issues are and how working on these issues with their partners – participants, CBOs, community colleges and employers – required a significant level of trust built up over time. This learning helped inform the strategies, approaches and tools SJI used with its many constituencies. Similarly, sites in New Orleans and St. Louis incorporated cultural competence and anti-racism training in their staff development efforts.

There was also a more overarching staff capacity challenge across sites – how to recruit staff with the appropriate experience to carry out their workforce development strategies and implement programs. Sites required staff with technical expertise, frequently in a specific vocation or industry targeted in their sectoral strategy. However, they also were very much in need of staff with “social service” skills – staff with experience and the commitment to provide services to participants facing a variety of barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. Sites had an implicit and explicit understanding that staff needed both types of experience if they were to effectively reach participants and assist them in overcoming their employment challenges. Finding this combination of experience and commitment to the work is an on-going challenge for sites.

Creating Common Ground with Employers

An important component of the Jobs Initiative framework was building partnerships with employers. From the beginning sites focused on how to engage employers and better meet their labor needs. To build such partnerships, sites found they needed to create common ground with employers so that they understood they shared mutual goals – to attract and retain productive employees. While employers generally did not frame their needs in terms of cultural competence, they often were closely related or overlapped with issues of race, culture and ethnicity. To better match job seekers with specific employment opportunities, most sites pre-screened job applicants to assess how well suited they were for a particular position.¹⁰ Through pre-screening, combined with job readiness training provided by sites, employers hoped to improve their success for hiring and retaining entry-level employees. In other instances, sites provided assistance directly related to cultural competence,

¹⁰ Denver’s Work Readiness Index assesses job seekers in terms of work habits and behaviors, attitudes and values, communication and interpersonal skills, and coping skills.

such as translating materials or signs into Spanish and identifying the need for a Spanish-speaking supervisor at a job site.¹¹



Sites also developed tools that assisted employers reduce turnover while also supporting new and existing workers. In Milwaukee, employer partners benefited from services such as positive attendance workshops, and mentoring programs and guide.¹² Positive attendance workshops are given on site to employees and emphasize the importance and benefits of good work habits such as positive attendance. For employees new to the workforce, the workshop helps bridge the gap between their previous life experience and the new workplace expectations they must meet. Because the site is viewed as a neutral party experienced in workforce development, it has greater credibility and expertise to deliver this type of service than if employers provided it. Another area in which sites found they could assist employers was at the supervisory level. The sites and employers realized that existing supervisors did not have the requisite skills to manage new workers. Created by the Denver site and used by several other sites, “*Managing to Work It Out*” addressed this skill gap for supervisory personnel. The training program, a companion training to “*Workin’ It Out*,” equips supervisors to effectively communicate with and motivate new and entry-level employees. By simulating real life workplace challenges, “*Managing to Work It Out*” assists supervisors in communicating formal and informal workplace expectations, understanding barriers faced by new workers, and becoming more effective in motivating these workers. Over the course of the Initiative, tools such as these enabled sites to effectively engage employers while also improving outcomes for participants.

Improving Connections with Community Partners

Beyond issues related to cultural competence, the sites struggled in their partnerships with community-based organizations. These challenges spanned the continuum of partnership – including identifying and selecting CBOs, service provision, outreach to residents, contracting arrangements and workforce development expertise. Over time sites worked with different CBOs and created more effective methods for engaging these partners.

¹¹ Interview with Margaret Berger-Bradley of the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative, October 21, 2003.

¹² Interview with Erik Parker of the Milwaukee Jobs Initiative, October 21, 2003.

In Philadelphia, staff found that the nature of its contract with partner organizations was fundamentally flawed. Early contracts with CBOs were very one-sided with nearly all responsibilities falling on the CBO while the site controlled the funding and had no real accountability to partners. This clearly created an inequitable relationship in which CBOs were subordinate to the site and the site held significant power over CBOs.¹³ To address the power imbalance, PJI reworked its contracts with CBOs so that both partners and site had responsibilities to one another. With contractual arrangements that were mutually beneficial, PJI and its partners had more balanced relationships in which all parties could be held accountable.

In Seattle, the site worked with numerous CBOs, many of which served a particular racial or ethnic group. With extensive experience serving such populations, CBOs were well versed in the cultural competence issues their clients faced. However, several lacked the capacity to provide effective support to participants for on-going case management and retention services. To shore up this gap, SJI created a guide to help CBOs develop this capacity within their organizations. “*Understanding Best Practices and Standards to Retain Entry-Level Workers*” provides practitioner-level guidance and information on assessment, placement, retention and other supportive services as well as common employment barriers faced by job seekers. With this tool, SJI helped blend CBO expertise in working with various racial and ethnic groups with its own workforce development expertise to effectively improve outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers.

