

Best Practices

Ohio has a growing poverty cycle we need to stem and deal with at its roots, finding best solutions for health care, education, housing and jobs.

No one program administered by any state can beat poverty and enhance quality of life, but a survey and implementation of Best Practices would quickly yield programs to be replicated cost-effectively thereby giving Ohioans caught in this downward spiral some boot strap benefits. The state would not need to brand the product, just identify best programs and expedite the replication. Connecting community program leaders to communities which need the service would be the state role for a train the trainers linkage.

With both a rural and urban face, poverty ranks Cincinnati and Cleveland on the unwanted TOP 10 list of big cities facing this challenging landscape. Other ideas, along with seeking innovative best practices, which might be fruitful in exploring how to move our state ahead without a lot of expenditures:

Housing/Related Needs

--People often overlook the need for furniture with housing. Columbus has a productive free furniture bank that collects unwanted furniture from new furniture customers (individuals and institutions) and cycles it back to individuals in need through about 40 plus social service agencies. (Having a stable/normal environment is most important to children.) During hurricane Katrina, the bank's known expertise was tapped to assist New Orleans. Why not ask the furniture bank group to replicate itself for all of Ohio? (Mayor Coleman knows this program quite well.)

--Sharing/Trading website. Why not set up a state-sponsored trading site? People could swap or give away products, including our non-profit and state institutions (schools could recycle texts, tables, chairs; hospitals/cities universities could swap). A monitored trading site could be a subset to save everyone money by recycling what otherwise might have been wasted. Many individuals using this site might not be able to afford any products if they could not obtain the second hand version, so merchant push back should be expected but could be addressed. No cash should trade hands.

--Again, Katrina-like, use volunteers to build housing, replicating the best practice model, Habitat for Humanity. Call out architects, builders, students/ do it yourselves who want to recycle extra building products they are storing in their garages from their last projects. We could have a contest challenge to create the best looking, most cost-effective, energy efficient house and quickly replicate it in areas of extreme need.

We should make sure those who receive the housing are also taught how to properly maintain/budget payments for the unit, like a potential Best Practice partner, Habitat for Humanity. The inner cities are full of rehab opportunities. (Ask people who never volunteer simply because their services are never sought...a great community get together/call out for the spring.)

--A massive purchase of fuel for houses, state and city buildings/cars/machinery could be negotiated as did Massachusetts. Could we bolster one of our alternative energy plants by purchasing from them? That contract, linked with the universities technology assist (we could challenge the universities), could make it much easier to raise capital to build plants and create good jobs.

--Food

Much backyard garden produce stupidly goes to waste despite a donate your garden produce program. Most people need to hear how to donate.

Additionally, Mayor Coleman and OSU have encouraged community gardens, so as a best practice, why not ask mayors and county commissioners across the state to create more gardens in the inner cities? Have a statewide focus on rolling up our shelves, gathering and canning everyone's remaining/donated produce. Civic and 4-h groups are always looking for projects, as are the scouts. Could we use these groups to spread the word and gather produce for distribution to food banks? County fair boards, high schools and churches could be engaged to advertise, solicit volunteers, open their kitchens for a statewide canning/cooking show.

--Since many of the statewide/local immigrants from Mexico and Somali were agriculturally based can some of them be connected with vacant city lands to grow more local produce and then sell it to their community where more fruits and vegetables need to be available at a good price? (Better diet/better health/less diabetes) Ohio State University is enhancing the development of an African tubular plant that will reduce African hunger. Can we use our OSU Extension and research folks to work with our immigrants and grow that plant or other native plants? Our extension agents could teach new techniques to the immigrants, but immigrants might be able to teach us some

new ideas, as well. OSU business graduate students can help set up markets. Teens from the community could be engaged through job training programs to help build the structures for more win/win projects.

--Also, all state functions, fundraisers for Dems and state lodges, facilities in their day to day operations should be mandated to automatically donate remaining food to foodbanks or other local entities so it can be readily consumed.

