

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: March 5, 22025

Name: Stephen MacDonald

Are you representing: Yourself ☐ Organization ☒

Organization (If Applicable): Lucas County Family and Children First Council

Position/Title: Getting Ahead - Bridges Out of Poverty Program Manager

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 96

Specific Issue: Healthier Buckeye Council Grant

Are you testifying as a: Proponent ☒ Opponent ☐ Interested Party ☐

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position: Funding from Healthier Buckeye will provide economic development and poverty reduction in Ohio through sustainable public-private partnerships.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Thank you, Chair, Vice Chair, and Ranking member for this opportunity.

As the Getting Ahead Bridges Out of Poverty Program Manager for the Lucas County Family and Children First Council, I oversee all aspects of Bridges and Getting Ahead in Lucas County. Our work includes providing Bridges training to help community members from all sectors develop a shared understanding of poverty. We also offer Getting Ahead classes for individuals who have experienced poverty, guiding them in investigating their lives, building resources, and achieving stability. Additionally, we develop and support initiatives that foster collaboration

across industry, nonprofit, and government sectors to address poverty at individual, organizational, community, and policy levels.

I first learned about the Healthier Buckeye Council (HBC) grant in 2016 while working with the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD) on a project aimed at addressing the workforce crisis among direct service providers (DSPs). We secured the grant to support this effort and proposed three key initiatives:

1. Providing Bridges and Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes
2. Supporting DSPs while assisting the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) in developing its

Community Health Worker (CHW) initiative

3. Launching an Employer Resource Network[®] (ERN[®]) for DD providers

ERNs[®] are public-private partnerships designed to support under-resourced employees by helping them remove barriers to employment and job retention. In turn, employers benefit from reduced turnover. Member employers purchase shares in the ERN, which covers the costs of a Success Coach—including salary, benefits, supervision, and other expenses. The Success Coach's primary role is to help employees remain in their jobs.

With HBC funding, we provided Bridges training and Getting Ahead in the

Workplace classes to under-resourced employees. We launched the “EaRNed Success” ERN for DD providers in collaboration with the Board of DD and supported HCNO in hiring five CHWs for a year, demonstrating the program’s viability. Today, HCNO contracts with 17 Care Coordination Agencies (CCAs) across seven counties, employing approximately 50 CHWs.

A key objective in launching EaRNed Success was to test the viability of the ERN model in Ohio and, if successful, scale the initiative statewide. Since 2017, we have established a second ERN in Lucas County and, in partnership with Marion Matters, helped develop additional ERNs across Ohio. By the end

of 2023, eight ERNs were serving 32 counties and 51 employers, supporting 15,624 employees. More networks are currently in development.

The impact of Ohio's ERN expansion is evident in 2023 year-end data. Member employers saw an impressive 1,419% return on investment (ROI), with 1,452 employees receiving assistance from a Success Coach. Success Coaches delivered 3,321 services, helping employees address challenges that could otherwise lead to job loss. This exceptionally high ROI directly improves employer financial health by reducing turnover costs. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) estimate the cost of replacing an employee is

between 50% and 200% of their annual salary, depending on their role.

We plan to develop a third ERN focused on returning citizens and employers committed to second-chance hiring.

Launching a new ERN comes with costs, and we've learned that grant funding significantly accelerates the process by covering development expenses and subsidizing new employers' first year of membership. This support enhances recruitment efforts and speeds up network implementation.

Funding could also support additional ERNs in Toledo-Lucas County and across Ohio. It would allow us to offer Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes for ERN member employees. Additionally, it

would strengthen collaborations with community stakeholders and help build a more structured network of partnerships, maximizing the reach and impact of available resources for Ohioans working toward stability.

One specific opportunity is expanding our involvement with Mobility Mentoring, a coaching model that aligns with Bridges principles and enhances support for Getting Ahead graduates. This framework is being used in Ohio, and maintaining consistency in support approaches ensures we can better serve client families.