Affecting Change Where You Can

In St. Louis and New Orleans, sites clearly understood that the deep racial divisions were systemic and not easily changed by any one organization or program. Historic racial divisions in these two cities were so entrenched that sites created specific strategies to affect change where and how they thought would achieve greater success. In New Orleans this meant the site developed an intentional strategy focused on the participant rather than the workplace. In creating the 21st Century Principles curriculum, NOJI deliberately based it on a strategy to equip participants to navigate the challenging, racially divided workplaces they would encounter in New Orleans. NOJI staff believed this strategy would be more fruitful than one focused on trying to root out racism from workplaces.¹⁴ Rather, the

¹³ Interview with Margaret Berger-Bradley of the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative, October 21, 2003.

¹⁴ Interview with Jyaphia Christos-Rodgers of the New Orleans Jobs Initiative, November 12, 2003.

curriculum acknowledged that racism existed and, that by in large, job seekers would enter workplaces heavily dominated by Whites and with a different culture than they were accustomed to. By focusing on equipping participants for the reality of local workplaces, NOJI sought to address racism in New Orleans in a way that would yield better outcomes for job seekers.

Similarly, in St. Louis, the site focused on more of a policy level than a programmatic one to address inequities in the construction industry. The St. Louis region, like many others, had a construction industry in which people of color were significantly underrepresented based on the percentage they comprised of the overall population and workforce. When the site faced significant difficulties trying to place people of color in the construction industry, they chose an alternative strategy focused on policy – one that required greater apprenticeship utilization on large construction projects. SLRJI advocated for a city policy requiring a minimum of labor hours be performed by apprentices on any publicly-funded project. Having worked in partnership with the local Building Trades Union to advocate for this new requirement, SLRJI also worked with the union to expand outreach and training so that more people of color could enter apprenticeship programs. Affecting policy level change, in this instance, proved easier to achieve than simply trying to place participants in construction jobs.

In developing a wide variety of tools and strategies, sites hoped to improve the results for job seekers enrolled in their programs. They hoped that these additional efforts would lead to securing more employment opportunities, longer periods of employment and, in the long term, job advancement in terms of wages, benefits and career ladders for their participants.

With the proliferation of strategies, approaches and tools developed within the Jobs Initiative, the Foundation recognized the wealth of resources and learning it could share with others across a wide spectrum of fields including workforce development, labor economics, cultural studies, human resources and others. It subsequently provided the leadership and resources to create a web page solely dedicated to the issue of jobs and race. Launched in 2003, the web page – www.aecf.org/initiatives/jobsandrace -- provides further information on and access to the tools and strategies developed in the Jobs Initiative as well as resources¹⁵ from other efforts and organizations.

¹⁵ An important example is the three-volume training guide produced by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The Annie E. Casey Foundation supported the development of this series of training tools created by Karyn Trader-Leigh of the Joint Center. The series, which was created in response to cultural competence issues faced by Jobs Initiative sites, includes “Fresh Start,” “Investing in Success,” and “Building Cultural Competence.” The training guides are appropriate for use by job seekers, new workers, frontline managers, training providers and other workforce development practitioners.

Table 1. Emergence of Cultural Competence Issues & Responses in the Jobs Initiative – 1 of 3