JOBS/ ,JOB RELATED-

-- Micro lending. Could the state operate a micro lending entity (perhaps even grants) to help a family help themselves into the workforce and out of poverty? An Appalachian entity was lending micro loans (under \$500) which were utilized by many women who wished to start small businesses.

--Employee buyouts. Why couldn't the state help educate employers about employee buyouts and promote this option when businesses are being sold as a way to keep current employment in the state and increase individual family income, as well as assure better customer service at the business site?

--Invention. A special category ... one Ohio may still excel in, so why not challenge its citizens to dig in and help? When has the state ever reached out and said to both universities and individuals that we need their creativity to develop or enhance a specific type of product~ Why not do a call out/ask the universities/ and individuals for their inventions, enhancements of products to be used in our state. Alternative vehicles, fuels, energy saving ideas are being worked upon at the universities and we should push for some of these products to be developed quickly for use in our state.

Universities could pool their talent and perhaps some increase in their base program grants could be promised for specific, quick to market ideas they bring to the table .. but incubation needs to be fostered on a time clock. (OSU has had the winning desert race solar car for how long~ Has that assisted the state's taxpayers/consumers? BGSU's windmill experiments are known throughout the country.)

We need to ask for our inventors to come forward and perhaps work with our universities. Great Britain has a special office/squad that trolls the world looking for good inventors/ideas. They find the garage inventors, bring them back to Tony Blair's backyard and finance them there. Why can't Ohio do the same? Are there things we could learn/use being developed at Wright-Patton? While working at the Ohio Primary Care Association, I was contacted by a physician from Wright-Patton who wanted to share ideas with us. He was deployed and it never happened, but what a great idea. It often takes 15-20 years for medical best practices to translate best practice ideas to working physician practices ... why not slice that protracted learning time?

--Military care for trauma patients is the best. Can't we help our hospitals learn/practice some of these applicable protocols so we are the best~ Our hospitals spend too much time fighting among themselves and with the insurance industry than acting as a unified front to clone all sorts of best practices that would be beneficial for them to share with each other, and yield better care. They need a call from the state's leader.

We have state of the art prosthetic limbs being fitted at Walter Reed Hospital, yet many of our soldiers will need these replaced/re-built many times. Can't we do that in our state, and also service those other amputees in our state who are victims of accidents/diabetes, but/cannot afford these state of the art limbs?

--State workers have/had a small reward program for usable ideas to promote government efficiency. Why not double the award and push that program?

-- Where are all the craftspeople? Try to find a good finished carpenter! Are we emphasizing college for too many and de-emphasizing a viable alternative of good vocational education? As a state, when we build things, we have no integration of arts with our crafts. We replace our beautiful country bridges with products that look like industrial supply cement rejects, and the modern replacements often don't last as long. We have mandated art pieces in all new state buildings, why not raise the bar so that artists/architects start talking with our bridge/building construction crews for all types of projects so we leave a legacy of quality?

--Our old iron/covered bridges are part of our historical legacy and they are disappearing. These remaining old structures add to our **tourism industry, which someone should be pushing very hard. (Jim Rhodes badgered our very reluctant legislature to invest in tourism promotion with an \$8 return on every \$1 spent. He was right.)** The legislature finally created state parks and a tourism office, but seldom is there an ad promoting Ohio's great parks, just West Virginia's and Michigan's. We are missing a big dollar return for capital facilities already built and operating.

We should also use our parks for state meetings where it makes sense. If poor food or service quality or pricing are issues, someone should review our wonderful state park lodge offerings quickly. These are quality offering/revenue generators that many Ohioans have not heard about or utilized. When gas prices are higher, families travel closer to home.