I've written my fair share of grant proposals, and one of the final questions in most requests is, "How will you make

this project sustainable?” I used to find this question challenging. However since I’ve realized that creating a common language for understanding poverty can engage the entire community, I no longer struggle to answer it.

I appreciate your time and attention.
Thank you.

Below, you will find some supporting evidence for my testimony.

Impact Coalition Website:

<https://www.impact-coalition.org/>

ERN USA Website: <https://ern-usa.com/>

History

Getting Ahead in Lucas County has a history of success. Since 2015, 459 people have graduated from 54 Getting Ahead classes. Ten funding sources have sponsored classes at seventeen locations. Getting Ahead classes are supported by multiple community partners and the Impact Coalition Steering Committee.

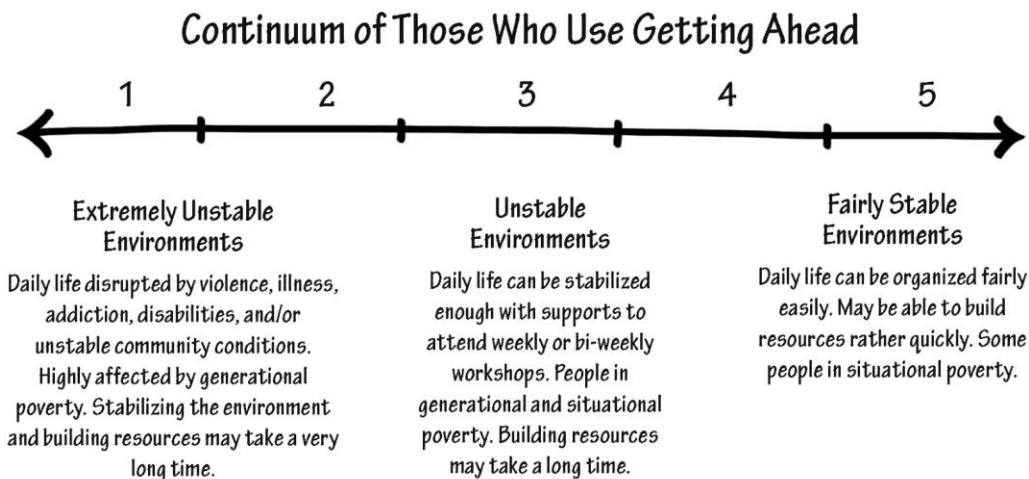
Metrics for Getting Ahead (GA) Graduates*

- 90% improved their Content Knowledge of the curriculum
- 88% were more hopeful after the class
- 39% improved Return on Investment (ROI) indicators in one-year
- 41% increased stability in one year, as evidenced by GA stability indicators
- 75% achieved two goals in one year
- 87% received post-program follow-up

* Based on JFS performance measures since 2015 for TANF enrollees.

Getting Ahead Classes

"Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life" by Philip E. DeVol is a comprehensive, community-based curriculum designed to empower adults navigating daily instability. Getting Ahead is for individuals who have experienced generational or situational poverty, including many who are employed but below the ALICE threshold.¹



Purpose and Philosophy

The class helps participants, "Investigators," to achieve financial stability and transition out of poverty. By leveraging the hidden rules of class, Investigators unlock pathways to valuable resources, including new connections and better employment opportunities.

¹ Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) are households that are surviving vs stable. According to the 2021 United Way ALICE Report, 42% of Lucas County household are below the ALICE threshold, and during the same period in Toledo 53% are below the ALICE threshold. See United for ALICE: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/>

Getting Ahead facilitators don't give advice. Instead, they foster an environment where motivation, insight, and actionable plans emerge from the Investigators themselves. This approach empowers participants to take ownership of their journey toward financial stability.

Investigators receive an attendance stipend, which communicates the value of their time and commitment. As expert problem solvers, they collaboratively identify community-based obstacles that hinder prosperity, thereby contributing to the larger goal of community improvement.

Throughout the class, Investigators construct a personalized roadmap called their 'future story.' This narrative acts as a compass, guiding them toward enhancing their resources and realizing their aspirations. Getting Ahead empowers individuals to foster positive change within their lives and communities by equipping participants with a comprehensive skill set and a strategic plan.