	Recruitment	Training	Employer Engagement
Cultural Competence Inquiry			
Types of Issues	Differences in recruitment/referral rates by race, ethnicity, culture; Differences in sources of referral and information about job opportunities; Characteristics of outreach and recruitment that are effective for reaching groups of ethnic minorities.	“Soft” skills; work readiness skills; certification and training for “hard” skills; education (high school completion, GED, literacy, ESL, postsecondary education/training)	Employer recruitment, application, interview, and hiring practices as they affect ethnic minorities fare; workforce composition by race/ethnicity, wage, position, etc.
Types of Informational Resources a. Scholarly literature b. Data, research and evaluation c. Effective Practice d. Policy and system reform	a. Literature on how ethnic minorities find jobs; extent to which ethnic minority groups participate in informal and formal public workforce programs and services. b. Data, research, and evaluation on the effectiveness of recruitment and referral strategies (participation rates, graduation rates, etc.) c. Effective practices for recruiting and referring ethnic minorities (get information from peers/communities) d. Improving recruitment/referral provisions in public policy/systems.	a. Literature on historic access to education/training by race/ethnicity; socio-cultural views on role of education in economic success; b. Data, research & evaluation on role of “soft” and “hard” skills in accessing jobs; educational attainment data by race/ethnicity, linguistic group, etc. c. Effective practices for work readiness; “supply” side interventions d. Policy opportunities for supporting work readiness/education/training.	a. Literature on historic employment discrimination; socio-economic trends by economic sector; b. Data, research & evaluation on employer workforce trends; c. Effective practice among employers for integrating diverse entry-level workers, managing diversity, etc. d. Employer policies & procedures that facilitate (or hinder) effective work in cross-cultural situations.
Examples of Strategies, Tools & Resources	“Empowering Urban Minority Males,” (AECF 2001) ¹ and New Orleans “Walker-Talkers”	Work Readiness Index; Workin’ It Out curriculum and training; 21 st Century Success Principles; <i>Fresh Start</i> ²	Managing to Work It Out; Soft Skills Training for Supervisors; W RTP Mentor Training Guide; <i>Investing in Success</i> ³
Lessons Learned	(1) Low-skilled individuals need contacts who are active in local labor markets, such as workforce development professionals, community colleges, community-based organizations, and employers. The Jobs Initiative helped make those connections between job seekers and potential employers. (2) Recruitment and referral sources need to employ program staff concerned about job seekers’ futures, not just job placement. (3) Community-based and culturally aware experiences are important for program staff, whether or not they are of ethnic minority backgrounds themselves.	(1) “Soft” skills are as important as “hard” skills in connecting to the labor force. “Soft” skills vary by industry/sector and employer; job candidates need to be appropriately matched with prospective workplace settings based in part on soft skill compatibility. (2) Lifelong learning, including K-12 and postsecondary education and training are essential for career advancement; entry-level workers require assistance in continuing education and training necessary for earning higher long-term wages. (3) Community colleges & community groups offer a range of work readiness and educational opportunities; they are pivotal partners in an effective workforce development initiative.	(1) Employment discrimination persists in the U.S. ⁴ (2) Employers often do not discriminate intentionally but implement practices with disparate impact on ethnic minorities; employers who seek to improve their policies and practices are often eager to partner and use tools alongside workforce practitioners to positively change their behavior. (3) Employers are able to have a significant impact on ethnic minority retention and advancement by improving the skills of front-line managers who often interact most consistently with entry-level workers of diverse ethnic & cultural backgrounds. Tools are useful in assisting employers and new workers.

Table 1. Emergence of Cultural Competence Issues & Responses in the Jobs Initiative – 2 of 3

	Case Management & Supports	Retention & Advancement	Policy & System Reform
Cultural Competence Inquiry			
Types of Issues	Managing and balancing family/other priorities and workplace expectations that have cultural significance for ethnic minorities and employers, respectively; providing ongoing help	Differences in placement, retention, and/or promotion rates of ethnic minorities; disparities in wages and earnings	Policies that hinder or assist ethnic minorities in gaining access to jobs, comparable wages and earnings, and opportunities for economic success
Types of Informational Resources a. Scholarly literature b. Data, research and evaluation c. Effective Practice d. Policy and system reform	a. Literature on how ethnic minority groups define “supports” or formal and informal assistance; b. Data, research & evaluation on rates of participation by ethnic minorities in support services; c. Effective practices in case management and support based on models effective with ethnic minorities; tap health care, education and other fields; d. Improving responsiveness of policies /systems to diverse groups	a. Literature on historic and present economic status of ethnic minorities; sectors heavily or sparsely dominated by ethnic minorities and analysis; role of labor unions; b. Data, research, and evaluation to examine multiple variables affecting retention & advancement of ethnic minorities; c. Effective placement, retention, and advancement strategies that succeed with ethnic minorities. d. Policy and system barriers and ideas for reform to improve retention and advancement of ethnic minorities in labor force	a. Literature on laws, policies, and regulations that affect the ability of ethnic minorities to achieve economic parity with the majority; b. Data, research, and evaluation of policy and system reform implementation and outcomes for ethnic minorities; c. Effective policies and system reform efforts at the federal, state, and local levels that enable ethnic minorities to advance economically; d. Policy goals, outcomes, and performance measures that can improve the economic success among ethnic minorities.
Examples of Strategies, Tools & Resources	Case Management & Retention; Intake & Assessment Manual; Community Coaches; Community Connection ⁵	<i>Moving Up is a Steep Climb, Extending Ladders</i> ; Products from AECF’s Jobs Initiative ⁶	Apprenticeship Utilization Requirements ⁷
Lessons Learned	(1) Job seekers benefit from case management & supports that are culturally sensitive and value employment as one aspect of a person’s life that ideally is managed well with family and other elements. (2) Support groups and opportunities for new employees to gather informally to “de-brief” about their experiences at work is often helpful because it offers entry-level workers a forum for examining how workplace culture and expectations interact with their own cultural perspectives. (3) Supports and resources are available within ethnic minority communities; it is important to identify and integrate them.	(1) Managing cultural differences in the workplace continues to be a critical component of effective workforce development long after an entry-level work is placed in a job. (2) Effective retention and advancement in cross-cultural situations involves examining policies & practices of employers and informing new workers of expectations that may or may not be documented. (3) Evidence in the U.S. indicates that “soft” skills are relevant for retention and advancement at all levels of employment, not just at entry-level.	(1) Laws, policies, and regulations affecting workforce development in the U.S. need to allow flexibility for workforce professionals to manage cross-cultural issues and situations as the composition of the workforce and workplace becomes more diverse; (2) System reform in U.S. workforce development involves engaging all partners – private and public sector alike – in paying attention to specific opportunities for improving access to employment, retention, advancement, and income/earnings for ethnic minorities.

