Enhance Communities Initiative (ECI)

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Mission

- To help those in low-income communities or communities below the poverty level gain a vocational-specific education and licensure that typically would be out of reach based on the funds needed to pay for that education.

Problems facing these communities

- In 2016, 5.8% of all workers age 18-64 lived in poverty (Hentze)
- As of 2018, of the 328.2 million US citizens who live in poverty, approximately 13% or over 42,000,000 people. (Benson and Bishaw)
- Occupational licensing* education and requirements be out of reach for many people living in poverty as the related costs and time commitments can make it impossible to afford or be available for while working another job. (Benson and Bishaw)
- Unemployment can be associated with stress-related illnesses and increased mortality. (Creating Healthy Communities / Reducing Unemployment)

*Occupational licensure- refers to a government regulation requiring a license or certification to pursue a particular profession such as cosmetology or realty.

General outline of ECI

- This program's aim is to provide free vocational services and occupational licensure to those who qualify (based on income level), so they can obtain the requirements needed to pursue a career without the financial burdens.
- We will also connect with local businesses to help with job searching.

Examples of Licensure programs that can be provided

- Some examples of programs that can be provided:
  - Cosmetology
  - Auto repair/Mechanic training
  - Dog Grooming
  - Graphic Design
  - Cooking/Culinary arts
  - Programming
  - Personal training
  - Bartending

Resources

- Local communities have people with the skills and knowledge to teach different professions (would be hired based on skill level and experience).
  - Community members want to support their neighborhoods, so they may be willing to teach them skills.
  - We can utilize those individuals who wish to teach thereby creating unity within a community setting.
  - Non-native speakers can be a valuable resource to train others who may be disadvantaged by language barriers.
- Volunteers may be willing to allow ECI practice their newly gained skills discounted rates, providing invaluable real-life experience needed for licensure.
  - Example: performing grooming on local dogs, cooking for the community, haircuts, etc.

Other applications of ECI

- This program can be utilized to help many different community issues-
  - Unemployment or lack of access to education for Deaf or disabled persons
  - Homeless individuals can use the training to help them get a job and work to reach independence– in turn helping to lower the homeless population in a community
  - Formally incarcerated individuals who may struggle getting a job can use ECI as a resource.
  - Veterans can join ECI if they have difficulty finding a job after returning from war.

Possibilities of other ways to expand

- Though the focus of this program is addressing unemployment, there are many other programs that can be put in place besides licensure and job assistance:
  - We can create a mental health counseling program within to help with those who may need mental health support, also.
  - We can create a position within the organization that works as a social worker to assist those who may need outside assistance with mental health or medical help.
  - We can create a personal finance course too for those who need it.
  - If we address the Deaf unemployment rate, we can hire staff interpreters
  - We can create a community garden to supply some foods needed in culinary class as well as support the community itself.

References

Benson, Craig, and Alemayehu Bishaw. "Percentage of People in Poverty Dropped for the Fifth Consecutive Year." *The United States Census Bureau*, 26 Sept. 2019, www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/09/percentage-of-people-in-poverty-dropped-fifth-consecutive-year.html.

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"Creating Healthy Communities / Reducing Unemployment." *Let's Get Healthy California*, 19 Jan. 2020, letsgethealthy.ca.gov/goals/creating-healthy-communities/reducing-unemployment/.