- Sessions: Twenty-one 2.5-hour sessions (20 classes and graduation)
- Duration: Two sessions per week for eleven weeks
- Investigators (participants): A maximum of thirteen Investigators per class
- For more information: Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World at a Glance
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3ND1Vx64q0>

Funding from the County Commissioners helps GA-BOP Initiative leverage alternative funding opportunities for Getting Ahead classes. This proactive approach to seeking additional funding sources ensures the sustainability and expansion of the program.²

² In FFY23, three GA Classes were implemented through the following alternative funding sources: 1) The MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge grant at FDCA, 2) The Harbor FACES grant, and 3) Salem Lutheran Church.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Return on Investment

Supportive Employment Saves Money

1419% ROI

Member contributions, exploratory visit totals & \$7,800 per employee turnover cost (SHRM calculation)

Distinct Employees Served



1,452

Plus their families



Company Members

51 15,624

51 employer members with 15,624 employees

Delivered Case Needs

Supportive Employment Changes Lives

3,321

A request can have multiple needs (services)

Top Ten Service Needs



656

Coaching



295

Public Assistance



204

Education



156

Counseling Request



407

Food Assistance



281

Financial



138

Personal Supplies



344

Transportation



240

Housing



81

Utilities

Resources Leveraged



ERN Loan & Saving Totals = \$43,250



Public Assistance Leveraged = \$2,479



Community/Relief Funds Leveraged = \$7,971



Total Resources Leveraged = \$53,700

**Includes partial monetary case outcome data*

Employee Utilization

Supportive Employment Transforms Companies

18.8%



EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE NETWORKS



STRATEGIC PARTNERS



THE ERN USA NETWORK



Collaborative Development Process



Employer Led Model



Shared Onsite Success Coach



Resources



Skill Building



Outreach Tools



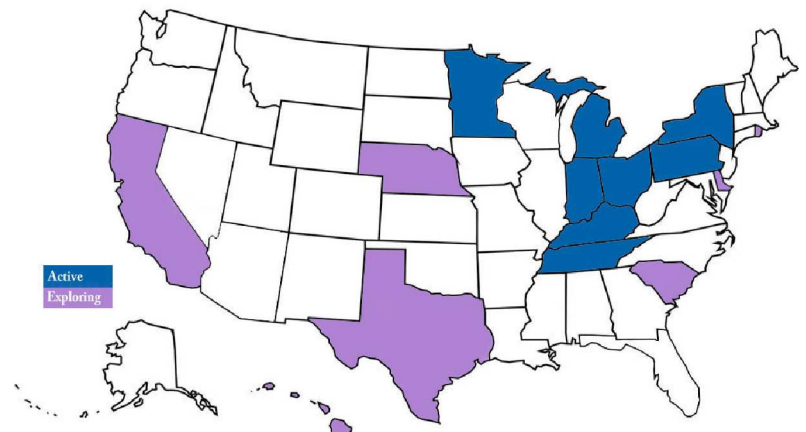
Data and Process Driven CMS



Peer Learning Events



125%-900+% ROI



May 2024 States & Counties

8 Ohio ERNs: Allen, Ashland, Auglaize, Butler, Crawford, Cuyahoga, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lorain, Lucas, Marion, Mercer, Montgomery, Morrow, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Ross, Sandusky, Seneca, Shelby, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, Wyandot

6 Michigan ERNs: Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, Oceana, Ottawa, St Joseph

5 Kentucky ERNs: Anderson, Hardin, Lee, Montgomery, Morgan and Wolfe

2 New York ERNs: Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Montgomery, Ontario, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady

1 Tennessee ERN: Shelby

1 Minnesota ERN: Southwest region

1 Indiana ERN: Johnson

1 Pennsylvania ERN: Lancaster

Exploring or Under Development: CA DE, HI, IN, KY, MA, MI, NY, OH, PA, SC, TX