Table 1. Emergence of Cultural Competence Issues & Responses in the Jobs Initiative – 3 of 3

	Workforce Partners		
Cultural Competence Inquiry			
Types of Issues	Ability of workforce professionals to acknowledge and address the need to address issues of race, ethnicity & culture in their intermediary role		
Types of Informational Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Literature on managing social change, facilitating effective cross-sector partnerships, and integrating ethnically diverse perspectives and resources; b. Data, research, & evaluation on the performance of workforce intermediaries and other partners in facilitating the ability of ethnic minorities to improve labor market outcomes; c. Effective practice for workforce professionals to address race, ethnicity, & culture d. Influencing policy & system reforms to address diversity 		
Examples of Strategies, Tools & Resources	<i>Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race (2001)</i> ; Proceedings of JI/Abt Research Conference (February 2003) ⁸		
Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Workforce development professionals – intermediaries and the range of other partners – are well positioned to introduce and manage a framework for cultural competence in workforce development as part of the overall management of a program. (2) Workforce partners each contribute unique and important roles in addressing issues of race, ethnicity, and culture as they emerge in cross-cultural situations. 		

¹Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001). *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race*, "Empowering Urban Minority Males," pages 10-12. This section of the report documents findings from a technical assistance working meeting held in Philadelphia in 1996 at the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation, a community-based referral source for the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative, to determine how to more effectively engage job seekers who were men of color through JI recruitment and referral activities and through partnering with employers. Another strategy was developed by the New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI) – identifying "Walker-Talkers." Walker-Talkers are members of the low-income communities targeted for outreach; they walked throughout targeted neighborhoods and talked with residents about the opportunity to connect with employment through NOJI, a strategy that increased awareness of and access to NOJI by potential job seekers.

²*Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race* (AECF 2001) describes a series of tools developed by the former Denver Workforce Initiative that were designed to improve work readiness among job seekers and to improve employers' responsiveness to new entry-level workers (see page 16); in addition, the report describes "21st Century Success Principles," a 21-day curriculum the New Orleans Jobs Initiative created that incorporates several innovations in workforce development training. See also Trader-Leigh, Karyn (2002). *Fresh Start: An On-the-Job Survival Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

³ Please visit the web site www.aecf.org/jobsandrace and review the section on Tools & Resources for information on how to obtain these tools: (1) "Managing to Work It Out: Helping Front-Line Supervisors Retain Entry Level Workers," Denver, Piton Foundation; (2) "Soft Skills Training for Supervisors: Improving the Performance of Supervisors of Diverse, Entry-Level Workers," Seattle Jobs Initiative; and (3) Trader-Leigh, Karyn (2002). *Investing in Success: A Supervisor's Guidebook for Supporting and Retaining New Workforce Entrants in Today's Multicultural Workforce*. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

⁴ Information on employment discrimination in the U.S. is available through multiple private and public sources, notably the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race* (AECF 2001), information from the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington is summarized on page 8 of this report; this information was shared with Jobs Initiative (JI) Site Directors in December 1997 and again during the JI working meeting on these issues held in Denver in 1998.

⁵ Please visit the web site www.aecf.org/jobsandrace and review the section on Tools & Resources for information on how to obtain these tools: (1) "Case Management & Retention: Understanding Best Practices and Standards to Retain Entry Level Workers," Seattle Jobs Initiative; (2) "Intake and Assessment Manual: Treating Program Applicants with Respect," New Orleans Jobs Initiative; (3) Community Coaches were a strategy developed by the Denver Workforce Initiative that paired each job seeker with a coach of similar cultural, linguistic, and experiential background to provide support throughout the workforce development process; (4) "Community Connection: A Training Manual for Developing Community Mentoring Programs," St. Louis Jobs Initiative.

