

Community Ventures Manual

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State of Michigan

Preface

The Community Ventures (CV) Program is an initiative that promotes economic excellence and talent development by providing career pathways and wrap-around services to the structurally unemployed and working poor. The Program is designed to help participants pursue career opportunities throughout Michigan by linking employers, community partners and faith-based organizations in order to assist participants finding long-term sustainable employment. The Program addresses key barriers to employment and provides access to other services such as personalized success coaching, mentoring, financial literacy, budgeting, soft-skills training, hard-skills training, and supportive services.

In order to sustain a successful CV Program, the Michigan Works! Agency (MWA) must maintain a commitment to:

- Partnering with employers who are dedicated to offering opportunities to those with barriers to employment, providing full-time hours at a living wage, and committed to working with participants and program staff to maintain at a minimum a 60% retention rate at 12 months of employment.
- Providing the wrap-around services that have become the hallmark of the Community Ventures Program.
- Partnering with area employers, community partners, faith-based organizations, and other state agencies to provide those who are willing to work with the tools they need to be successful.
- Actively promoting the Business Resource Network (BRN) model to area employers in order to provide similar services to every employee in need of such services.

The purpose of the CV Manual is to provide definitions, policy guidance and program expectations. Procedural guidance is also provided to assure consistency. The manual is intended for use in conjunction with any other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. It is not intended to provide comprehensive, step-by-step direction; as such guidance may be developed at the local level. Every effort has been made to match this document to applicable state and federal policies and guidelines; however, if a conflict is identified, federal policy should be followed first and foremost, then state policy.

This manual is to be used as a guide to provide clarity, information and resources, which can enhance and improve service delivery and performance at the local level. This document is a living document that will be updated and expanded regularly. An emphasis will be placed on highlighting best practices whenever possible.

Using and Maintaining the CV Manual

Information identified herein is necessary for reporting, eligibility determination, and for program management purposes.

Definitions of terms will not be given each time they occur in the manual. Definitions are included in the Glossary section of the manual. A list of commonly used acronyms has been provided as well.

Additionally, reference indications will not be spelled out each time they are used within this manual. The following abbreviations apply:

Reference

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed
Business Resource Network
Community Ventures
Michigan Works! Agency
Workforce Development Agency

Denoted As:

ALICE
BRN
CV
MWA
WDA

Revised and/or additional chapters, sections, and pages will be issued as necessary. Pages are numbered sequentially within each chapter.

The manual should be kept at hand in a loose-leaf notebook or binder so that changes, additions, and deletions can easily be made.

Note: Dates noted as "date issued" and "supersedes" refer to issuances of this manual and are not effective dates of regulations, policies, and income levels.

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Chapter 1: Eligibility

The Community Ventures (CV) Program is an initiative that provides opportunities for the structurally unemployed and working poor to secure and maintain full-time meaningful employment that provides a living wage. The purpose of the CV Program is to partner with eligible employers who are willing to establish jobs for participants that pay a living wage and offer full-time employment in order to offer participants a pathway out of poverty.

Section 1-1: Employer Eligibility

Employers must commit to one or more positions at a worksite within the geographical area covered by the provider. The position must be eligible for full-time employment (30 or more working hours per week or 120 working hours per month) and pay participants a starting wage of not less than \$11.50 per hour.

The employer must be committed to working with participants and program staff to overcome barriers participants may be facing to maintaining full-time employment. The goal of the program is to provide careers to participants and provide them the tools and opportunities to maintain employment. This may require the employer to modify employee policies (e.g. time and attendance) with the understanding that this population of workers may be facing barriers such as reliable transportation or child care and tardiness may not be entirely the fault of the participant.

Employers must be willing to provide work space for Success Coaches within the worksite. The purpose of a Success Coach is to provide soft-skill training and to address immediate needs of participants before an issue arises. Providing a workspace for the Success Coach at the worksite allows participants to meet with their Success Coach on a regular basis to address any barriers that may hinder the participant's success.

Employers must allow time for participants to meet with their Success Coach when necessary. This need not be during production hours. Times such as before or after the participant's shift or during scheduled lunch or break times are sufficient.

Section 1-2: Participant Eligibility

The purpose of the CV Program is to provide long-term meaningful employment for those facing barriers to employment or the working poor. CV eligible participants will have one or more demonstrated or documented barriers to employment. Barriers include, but are not limited to:

- Returning Citizens
- Homeless
- Mental or physical disability
- Substance abuse
- Living at or below the federally established poverty limits
- Lacking a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency
- Long-term unemployment
- Receiving state or federal public assistance
- Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population

Other barriers may be present which prevent an individual from securing long-term meaningful

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employment. MWAs are encouraged to review each participant on a case-by-case basis in order to determine eligibility. Continued eligibility in the CV Program requires the participant being actively employed by a CV eligible employer, working 120 or more hours per month at no less than \$11.50 per hour.

