Getting to Work: Opportunity and Hurdles to Prosperity in Michigan

A Center for Michigan Community Conversation Issue Guide
November 2014 - June 2015
#MiVoice

Challenges To Upward Mobility Guide
Welcome to this Community Conversation!

Welcome! Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to participate in this Community Conversation. We are the Center for Michigan, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization. This is our sixth statewide public engagement campaign since 2007. Today, you join more than 30,000 Michigan residents so far who have participated in this form of citizenship! The goal of today’s conversation is to gather your thoughts, ideas, opinions and priorities about the Michigan job market and how people navigate their personal paths to prosperity in our state.

Michigan's economy was one of the hardest hit by the Great Recession, and our state’s unemployment rate is still among the highest in the country. You may see challenges and opportunities in Michigan's economy every day – and today we want to hear about those. We’re going to ask about what you know, what confuses you or makes you fearful, what inspires you or makes you hopeful, and your vision for the Michigan job market of the future. We’ll also ask for your impressions about a wide range of ideas to potentially improve paths to prosperity in Michigan. The Center will then take what we hear in more than 150 of these conversations across the state, and amplify your opinions, priorities and ideas to our state’s leaders for further action.

Leaders Are Listening

And we know that leaders respond to the results of these conversations. The findings from previous Community Conversations, which have involved more than 30,000 Michigan residents to date, provided public momentum for state leaders to:

- Approve the nation’s largest expansion of public preschool for two years running.
- Toughen certification tests for new teachers.
- Approve deeper state investment in the “Pure Michigan” marketing campaign.
- Reform state business taxes.
- Institute reforms to save taxpayers $250 million in state prison costs.
- Stop the backslide of the traditional 180-day K-12 school year.

Your Voice Matters

The Center for Michigan is a nonpartisan organization, supporting no specific politician, or party. We pledge to serve as your bullhorn to our state’s leaders.
To start today’s conversation, we’d like to hear where you are on your personal path to prosperity in Michigan.

The next page provides some statistical information about Michigan’s job market. Consider this information, as well as your personal experiences, in this portion of our conversation today. Please turn to the screen at the front of the room. We’re now going to ask you a series of questions about:

- Your personal impressions of the Michigan job market.
- Where you personally see potential threats and opportunities in Michigan.
- Your vision of the future - what success in the Michigan economy looks like for you.

Use your clicker to answer the questions on the screen. You will instantly see the mood of the room. In a moment, we’ll all discuss your reactions to these questions and we welcome your personal stories.

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- What are your hopes and fears about Michigan’s economy and job market?
- What makes you confident about Michigan’s future job market?
- Have you had any turning points in your job or career path? What were they? Who or what caused them?

Let’s Get Started

Our conversation today will cover one or more of three major topics:

1. Career Navigation
2. College Value and Affordability
3. Challenges to Upward Mobility

This guide will serve as your road map for today’s Community Conversation.

It contains:

- Researched, nonpartisan information on Michigan’s classroom-to-career pipeline.
- Outlines of options for improving this pipeline, with pros and cons for each.
- Guiding questions for open discussions throughout this meeting.
Things are getting better.

1. Many people are back to work. As of October 2014, Michigan’s unemployment was 7.1 percent. The unemployment rate rose as high as 14.2 percent at the worst point of the Great Recession in August 2009.

2. Many Michigan residents are seeking new skills to compete in the 21st Century global economy. The percentage of Michigan residents who hold an associate’s degree or higher has risen from 35.7 percent to 37.4 percent over the past five years and college enrollments have risen considerably.

3. Some Michigan residents, like entrepreneurs, are finding their own path. Each year, Michigan Celebrates Small Business honors dozens of entrepreneurial start-ups in its “Companies to Watch” program. These start-ups, in every corner of the state, find new markets, new products, new technologies, and fast-growing profits. They find prosperity through innovation.

But it’s not exactly the glory days.

1. Manufacturing jobs, long the road to the middle class, are more limited and lower paying. Michigan lost nearly 423,000 manufacturing jobs in the Great Recession. Some of those jobs have returned, but many others may never come back.

2. Overall, wages aren’t what they once were. In 1982, Michigan’s median wage was the 4th highest in the country, but following a massive loss of manufacturing jobs, Michigan’s ranking had fallen to 24th by 2012. For example, veteran line workers in the auto industry make more than $28 an hour, but entry level workers make just under $16 an hour.