⁶ Please visit the web site www.aecf.org/jobsandrace and review the section on Tools & Resources for information on how to obtain these tools: (1) Iversen, Roberta R. (2002). *Moving Up is a Steep Climb: Parents' Work and Children's Welfare in the AECF Jobs Initiative*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation; (2) Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001). *Extending Ladders*. Baltimore, MD: Author; (3) Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001). *Products from AECF's Jobs Initiative: A Catalogue of Innovations in Workforce Reform*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

⁷ The St. Louis Regional Jobs Initiative developed an advocacy-oriented strategy to combat longstanding exclusion of ethnic minorities in certain segments of the manufacturing sector in St. Louis, Missouri. The St. Louis Jobs Initiative garnered support from local legislators and some employers for Apprenticeship Utilization Requirements that increase accountability among employers for hiring a diverse group of apprentices who would be eligible to advance in the workplace based on successful completion of the apprenticeship program. Historically, ethnic minorities were not given equal access to apprenticeship programs in that sector. For more information, please contact the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council in St. Louis, MO.

⁸ The Jobs Initiative and Abt Associates, Inc. hosted the "Jobs Initiative Research Conference – Recent Research and Results," in Tampa, FL on February 27-28, 2003. Recommendations included specific suggestions regarding the role of workforce development intermediaries and partners in addressing issues of race, ethnicity, and culture through policy, research, evaluation, and public messages. Contact Laura Duenes at Abt Associates, Inc., Bethesda, MD, for conference proceedings, or find them on the Jobs Initiative web site located at www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative.

Lessons Learned: Understanding What Worked



As in many other areas, the Jobs Initiative was an innovator in cultural competence in workforce development. In the late 1990's when Jobs Initiative sites and the Foundation found limited resources and tools to address issues of race and work they were encountering, they decided to focus on such issues more directly. While this initially meant raising issues of race and work, and then creating a dialogue on the subject, in time both the sites and Foundation had to create tools and strategies specifically targeted at cultural competence in their workforce development efforts. Through its initial experience, Jobs Initiative leaders learned extensively about the various ways in which race, ethnicity and culture affect workforce development, and shared their preliminary observations in *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race* (2001). After developing and implementing specific tools and strategies, and articulating a cultural competence framework for addressing these issues, the Jobs Initiative leaders learned more about “what worked” and the challenges prevalent in this work. These lessons represent a synthesis of the Jobs Initiative experience with cultural competence in workforce development.

Beginning a dialogue on issues of race and work was a critical first step

Within the Jobs Initiative, the sites began a dialogue on issues of race and work that was supported by the Foundation. Through their on the ground experience, Jobs Initiative sites identified these issues and began a more explicit dialogue within the Initiative on the myriad issues they faced. Beginning the dialogue created an environment where sites could discuss cultural competence issues, compare their experiences, identify their needs and develop an overall awareness within Jobs Initiative leaders of the pervasiveness of issues related to race and work. JI sites indicated, that by participating in the Jobs Initiative cultural competence effort, they benefited from openly discussing strategies and tools and improved their ability to manage these issues. Clearly beginning this dialogue was a critical first step that ultimately led the Foundation and the sites to more explicitly address the cultural competence challenges they faced.

Leadership and dedicated resources to cultural competence demonstrated its importance

JI authors knew that particular strategies would be needed to assist targeted job seekers in securing employment although they did not anticipate how explicitly such strategies would have to deal with cultural competence. When these issues arose within the sites, Initiative leaders within the Foundation devoted additional resources to address them. Similarly, JI managers within the sites generally welcomed the opportunity to explore the efficacy of cultural competence in workforce development. Committed leadership within the Foundation and in sites – along with the dedicated resources needed for technical assistance and development of tools – was responsible for gains made by sites in addressing issues of race, ethnicity and culture in workforce development.

Jobs Initiatives sites found it challenging to balance cultural competence work with other priorities

While cultural competence was an important aspect of the Initiative, sites found it difficult to balance this along with many other results for which they were responsible. Jobs Initiative sites observed that integrating cultural competence strategies might have been even more successful if this aspect had been more closely interwoven with other components of the effort. Sites were required to collect information on participant enrollment, placement and retention, program performance measures, etc. In addition, JI sites engaged in formal technical assistance and evaluation supported by the Foundation. However, the cultural competence framework and interventions was managed somewhat independently from these efforts. As a result, these interventions were not as well integrated with ongoing technical assistance, data collection and performance measurement. While sites were asked to include this perspective in performance measures that they developed during later stages of implementation, attention to cultural competence was not as rigorously tracked as other components of the Initiative. Ultimately, sites expressed difficulty in managing and balancing priorities established at the outset of the Jobs Initiative with the newer emphasis on integrating cultural competence as a perspective affecting every component of workforce development. In retrospect, introducing the cultural competence framework at the start of the Jobs Initiative and integrating this component more seamlessly with other activities, may have led to an even sharper focus on cultural competence and potentially tracking of performance indicators.

