



Circles: Fundraising Update

Top Tip: What worries/frustrates your partners and potential funders the most? What do they really want to accomplish?

*Circles has almost universal application to help people achieve any goal. Rather than simply pitching Circles as your stand alone project and hoping people will help fund it, a more effective approach is to ask your partners and potential funders, "How is poverty affecting your bottom line and the results you want to achieve?" How can **Circles/Bridges/Getting Ahead** be used to help solve that problem?*

Circles as a retention strategy for education and employment:

MTM has been working with **Jerry Mainstone, Director of BC CAREERS (Battle Creek, MI)** to prepare a **Kellogg Foundation** grant submission which involves a consortium of businesses, uses work force training and retention services based on Cascade Engineering model, Circles and Bridges Steering Committee comprised of community organizations to create economic development opportunities and eliminate poverty. Kellogg has already provided BC CAREERS with a planning grant this year.

Tay Waltenbaugh, Executive Director of Westmoreland Community Action (Western PA) and I met with the community college president for his region and asked him the above questions. His most disturbing problem was that 45% of the first year students drop out. He is very motivated to improve that rate and he realizes that the issues of poverty (transportation, childcare, tyranny of the moment, and hidden rules) fuel the problem.

Wal-Mart gave the community college \$50,000 for financial assistance to help students at risk of dropping out for lack of funds to solve transportation and other poverty related issues. We proposed to the college president to co-design a Circles initiative for the community college to help with retention. The president felt confident that allies could come from both faculty and students.

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The community college president told us that a company in the area needs 100 new employees a year for jobs that pay \$19/hour and they are having a hard time recruiting people able to meet the requirements. Can Circles be used to help meet this demand? Of course it can, as long as someone is committed to making it happen.

Tay and I also met with the Wal-Mart supervisor for several stores and 7000 employees. Can Circles be used to help people who get into the Wal-Mart employment system become more economically self-sufficient? Yes. She offered to help us pursue a demonstration grant through the Wal-Mart national foundation.

We sat down with the senior director of the **Mellon Foundation** in our day of meetings and were given green lights to submit a proposal. The key is having community colleges and some businesses in the mix.

In New Jersey, **Terry Newhard, Executive Director for NORWESCAP**, and I visited both community college presidents in his region and received the same reception. They are concerned about low-income students dropping out and both said they have benefactors and funds to help anyone out. Both colleges are ready to partner with Terry to design a Circles initiative. The first step will be providing Bridges training to faculty and interested students.

Important insights: Community colleges often have key relationships with businesses and wealthy individuals. Building a Circles initiative in a manner that flexibly serves the students provides good access to movers and shakers in the community. Both Tay and Terry are well known in their communities and have solid reputations for good programs. They are both on the **Workforce Investment Boards** and so are the college presidents. Their previous relationship and the idea of using Circles as a retention strategy for education is what opened the door to these possibilities. And, both men have no problems asking people for money.

Circles as a retention strategy for employers:

The **Ohio Jobs and Family Services** agency committed \$40,000 to help launch Circles in Wooster, Ohio with Goodwill as the lead agency.

Pennsylvania Executive Director Roger Collins (Bucks County PA Opportunity Council), Circles coordinator Tammy Schoonover, the Workforce Development Director and contracts manager and I met for an exciting meeting to push the envelope on what workforce development would look like if accountability was formalized at 200% of poverty guidelines. The WIB has provided Opportunity Council with \$38,000 to train 64 Career Links personnel in Bridges. The strategy is to provide a common language to understand and plan more effectively in

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helping families out of poverty. That particular conversation has already made its way to PA state officials.

Indiana Circles communities are pulling together a statewide conference for government officials and business leaders to advance the use of Circles as a retention and advancement strategy for education and employment on October 7. They are also gathering a bi-partisan team of state legislators to advocate for the proposal submitted to the state's Department of Social Services for \$1M to build capacity for Circles in 5 Indiana communities.

To begin preparing Circles as an employer retention strategy, learn more about **Cincinnati Works** [www. http://www.cincinnatiworks.org](http://www.cincinnatiworks.org) and the **Source** www.grsource.org both organizations are using Bridges concepts to accomplish impressive results.

Getting Ahead has been used by Youngstown State University to train St. Elizabeth Hospital staff. See attached results.

Circles as a Child Abuse Prevention strategy:

Missouri Valley Community Action just received approx \$160,000 from the state for using Circles as a strategy to child abuse prevention.

TANF/Faith-based funding:

Allison DeHart, Circles coordinator from Troy, Ohio has organized a meeting with **Faith-based initiatives director** for the state on September 9 to discuss funding for the 11 communities launching Circles initiatives in Ohio. See Ohio Governor's Task Force recommendations on addressing poverty just released today to committee members today. Circles is mentioned in recommendation # 20.

United Methodist Conference: Dr Alan Rice, RFD CDC Executive Director in the United Methodist Conference is convening a large phone conference with leaders from North Carolina to introduce Circles as a strategy to help them achieve the Methodist's new national commitment to end poverty.

Statewide Community Services Block Grant Funds:

Both Nevada and New Jersey have funded Circles out of their statewide Community Services Block Grant discretionary funds. The amounts are \$60,000 and \$75,000 respectively.

United Way

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United Way just informed **Circles Director Jason Upthegrove** and his new nonprofit agency that they are awarding them \$60,000 to start Circles in Lima, Ohio. The **Wayne County United Way** based in Wooster, Ohio has committed \$10,000 and Jobs and Family Services is providing \$40,000 to Goodwill towards its goal of securing funds for the first two start-up years of Circles. .

Final note: How to achieve an appropriate and assertive tone for fundraising.

If you stop yourself from asking people for funds because you think everyone is hitting them up for money, think again at the enormous privilege anyone enjoys with a household income above the self-sufficiency standard of \$45,000 a year for a family of four. Anything above the self-sufficiency line is discretionary. Think of the privilege enjoyed by the wealthy as defined by Obama (\$250,000) or McCain (\$5M). When people have twice that, four times that, or 3000 times that much resource, the vast majority of their money is discretionary. They are asked for money often because they have so much discretionary money at their disposal.

They are also enjoying current tax policies favorable to the wealthy, the power to make even more money through lobbying government, using legal and financial advice to lower taxes, and using wealth to leverage opportunities that are nowhere on the radar of middle and low income people.

Our economic system is creating more disparity now than in any other time in history. The cost of basic needs is escalating past the means of millions of households. Circles can help in so many ways to level the playing field by sharing support, information, and opportunities so that more of our country can tap into the financial stability and even luxuries that only a small percent of the American population enjoys today.

We ask people in low income situations to "get ahead" by learning the hidden rules of middle-class life. I invite you to learn the hidden rules of wealth and ask people to share their resources in ways that grow Circles in your communities. You and your community have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The discomfort will help you bond with those who are struggling to get out of poverty. Like everything, it gets easier with practice.

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