3. At the root, Michigan’s core talent pipeline – its K-12 education system – is struggling. In terms of academic achievement, Michigan’s K-12 students are not keeping pace with the growth in academic performance in leading states or other leading countries.

4. Some Michigan residents are struggling in the new economy. In some communities, such as Detroit and Flint, nearly half of all adults have low basic skills for the workforce, and struggle to get jobs. In these two communities, reported unemployment rate is 17 percent.

5. Michigan workers don’t have the right skills to fill current job openings. Right now, there are some 75,000 job openings in Michigan in fields such as information technology, health care, and engineering. But employers often say they have trouble finding truly qualified applicants.
Consider This: Some Facts to Consider About Challenges to Upward Mobility

Michigan residents face many challenges and obstacles in today’s complex job market.

1. Our state’s unemployment rate is improving, but is still above average. Michigan’s October 2014 seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.1 percent, compared to a national average of 5.8 percent. This is down more than six percent from five years ago.

2. Michigan has a skilled labor shortage. More than 75,000 positions are currently unfilled.

3. Long-term unemployment is deadly to future job prospects. For those who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer, a growing number of studies suggest they face long odds at ever finding work again. By the time a person has been unemployed for six months, their chance for employment drops to about 10 percent.

4. Personal incomes in Michigan are lower than in most states. Michigan’s per capita personal income has ranked between 35th and 40th among all states over the past five years.

5. And many growing job fields in Michigan pay low wages. One of every five new job openings in Michigan over the next ten years will be for restaurant workers, service workers, and building, grounds, and maintenance workers. At current salary levels, employees in these three fields would be eligible for food assistance as sole breadwinner in a family of four.

6. Labor force demands result in some college graduates not using their degrees in their jobs. Nearly half of bachelor’s degree holders are employed in jobs that require less than a bachelor’s degree.

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**NEXT 10 YEARS**

**NEW JOB OPENINGS IN MICHIGAN**

1 of every 5 jobs will be for:

- Restaurant
- Service
- Building, grounds & Maintenance

At current salaries:

Family of 4 sole breadwinner is eligible for food assistance.

**LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (in Weeks)</th>
<th>Odds of Finding Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 weeks</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 weeks</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

>27 weeks:
The longer the odds are for finding work.
7. **Occupations are changing rapidly.** Many of the fastest growing career fields in Michigan, such as advanced manufacturing and information technology, require continuing education. Those without the training for the needs of today’s employers may be left behind when more and more careers require lifelong learning.

8. **And employees are changing jobs more frequently than in previous decades.** The average worker has been doing their job for 4.6 years, meaning that adults are not likely to “climb the corporate ladder” with any one employer.

9. **Adults seeking new career paths often have difficulty finding data-driven career navigation advice.** Michigan offers some online career navigation support, but it can be difficult to find and hard to navigate. National reviews suggest career navigation sources have varying quality and are disorganized – making it difficult for job seekers to find data-driven, individualized support.

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**It’s particularly tough for those with little experience and low basic job skills.**

1. **It’s tough for youth to break into the work world.** In 2000, nearly 50 percent of 16-19 year olds in Southeast Michigan were employed. In 2012, that number dropped to 27 percent – putting metro Detroit among the worst regions in the nation for youth employment.

2. **Youth disconnection from the job market is costly, both personally and for society.** Seventeen percent of all 16-24 year-olds in America are neither in school nor working. Research suggests that if these 6.7 million people are not attached to education or work by age 25, the aggregate taxpayer burden of this cohort will be $1.56 trillion, and the aggregate social burden will be $4.75 trillion.

3. **Many adults lack the skills they need to succeed in today’s job market.** Nationwide one in six Americans have low literacy skills and one in three have low numeracy skills. In Detroit and Flint, the number is nearly half of the total population.

4. **There are limited resources devoted to basic skills training.** In 2012, Michigan invested nearly $105 million on services for over 51,000 residents participating in workforce training, dislocated worker programs, and disconnected youth programs. The average cost per participant for these services was about $2,000.
Use your clicker to answer the questions on the screen. Once again, you will instantly see the mood of the room. We'll then discuss your reactions to these questions and we welcome more of your personal stories.