Jobs Initiative sites developed a variety of effective tools and strategies – particularly for recruitment and job readiness training

When sites found limited tools and resources available to address their cultural competence issues, they worked closely with the Foundation and others to develop their own tools and strategies. The sites were innovators in this aspect of workforce development and developed a wide variety of tools and strategies, particularly in recruitment and job readiness training. These included those designed to improve job readiness – such as the *Work Readiness Index* developed by the Denver Workforce Initiative; to assist new workers in entering the workplace, as with the recently released workbook, *Fresh Start: An On-the-Job Survival Guide (2003)*¹⁶; or to promote retention, as with NOJI’s *21st Century Success Principles* and Denver’s *Managing to Work It Out* tool for front-line supervisors. Developing and utilizing these tools and strategies encouraged sites and their partners to pay attention to these issues at every step along the continuum of implementing workforce development efforts.

Jobs Initiative employers indicated they benefited from cultural competence interventions, although they did not consider issues of race, ethnicity and culture to be problematic



Jobs Initiative employers did not consider issues of race, ethnicity and culture to be problematic, despite documented evidence of disparities in labor market outcomes by these and other factors, but employers involved in acting on these strategies indicated that they benefited from cultural competence interventions. This was demonstrated in a 2002 survey of Jobs Initiative employers in which most JI employers did not perceive issues of race, ethnicity, and culture to be problematic within their companies. As several employer studies have concluded, naming “race” as an issue is rare if ever likely to occur.¹⁷ Yet, when employers discuss the types of challenges they confront with entry-level workers, these issues emerge. While employers may not identify race, ethnicity and culture as factors that need to be addressed head-on in the workplace, they are willing to engage in strategies that are likely to improve the ability of front-line workers to succeed on the job, reducing turnover and increasing the chances that workers will perform their jobs well. The Jobs

¹⁶ Authored by Karyn Trader-Leigh, published by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies under a Jobs Initiative grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

¹⁷ See Philip Moss and Chris Tilly (1995). “Soft Skills and Race: An Investigation of Black Men’s Employment Problems.” Other sources to cite?

Initiative sites learned that approaching employers with strategies aimed at improving outcomes among entry-level workers was effective, whether or not there was an explicit acknowledgement of labor market disparities. Sites learned that by engaging employers in developing tools like NOJI's "21st Century Success Principles" curriculum or the Denver Workforce Initiative's *Workin' It Out* series, issues of race, ethnicity and culture were addressed in ways that sustained employers' receptivity.

Participant success is influenced by multiple factors – including race, ethnicity and culture – that are interrelated in complex ways and difficult to disentangle.

Ethnographies of JI families illustrated the complex interrelationships among race, ethnicity, culture and other factors.¹⁸ These variables are difficult to disentangle, making it quite challenging for sites to design strategies that would respond appropriately with flexible, finely tuned solutions.

Participants shared their experiences of race and "racism" as critical factors affecting their lives at work and home. Their family stories illustrate that the well-being of children and families raised by participants was affected by issues of race, ethnicity, and culture. When a participant perceived racism or marginalization in the workplace, the effects were amplified if the other spouse also experienced similar instances of negativity. Since many factors interacted in the lives of each JI participant, individuals often felt marginalized and discriminated against in multiple ways. Jobs Initiative findings provide evidence that disparities attributable primarily to differences in race, ethnicity and culture persist. At the same time, the complex interrelationships among characteristics of sites and participants make it difficult to assess direct cause and effect between issues of race, ethnicity and culture, cultural competence strategies, and labor market outcomes among Jobs Initiative participants.

¹⁸ See Iversen, Roberta (2002). *Moving Up Is a Steep Climb* and "Stories of Families at Work," posted on www.aecf.org/jobsandrace/readingroom.

Concluding Thoughts

After a decade of Jobs Initiative experience, it is important to document what sites accomplished and learned from the Initiative's unique focus on race and work. With its intention to serve inner city, unemployed and underemployed adults, the Jobs Initiative expected to develop and implement workforce development strategies that would address the needs of these target participants. What those leading the Initiative did not anticipate was exactly how much the Initiative would have to explicitly address issues of race and work in order to serve target job seekers. As sites identified and raised these issues the Annie E. Casey Foundation responded – not with a set of prescribed solutions, but with resources and support to assist sites in defining a framework, and developing strategies and tools to meet their local needs and context.

Throughout the Jobs Initiative sites, much was accomplished and learned over the course of the Initiative about race and work, and the inherent challenges of addressing those issues in the workforce development context. These accomplishments and learnings are highly valued by those involved in the Jobs Initiative and considered an important contribution to their individual experiences as well as to the workforce development field.