CV participants must also agree to:

- Meet with and work with their assigned Success Coach in order to identify/develop the tools necessary for success. Failure or refusal to work with the Success Coach may constitute grounds for removal from the program.
- Keep their assigned Success Coach informed of any changes to employment status or address while participating in the program.

Participant success is measured by completing 12 consecutive months of employment and remaining incarceration free for 3 years.

Chapter 2: Program Design

The underlying objective of the CV Program is to provide a pathway from dependence, to stabilization, to independence from supportive services. MWAs coordinate directly with participants in order to identify barriers and develop action plans to promote long term employment success. To accomplish this, MWAs employ Success Coaches who meet with each participant and develop customized case management plans that proactively address any barriers to long-term sustainable employment. Success Coaches continue to work with participants addressing barriers and to ensure the participant has developed the skills necessary to navigate future barriers as they arise.

Section 2-1: Service Delivery

The MWA shall establish a single point of contact for the CV Program. The designated CV Coordinator should be knowledgeable of the program and have sufficient authority to make program decisions in a timely fashion.

MWAs shall operate within their established budget to implement the CV model in accordance with this manual. It is the responsibility of the MWA to ensure that participants of the program receive the identified wrap-around services. MWAs work closely with employers and participants to overcome barriers and assist with facilitating change to the employment culture where and when appropriate. MWAs also ensure funds and support to participants are distributed in a fair and equitable fashion.

Working towards a self-sustaining program model the MWA connects participants to resources in the community before utilizing CV funds to meet participant needs. The MWA ensures there are no duplication of services for any single participant. Service cannot be provided to any participant who has not been determined to be eligible for the CV Program.

Section 2-2: Wrap-Around Services

Success Coaches

Success Coaches are employed directly by each MWA or its designee. Success Coaches are expected to offer wrap-around services in the form of personalized case management plans addressing life and work skills, soft and hard skills coaching/training, conducting and providing on-site visits/services. Success Coaches must be knowledgeable in other programs within the community in order to connect participants with community resources before allocating CV funds to meet participant needs.

Success Coaches are expected to provide services, as appropriate, at the participant's company worksite. On-site visits should be completed as frequently as necessary to make the Success Coach available to all the participants working at a single location. Therefore, the frequency and duration of site-visits may vary depending upon the number of participants working at a single location.

Services provided on-site may include participant-employer mediation, supplemental soft-skill training, management plan review, addressing participant complaints, and meeting with participant's supervisors/employers to address any company questions/concerns.

Success Coaches may be required to develop, author and provide various reports as necessary

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to respond to request by the MWA or WDA. These reports may include participant tracking reports and/or success stories, expense reports, retention reports, and regular monthly/quarterly/annual reports.

MWAs will hire a sufficient number of Success Coaches to provide services to all participants. To allow for sufficient funding for all components of this program, it is recommended that there be no more than one Success Coach for every 125 participants charged to the CV award.

Case Management

As part of an overall effective case management strategy, the Success Coach must meet with and develop a plan with each participant. It is expected that the Success Coach will make initial contact with each participant within one week of the participants being assigned to their caseload and have a working case management plan by week two.

The purpose of meeting in person is to identify any barriers the participant may be facing that would hinder their success with maintaining long-term employment. Some barriers to identify may include, but are not limited to, reliable transportation problems, child-care concerns, insufficient job skills, lack of work supplies/equipment, unstable living environment including homelessness, back rent due, outstanding utility bills, etc.

Once the Success Coach and participant have identified any foreseeable barriers, a customized plan shall be developed addressing methods to navigating those barriers and creating a pathway to independence for the participant. The plan will outline the duties and responsibilities of the participant and the Success Coach. The Success Coach and participant shall meet as regularly as necessary to review the effectiveness of and to make adjustments to the case management plan in order to ensure the long-term employment success of each participant.

Supportive Services

Supportive Services are offered to participants facing hardships that would directly prohibit their success toward long-term employment and self-sufficiency. The key to supportive services is to provide temporary support that enables participants to retain employment and develop a plan of self-sufficiency moving forward. Examples of supportive services and suggested eligibility requirements include, but are not limited to:

Purchase of fuel cards, bus tickets or other means of public transportation

Assistance with minor automobile repairs (eligibility requirements such as establishing proof of participant's ownership, valid insurance, and valid driver's license)

Utility payments (eligibility requirements such as providing proof of imminent shut-off and attempts to work out payment plans with utility company)

Purchase of work related supplies such as steel-toed boots, eye protection, gloves, interview clothing, etc.

Housing assistance (eligibility requirements such as the participant is on the lease and an eviction notice is provided)

Temporary assistance with establishing child care

Financial Literacy and Budgeting

Financial literacy is the ability to understand how money works, how to manage money and live within a budget. Success Coaches must ensure each participant is offered financial literacy

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training that meets their individual needs, including assisting participants with the development of a budget.

A budget is a customized plan that identifies saving and spending habits for an individual or family unit over a specified period of time. The purpose of a budget is to express the importance of living within one's income limits while accounting for future life events. Any participant receiving financial assistance in accordance with this program is required to develop a budget that identifies a savings plan for overcoming future financial barriers that may arise.