CHALLENGES TO UPWARD MOBILITY

However, opportunities for prosperity exist for Michigan residents in the workforce, especially for those with education.

1. Poverty rates fall as education levels rise. Rates of poverty for those with only a high school diploma are 174 percent higher than those with four-year degrees or a higher level of education.

2. Jobs in Michigan will require a variety of education levels. Job projections for Michigan suggest of the 1.579 million projected job openings from 2010-2020, about 5 percent will require less than a high school diploma. Nearly 26 percent will require a high school diploma, and just over 26 percent will require a technical certificate. Nearly 10 percent will require an associate’s degree and more than 33 percent will require a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Discussion: Your Impressions of Challenges to Upward Mobility

In this section, we’d like to hear your thoughts and impressions of challenges and opportunities in Michigan’s job market.

Pages 4 and 5 provide statistical and background information about some of the challenges faced by many in Michigan’s job market, as well as the opportunities available. Consider these facts, as well as you and your family’s own experiences, as you answer the following questions. We will start with several multiple choice questions about:

- Your personal experiences with the challenges in Michigan’s job market.
- Your views on the availability of information about jobs and the training for the skills needed to get them.
- Your priorities for increasing and improving opportunities in Michigan’s job market.

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- If you are currently working, how did you get your job?
- If you’re not currently working, what happened to your job?
- If you’re preparing for work in an education or training setting, what kind of work are you preparing for?
- If you’re an employer, what is helpful to you when you’re recruiting employees?
- Think about someone close to you who is struggling to connect with Michigan’s job market.
  - Why do you think they are struggling?
  - What could be done to help this person?
  - What do you think they need?
Consider This: Pros and Cons for Possible Ways to Improve Opportunities for Upward Mobility

**OPTION 1:** Expand apprenticeship-style partnerships between the state of Michigan, community colleges, and employers

**THE IDEA:** The Michigan Advanced Technical Training program (MAT2) offers applicants an opportunity to earn an associate’s degree, receive 3 years of courses, on-the-job training with pay, and a guaranteed job as a mechatronics technician, IT technician, or technical product designer. This idea could be expanded to other career fields, and be offered at community colleges across the state, not only in Southeast Michigan.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** This model is working in Michigan today. Thirty employers currently partner with the MAT2 program, and the program expanded to include two additional fields in its second year. Offering similar apprenticeship opportunities to students in additional technical fields at community colleges statewide may allow more Michigan residents to receive the training they need for gainful employment without taking on student loan debt. Additionally, employers will be able to fill pressing needs with committed, well-trained employees.

**CON ARGUMENT:** Apprenticeship programs are expensive. Currently, all tuition costs and pay for on-the-job training in MAT2 are paid for by the participating employers, in exchange for a commitment from students to work for their company for a minimum of two years after completion of the program. These cumulative costs total more than $25,000 per student. The question of whether employees will be willing to shell out this much money to train employees statewide is unanswered, especially given that the first cohort of MAT2 students have not yet completed their training.

**OPTION 2:** Support intensive job and basic skills training for youth and adults disconnected from the job market

**THE IDEA:** Several programs across Michigan, including Earn and Learn in Detroit and Pathways to Success in Grand Rapids, have forged partnerships between nonprofit agencies, state workforce development programs, foundations, educational partners, and employers to help residents acquire the skills necessary for consistent and meaningful employment.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** This multi-faceted approach can help reconnect Michigan residents to the work world when they may otherwise require significant support from taxpayer-funded programs, like food and cash assistance. Participants in these intensive programs participate in training to boost basic skills, as well as participate in training in specific fields they hope to enter. Employers who hire residents who have completed this training will need to do less on-site training.

**CON ARGUMENT:** These collaborative programs rely heavily on the continued programmatic and financial support of the partners involved. As a nation, we currently provide government funding for programs to improve basic skills at about $20 per person in need. This lack of support suggests that there may not be public appetite for increasing government investment in these programs. Without government resources, it may not be possible to create these types of programs on a large enough scale to serve the entire state.

**OPTION 3:** Offer paid summer internship experiences for youth

**THE IDEA:** Providing early work experiences for young Michigan residents through summer internships could offer opportunities for career exploration and understanding of the responsibilities of the work world. The Detroit Youth Employment Consortium’s “Grow Detroit’s Young Talent” program placed more than 1,900 youth in summer internships in 2013. Programs like this could be models for replication across the state.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** The national youth unemployment rate is more than double the average unemployment rate for all workers. And employers surveyed by the Workforce Intelligence Network say that they are unlikely to hire employees without work experience. Providing these summer internships is mutually
beneficial for the young people who gain skills and value job experience and for employers who have their organizational needs met and are connected to potential future employees.