Cultural competence, and the issues embedded in it, are ubiquitous in workforce development – therefore, it has to be a standard part of the dialogue



As sites began to implement their jobs projects, they soon realized they were facing issues of race and work at every turn: in building relationships with employers, in working with community-based organizations and training providers, and in recruiting and placing participants. Over the course of the Initiative, sites concluded that these issues really are ubiquitous – whether acknowledged or unacknowledged – in every aspect of their work. In hindsight, they understood that cultural competence really needed to be a part of all dialogue among partners. That is, rather than having these issues dealt with in isolation, they believe that race and work issues have to be more tightly woven throughout every aspect of workforce development efforts. The cultural competence framework developed in the Jobs Initiative encourages practitioners to take a comprehensive view of these issues and address them along every step of the workforce development continuum.

Much of this work is about bridging gaps – creating common ground and language

Many constituencies – employers, job seekers, training organizations, community-based organizations, workforce development agencies, and educational institutions – have common interests in terms of improving skills and employment opportunities for job seekers. However, they often lack common strategies, efforts and even language for meeting those interests. This is especially true in regard to issues of race and work. As intermediaries, sites invested significant resources and energy identifying common needs and interests, and then creating tools that helped bridge some of those gaps – like pre-employment training curricula that addressed soft skills and issues of cultural competence, or mentoring programs that helped breakdown perceived and real barriers for new employees at job sites.

Addressing the complex, interrelated issues of jobs and race requires using resources from multiple fields and employing multiple strategies

No one field or strategy is sufficient to address the complex, interrelated issues of jobs and race in implementing workforce development efforts. As in the Jobs Initiative experience, it is beneficial to draw on resources from a multidisciplinary network of individuals and organizations with expertise in labor market economics, employment discrimination, cultural competence, public policy, workforce development and related fields to provide greater insight for understanding issues of race, ethnicity, and culture. Cultivating an informational resource network is essential for workforce practitioners to expand the range of sources they can tap for existing materials to address these issues and for designing innovative strategies of their own. Similarly, no single strategy will adequately address these complex and deep-rooted issues. Using multiple strategies at various points along the continuum enables practitioners to more effectively and comprehensively address issues of jobs and race. Whether these strategies target race and racism through policy advocacy or training and technical assistance to cultivate workforce partners, numerous strategies are necessary to improve supports for success among job seekers and workers of diverse backgrounds.

Practitioners highly valued the cultural competence gains they made and readily acknowledged the process as one that is on going and in which there is continuous learning and growth

Staff at the site level really valued what they learned regarding race and work, and how they personally and professionally had become more culturally competent through this work. They also

freely acknowledged that cultural competence is a process in which we are all constantly learning and growing. Rather than being daunted by this fact, they seemed excited and challenged by it – energized at how they had raised their own level of awareness through the Jobs Initiative work.

As we share the Jobs Initiative experiences in race and work, we hope that other efforts – in the field of workforce development and in other fields – will benefit from what was accomplished and learned over the course of the Initiative.

Resources

Through the Jobs Initiative and other efforts, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported development of publications, tools and other resources that address issues of race, ethnicity and culture. Resources provided here will be beneficial to a variety of practitioners, policy makers and researchers in numerous fields. While on the web, please access many of these resources by visiting <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/jobsandrace>.

Relevant Publications

Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race (2001)

<http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/jobsandrace.pdf>

Soft Skills Training

An Annotated Guide to Selected Programs

To order go to the Joint Center's website at: <http://www.jointcenter.org>

Soft Skills and the Minority Work Force: A Guide for Informed Discussion

<http://www.jointcenter.org/>

Stories of Families at Work by Roberta Rehner Iversen

<http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/jobsinitiative/ethnography.htm>

Extending Ladders (2001)

<http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/ladders.pdf>

Products from AECF's Jobs Initiative: A Catalogue of Innovations in Workforce Reform (2001)

<http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/catalog.pdf>

Tools and Resources

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Fresh Start: An On-the-Job Survival Guide

To order go to the Joint Center's website at: www.jointcenter.org

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Investing in Success: A Supervisor's Guidebook for Supporting and Retaining New Workforce Entrants in Today's Multicultural Workforce

To order go to the Joint Center's website at: www.jointcenter.org

Managing to Work It Out

Helping Front-Line Supervisors Retain Entry-Level Workers (Denver)

To order participant manuals, or inquire about training contact: The Piton Foundation at 303-825-6246.

Soft Skills Training for Supervisors

Improving the Performance of Supervisors of Diverse, Entry-Level Workers (Seattle)

To order contact the Seattle Jobs Initiative office manager at 206-628-6981.

The WRTP Mentor Training Guide
Helping Manufacturing Companies Train Workplace Mentors (Milwaukee)
To order contact the WRTP administrative assistant at 414-906-9625.