--Transportation to jobs is a huge issue for the poor, so why don't we make bikes available? In Sweden, the tax on an auto is as much or more than the auto costs, so young people use bikes. The citizens are healthier and there is less pollution. Portland and/or Seattle makes bikes available throughout the city. You return them at coin operated stands. If we made bikes almost free (they wouldn't need to be new) so some folks who asked for them could get to work, wouldn't it be worth it? We could also have a bike shop that recycles/repairs bikes to keep everyone on the road. All municipal buses should have plenty of bike racks to be utilized at no extra charge. Bike racks on school buses~

--Don't allow a person to leave prison without a job/job training.

EDUCATION/FAMILY SUPPORT

--Why not pair schools which are wealthy/good performance schools with those which have very little? Books, furniture, buses, teacher training, ideas can all be shared /recycled, and it would be good for both the wealthy and less affluent partner. Grade/reward the partners and share their success with other pairings.

--Any family receiving state support or health care benefits should be linked with a child development course/family budget training. In some instances, better informed consumer choices may help break the poverty cycle.

--We have a growing migrant community. Why not encourage those in the community to teach others in their own community English and business skills?

--Adult literacy should also be focused upon more publicly, connected to positive offerings from the state.

Additionally, do we ask community colleges/colleges to let the public know when they are educational slots available? We could reach out and match needy students with course seats still open. Taxpayers are subsidizing those classes, whether totally full or not.

--In high economic/social need areas why not have the community designate and pay a small stipend to some good role model/elders as willing guide parents for a community touch point? There is a special need when foster children turn 18 and leave care, often leaving them very alone, and when adults return to the community with no social ties. Children and adults could have a home base of caring individuals.

In previous decades, when fewer mothers were working, there were always mothers or grandmothers in the neighborhood who kept an educated eye on the children. There were wise grandmothers/elders who could be relied upon for advice of all types. Today there are many children wandering the streets without adult supervision for various reasons. .

HEALTH CARE

-- The state needs to place more muscle/dollars behind the idea of prevention/outcomes in both its Medicaid and private insurance programs for state employees, and all Ohioans. Preventive care/education and outcome-based payment need to be the language for health care. As one small best practice, in Asheville, North Carolina pharmacists are being paid a small fee as physician extenders, educating patients about diabetes and other chronic conditions when patients come in for re- fills. The reduction in city health care costs was noticeable as employees responded to being asked to learn more about their own chronic conditions.

The state also needs to foster at every opportunity better exercise/eating habits for all Ohioans. Cafeterias from K-college have horrible food, and school-placed junk food machines ice the obesity cake. State like Arkansas have a health report card that goes home to the parent.

--Create a Primary Care (only) Risk Pool for Ohioans to buy into inexpensively if they cannot afford the work offered plans, or they do not work. A physical should be mandatory to use this state offering, and disease management/outcome management should be required for the participating clinicians with best practice protocols. (More detailed paper already submitted.)

-- To reduce future Medicaid costs related to aging, the state should start its own long-term care insurance program and market it to Ohioans. Ohio's Medicaid long-term care costs are already ballooning before the huge baby boom generation begins utilizing services. An insurance company could help administer it, but it should always be controlled by the state. If the state were to aggressively market its own product, people would listen and probably buy it in larger numbers than they are buying from insurance companies today. (There is a lot of confusion surrounding the purchase, with many difficult comparisons across product, not to mention that products are quite costly.)

A significant Medicaid cost burden would be reduced if more Ohioans obtained long-term care insurance. The \$13 billion Medicaid program spends 75 percent of its dollars on institutionalized care, a good portion of which is nursing home care to other than poor families. Families performing good financial planning could avoid the state being the all too often payer once the estate assets are depleted. Educating middle class families about the purchase of long-term care insurance is essential, but we need to make sure that insurance is available, accessible and a good buy for the consumer.

Communication-

Why not have a state phone bank to communicate with Ohioans or to let them communicate ideas/complaints to the Governor about state government. People would think the government was listening, which is a big issue. The phone bank could be administered from a high unemployment area to foster better/faster communication for all types of constituent issues/problems, and for the quick promotion of new ideas.

Katherine Kuck shared with Bob Erickson (4.6.10)