**CON ARGUMENT:** The “Grow Detroit’s Young Talent” program requires $2.7 million in private support to function at its current level. These private dollars are used to subsidize the wages the youth earn through their internship. Total giving to charitable organizations has still not reached the levels prior to the Great Recession, raising doubts about the public’s willingness or ability to support such programs statewide. Funding these programs through public dollars would be equally expensive, requiring additional tax funding or shifting of resources away from other youth-focused programs.

**OPTION 4:** Implement a retraining scholarship system for people who seek training for a job in a new field

**THE IDEA:** From 2007-2010, the state of Michigan offered a program called “No Worker Left Behind” to unemployed and low-income workers. Program participants were given up to $5,000 for two years for classes or training at a community college, university, or other approved training program in order to build the skills and knowledge for a new career. Such a program could be re-instituted today.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** A survey of “No Worker Left Behind” participants suggests that the program was effective in helping Michigan residents find work; nearly two-thirds of participants found employment after completing the program. The program had 165,000 participants in three years, which implies that the interest in such a program was high. Continuing education will be increasingly important as technology changes, and programs that encourage learning throughout life will help build a culture of learning in our state, in addition to helping more residents succeed in Michigan's economy.

**CON ARGUMENT:** Like previous options, the major con for this idea is its cost. Three years of the No Worker Left Behind program cost $500 million. Additionally, critics point to the fact that attempting to retrain workers for future “in-demand” jobs is a fool’s errand, as businesses are rarely able to predict what their job needs will be beyond the near future.

The next portion of our discussion seeks your feedback on several ideas for improving opportunities in Michigan's job market. Pages 7 and 8 briefly outline some of these ideas as well as arguments for and against them.

Consider these pro-con arguments, as well as your personal experiences, in this portion of our conversation today, and use your clickers to tell us what you think of these ideas.

We’ll then get a chance to discuss these ideas, as well as other suggestions you may have.

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**CHALLENGES TO UPWARD MOBILITY**

**Pros and Cons for Possible Ways to Improve Opportunities for Upward Mobility**

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- Who's responsible? Which stakeholders should take the lead on making any changes you want to improve opportunities to succeed in the job market?

- At what cost? If Michigan were to improve opportunities in the state's job market, who should pay for the improvements? Are you willing to pay?

- What's missing here? What are your additional ideas for improving opportunities in Michigan's job market?
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>A training program designed to teach a new generation of practitioners a trade or profession with on-the-job training and often accompanying study or coursework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic skills</td>
<td>The foundational skills needed to obtain and retain a job in today’s economy, including reading, writing, math, and digital literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Technical Education</td>
<td>Courses that integrate core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge. In the past, these courses were sometimes known as vocational education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Training after high school which results in a valuable credential, including professional/technical certificates and academic degrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college</td>
<td>A post-high school educational institution that grants primarily associate’s degrees and vocational certificates. Community colleges are public institutions, and receive funding from both state and local governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>An individual who starts a business or organization. This person is responsible for developing the business model and resources needed for the organization to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA</td>
<td>The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is an application that must be completed by all students who hope to be eligible for federal student aid, including work study and student loans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private college or university</td>
<td>A post-high school educational institution that grants bachelor’s degrees, and in some cases, associate’s and graduate degrees. Private colleges and universities are not public institutions and do not receive funding from state government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public university</td>
<td>A post-high school educational institution that grants bachelor’s degrees, and in some cases, associate’s and graduate degrees. Public universities are public institutions, and receive funding from state government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labor</td>
<td>Individuals trained with specific skills, knowledge and abilities for a particular field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You & Next Steps

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and priorities about paths to prosperity in Michigan!
Keep the momentum you built today going in the following ways:

1. **Spread the word.**
   Contact us at engage@thecenterformichigan.net to tell us about other groups of people who would like to participate in a Community Conversation. We’re seeking additional participants, as well as groups to host discussions, all over the state.