Soft Skills Training

Soft skills are a combination of interpersonal, social and communication skills necessary for success in the workplace. Soft skills ensure participant success by providing them with the skillset necessary to be able to work well with others.

Success Coaches are expected to assist participants with soft skills training specific to the participant's employment needs and options. Soft skills training include, but is not limited to customer service training, conflict resolution, appropriate communication in workplace, time management, teamwork, problem solving and informal leadership skills. Success Coaches are expected to be able to provide soft skills training to participants but may utilize outside resources in order to provide the best possible training options available to participants.

Hard Skills Training

Hard skills are those tangible, easy to measure skills that directly provide and/or facilitate the implementation of career advancement. They focus on training offered during employment and may be offered by the employer or an outside service supported by the employer. Hard skills training includes, but is not limited to, necessary job related or job advancement skills such as:

Computer skills

Skilled Trades and/or Apprenticeship opportunities

Management/Leadership training

Equipment Operator training

Section 2-3: Funding

CV funding is available to enable MWAs to provide services to participants with the intent of providing pathways out of poverty for those facing barriers to employment and the working poor. Funding through CV is limited. Therefore, MWAs must be diligent in leveraging funding and resources from community partners such as area employers, faith-based and philanthropic organizations, and other state agencies in order to provide the best services possible to meet the unique needs of CV participants.

It is the responsibility of the MWA to maintain accurate reporting and financial records to demonstrate that funds are being distributed fairly and equitably based upon the need(s) of individual participants. Should a region realize an influx in eligible participants and anticipate serving more participants than estimated, it is the responsibility of the MWA to communicate this to the WDA in order to determine whether an increase in funding or to limit the number of eligible participants is the best approach for addressing the matter.

Continuation funding beyond the current fiscal year is not guaranteed from the State of Michigan. Therefore, MWAs shall work towards a sustainable local funding model by having

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Business Resource Network (BRN) members contribute membership dues/fees, secure local donations and identify other local sources of funding. Through these fees, donations and other local sources, BRNs will be able to support Success Coaches, provide employee training, and offer additional supportive services.

Section 2-4: Participant Reporting Requirements

The MWA must enter all participants in the One-Stop Management Information System.

Participant metrics will include:

- Job Retention at 3, 6 and 12 months (Wage Record Data)
- Wage increase at 12 months (Wage Record Data)
- Remained incarceration free for 3 years (Michigan Department of Corrections)

Chapter 3: Employer Wage Incentive

The origins of the CV Program included an employer wage incentive as part of the Program model. Employers who agreed to adopt the CV model were offered a wage subsidy as an incentive to offer jobs to those facing barriers to employment. The employers were required to invoice monthly requesting a portion of their wage reimbursement for every qualifying job that was filled with an eligible participant.

Section 3-1: Existing Employer Wage Incentives

A list will be provided to the MWA for all current CV employer grants. Effective with the September 2018 billings, CV employers will submit monthly invoices to the MWA. The local Success Coach, or other staff as identified by the MWA, will verify wage incentives being invoiced are accurate and properly documented. The approved invoice will be sent to WDA for payment. Approved invoices will be sent to:

Workforce Development Agency
Mr. Todd Butler, Community Ventures Administrator
201 N Washington Square, 3rd Floor
Lansing, MI 48913
TIA-CommunityVentures@michigan.gov

Section 3-2: Future Employer Wage Incentives

New employer incentives will be the sole responsibility of the MWA. MWAs shall use wage subsidies as a tool to incentivize jobs as necessary for individuals who face at least one of the following as a barrier to employment:

- Returning citizen
- Homeless
- Disabled
- Substance abuse

MWAs have flexibility to tailor wage incentives to the employer within the following parameters:

- Wage incentives to CV employers cannot exceed \$500 per month per eligible CV job, not CV participant.
- Total wage incentives per CV job are limited to a maximum of \$5,000 and must be for the first 12 months of the job.
- The wage incentive must be tied to an eligible CV participant meeting the criteria stated above.
- If a CV job is vacated and backfilled with a CV participant that does not meet the employment barrier criteria stated above, no further wage incentive can be paid on that job.

MWAs will initiate and manage new wage incentive agreements with CV employers. This will include verifying, managing and making wage incentive payments to CV employers. Funding for employer incentives will come from the CV award. No additional funds will be provided for employer incentives.

Chapter 4: Business Resource Networks (BRNs)

BRNs are designed to bring together local business with a willingness to pool their resources in order to accomplish together what they may not be able to accomplish on their own. BRN members have a willingness to serve a population of workers who, without support, are at significant risk of losing their job(s) due to various employment barriers.

The primary benefit for an employer in joining a BRN is the ability to provide sustainable employment to residents from within the employer's community.

Recruitment for BRN membership is focused on employers who are committed to recruiting and maintaining a qualified workforce from within the communities where the businesses operate. Small to mid-sized business who offer full-time employment, pay a living wage and are experiencing high turnover rates are the primary focus of BRN membership.