Job Seekers and New Employees

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Fresh Start: An On-the-Job Survival Guide
To order go to the Joint Center's website at: www.jointcenter.org

Learning to Work It Out
Pre-Employment Training Tool to Enhance Job Retention (Denver)
To order participant manuals, or inquire about training contact: The Piton Foundation at 303-825-6246.

Work Readiness Index
Assessing Job Seekers' Ability to Get and Keep a Job (Denver)
To order contact The Piton Foundation at 303-825-6246.

Workin' It Out
A Tool to Improve Retention of Entry-Level Workers (Denver)
To order participant manuals, or inquire about training contact: The Piton Foundation at 303-825-6246.

21st Century Success Principles Course
A Curriculum for Pre-Employment Training (New Orleans)
For more information go to the website: www.boggsit.org/bridgecollab

Essential Job Skills
A Pre-Employment Training Guide for Participants (Milwaukee)
To order contact the WRTP administrative assistant at 414-906-9625.

WRTP Peer Advisor Training Guide
Helping Employees to Serve As Peer Advisors to the Co-Workers (Milwaukee)
To order contact the WRTP administrative assistant at 414-906-9625.

Workforce Development Practitioners

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Fresh Start: An On-the-Job Survival Guide
To order go to the Joint Center's website at: www.jointcenter.org

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Building Cultural Competence: A Tool Kit for Workforce Development
To order go to the Joint Center's website at: www.jointcenter.org

Work Readiness Index

Assessing Job Seekers' Ability to Get and Keep a Job (Denver)

To order contact The Piton Foundation at **303-825-6246**.

Case Management and Retention

Understanding Best Practices and Standards Retain Entry-Level Workers (Seattle)

To order contact the Seattle Jobs Initiative office manager at **206-628-6981**.

Soft Skills Curriculum

Teaching the Essentials for Functioning in the Professional Workplace

To order contact the Seattle Jobs Initiative office manager at **206-628-6981**.

21st Century Success Principles Course

A Curriculum for Pre-Employment Training (New Orleans)

For more information go to the website: www.boggslit.org/bridgecollab

Intake and Assessment Manual

Treating Program Applicants with Respect (New Orleans)

To order contact the New Orleans Jobs Initiative at TheNOJI2000@aol.com administrative assistant at **414-906-9625**.

Community Connection

A Training Manual for Developing Community Mentoring Programs (St. Louis)

To order contact the St. Louis Regional Jobs Initiative at **314-421-4220**, ext. 286, or e-mail at jobsinit@ewgateway.org

Web Links

Research Organizations

AmeriStat (Population Reference Bureau):

<http://www.ameristat.org/>

Diversity Database (University of Maryland at College Park):

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/>

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

<http://www.jointcenter.org/>

L4D Research Project (Learning for Diversity)

<http://www.arcassociates.org/leading/reports.html>

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

<http://www.ffeu.org/>

Unbroken Circle: List of National Organizations (Newsroom Guide to Civil Rights published by the Communications Consortium Media Center)

<http://unbrokencircle.org/involved.htm>

Workplace and Educational Resources

American Institute for Managing Diversity, Inc.

<http://aimd.org/>

DiversityInc.com

<http://www.diversityinc.com/>

Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL): Diversity Web Sources in Higher Education

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ressept00.html>

HRZone

<http://www.hrzone.com/articles/diversity.html>

Project Equality of Wisconsin

<http://www.projectequalitywi.org/>

Society for Human Resource Management – Diversity Page

<http://www.shrm.org/diversity/>

Workplace Diversity Network (*National Conference for Community and Justice and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University*)

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/depts/WDN/>

Religious, Ethnic, and Minority Rights Organizations

Anti-Defamation League

<http://www.adl.org/>

Asian-American Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.asianamerican.org/as.html>

Chinese Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE)

<http://www.causeusa.org/>

CivilRights.org

<http://www.civilrights.org/>

Japanese American Citizens League
<http://www.jacl.org/>

Korean American Alliance
<http://www.kaa.org/>

N.A.A.C.P.
<http://www.naACP.org/>

National Black Chamber of Commerce
<http://www.nationalbcc.org/>

National Conference for Community and Justice
<http://www.nccj.org/>

National Congress of American Indians
<http://www.ncai.org/>

National Council of La Raza
<http://www.nclr.org/>

National Urban League
<http://www.nul.org/>

United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
<http://www.usbcc.com/>

Government Data

American Council on Education: Office of Minorities in Higher Education (OMHE)
<http://www.acenet.edu/programs/omhe/>

Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/nlsoy.toc.htm>

Civil Rights Division (U.S. Department of Justice)
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/>

Department of Education Office for Civil Rights
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/>

Diversity in the United States (State Department's International Information Programs)
<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/race/>

Equal Opportunity Employment Commission
<http://www.eeoc.gov/>

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
<http://www.usccr.gov/>