2. **Participate in Part 2!**
   This fall, we’ll be organizing a second round of Conversations on the topics we discussed today. The Center will take the impressions and priorities you shared today, and look for models and potential ideas for acting upon those priorities. In Part 2, we’ll be asking for your feedback on those ideas. We’ll be in touch to invite you to participate next summer.

3. **Stay informed.**
   Subscribe for free to Bridge Magazine, the Center for Michigan’s online news magazine at www.bridgemi.com. Bridge’s in-depth, data-driven reporting will help you better understand the complex issues facing our state.

4. **Follow the Conversation’s progress.**
   Throughout this round of Community Conversations, we’ll be posting updates, as well as our findings from these discussions. “Like” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/thecenterformichigan and follow us on Twitter and Instagram using @CenterforMI. Continue to share your ideas for improving Michigan’s paths to prosperity using the hashtag #MiVoice.

5. **Make Michigan better through service.**
   Visit www.thecenterformichigan.net for a link to Volunteer Michigan’s online volunteer match tool. You can search for volunteer opportunities in your own community.

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**ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MICHIGAN**

The Center for Michigan is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan think-and-do tank. The Center was founded in 2006, and our work is defined by three verbs: Engage, Inform, and Achieve.

**Engage:**
We are the state’s leading practitioner of nonpartisan public engagement. We make citizenship interesting, convenient, and meaningful though interactive, small-group Community Conversations, large town hall conferences, phone polling, and online engagement tools. This public engagement can, and does, lead to actual policy change.

**Inform:**
Bridge, our online news magazine, focuses on the “how” and “why” of Michigan current events. Our differentiated, in-depth, data-driven reporting accentuates—and partners with—traditional publishers increasingly focused on the “who,” “what,” “where,” and “when” of the 24-hour news cycle. Positive policy change growing out of Bridge’s journalism, while rare, is among the highest forms of social return to the Center’s investors.

**Achieve:**
We take the findings of our public engagement campaigns and Bridge journalism and seek to get things done for Michigan. Some examples of positive change: 1) The nation’s largest expansion of public preschool, two years running; 2) Some $250 million in savings from prison system reforms; 3) Stopping the erosion of the traditional 180-day K-12 school year; 4) Approval of tougher certification tests for new teachers; 5) Deeper investment in the Pure Michigan marketing campaign; and 6) Reform of state business taxes.
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Center has been fortunate to attract a group of distinguished Michigan citizens to serve on its Steering Committee. They include:

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former member of Congress and former Michigan State Senator

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President, Spectra Data and Research, Inc., and Senior Advisor, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

Cynthia Wilbanks,  
Vice President for State Relations, University of Michigan

Thank you TO OUR INVESTORS

The Center for Michigan's work is made possible through the generous financial support of the following organizations and individuals for the 2011-2015 program period:

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Michael Staebler  
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Clayton & Ann Wilhite  
More than 150 people who have contributed $25-$999
DATA SOURCES

Opening Discussion: Facts to Consider

Unemployment rate: http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis/AreaSelection.asp?tablename=Labforce


Job openings in Michigan 2010-2020: https://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020


Entrepreneurs: https://www.michigancelebrates.biz/past-winners/2014-mcsb-award-winners/

Michigan college graduation rates: http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/#michigan


K-12 performance: http://bridgemi.com/2012-michigan-scorecard/#4

Challenges to Upward Mobility: Facts to Consider

Michigan's labor shortage: http://www.mitalent.org/

Michigan's unemployment rate: http://milmi.org/


Low-wage, growing job fields: http://bridgemi.com/2013/12/plenty-of-jobs-for-those-with-few-choices/


Employee tenure: http://www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm

Career advising for adults: www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/career_counseling.pdf

Youth employment: http://win-semich.org/


Poverty rates by education level: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032014/pov/pov29_100.htm

Job projections by education level: https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/kg8r28e48gsawyppx

Challenges to Upward Mobility: Pros & Cons


http://www.earnandlearn.org/

http://www.grcc.edu/node/12129

http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/adult-education-wia-titleii

http://nebula.wsimg.com/0d33ecaa00cd678b-19844c1ae1f07ba?AccessKeyId=0FA6A2C9964E0E8EF333&disposition=0&alloworigin=1

http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/youth-unemployment-rate

http://www.growdetroitsyoungtalent.org/about-us.html

http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=42#VCXDMPIdWVM


http://www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/10864