

FISH Executive Overview

Fast Forward 4 Families

The biggest issues right now in our region have to do with housing and with our business environment. The recent economic downturn stifled construction in our region and brought with it the nation's highest mortgage foreclosure rates and unemployment. Now that the economy has improved, our recently unemployed, who are just happy to have a job, are underemployed... accepting the "low hanging fruit" of minimum wage jobs. In addition, the demand for housing is high, and supply is low... driving up rental rates by 50-80%. Ironically, our business environment is booming, but they can't find locals with the right skills, and employees recruited from outside the region, can't find housing. As a result, multiple local organizations have become motivated to implement a fix to these problems.

Envision single parents who are working one or two low-paying jobs to pay for daycare and some of their family's essentials barely keeping their heads above water. Think about the impact, if we could provide for several of those families at a time... allowing the parent to attend college with no upfront cost, earning a certificate in Medical or Information Technology; Construction or Manufacturing Management... with employers willing to hire them at \$18-24/hr. Once employed they would gradually pay back 60% of their "interest free" education costs and do volunteer work to "pay forward" the remaining 40%. A local foundation has agreed to fund the initial cost of the education, so many students will only need to volunteer to mentor future students. Since existing non-profits will be doing the "leg-work", there will be no additional "process costs" making the program self-funding (just redirected workloads). We will be helping our clients move from "**menial jobs to meaningful careers**".

Next fall, our consortium is planning to roll out a pilot program called "**Fast Forward 4 Families**" to shift these families from menial jobs to meaningful careers... with an eventual roll-out to all Nevada Counties. Our partners include Western Nevada College (WNC) providing the "formal education," the CIRCLES program developing the team skills/people skills/relationship skills and FISH/ Carson's Health and Human Services/Nevada Rural Housing providing the stability of housing, food, on-the-job training, and other support as needed. We are working with other organizations to provide interviewing and other job skills. In addition, we are partnering with the Northern Nevada Development Authority (NNDA), who will function as the liaison with our regional employers. The state of Nevada has asked that we share what we learn so the program can be rolled out to other Nevada counties.

This time, FISH is looking at private funding to purchase a property close to our main FISH campus and to build a "dormitory" for families while they are in this "career" program. Every client would be able to live in these apartments as long as they follow their development plans. Once their development plan has been completed, they will transition to other housing. Family members who do not attend college will also take part in developmental training, so we can have a bigger impact on generational poverty. The estimated cost of the housing project is \$14 million and will include a shuttle service to transport students to WNC and back as needed.

Applicants would be assessed, and coached so they can find the best suited career path. Our "team" would provide multiple "touch points" to keep the students on track. Following their successful employment, graduates would help to recruit, market and refine our process to bring in the next wave of students.

Automation from self-driving taxis, delivery trucks, automated food service, and the high cost of secondary education will continue to haunt our low skill workforce. Our timely pilot program, and others like it, will use private/public collaboration to provide a nimble solution to our every changing employment and housing needs.