



Business Friendly Committee

A Business Case for AustinWorks

Purpose: To attract, develop and sustain a quality workforce with skills that align with current and future career opportunities in Austin and the surrounding area.

Executive Summary of Business Plan

Attracting and retaining key employees is critical to the long term success and growth of all business, and to our local economy. Competition for these employees is increasing, and is expected to further escalate as “baby boomers” are replaced in the workforce.

Several employers, particularly those seeking college-educated, professional staff, have repeatedly said that one of their greatest challenges is selling prospective employees on living in Austin. These challenges are often not related to the position or compensation offered, but instead to the career interests of the “trailing spouse” and other family members.

Vision 2020 is in direct response to this concern. The 10 project areas are intended to enhance quality of life, and make our community a more attractive place to live, work and play.

AustinWorks is a critical component of that effort, establishing a more comprehensive system to not only attract qualified employees, but also welcome and connect their family to the community. The Business Friendly Committee and the Chamber met with dozens of Austin employers to develop a plan to better promote and showcase our community to newcomers.

Modeled after a multi-faceted, highly successful, workforce initiative in Dubuque, IA, AustinWorks would have three main components:

1. Community Concierge. A clearinghouse of information and personalized services, designed to introduce and connect all family members to the community.
2. Enhanced Employment Opportunity systems, including a one-stop AustinWorks website.
3. Renewed Commitment to Students of all ages, seeking pathways to employment and career enhancement.

The first and most important step, HR managers have advised, is to establish Community Concierge services.

Community Concierge

A comprehensive and personalized newcomers program, designed to work with local businesses to help recruit, relocate and retain potential and existing employees.

1. **Personal, newcomer services**, individually shaped to fit the interests and needs of the family. Concierge will be supported in all activities by Chamber staff and volunteers.
 - **Tours of the community**, specifically designed to meet the interests of all family members. Preliminary discussion will identify points of interest.
 - **Fast Track** trailing spouse to employment, volunteer and entrepreneurial opportunities. Develop ongoing relationships with all major employers. Develop mutual assistance agreements with HR departments to “fast track” interviews for trailing spouse, regardless of current openings. Connect family to organizations, schools, churches, and other areas of interest. Promote trailing spouse to all employers.
 - **Newcomer’s Club**. Organize and coordinate groups with common interests.
 - **Awesome Austin**. Establish and coordinate periodic events for groups of newcomers, showcasing the community and connecting them to others.
 - **Housing**: Track and Maintain Rental Database. Update monthly and distribute to those interested in relocating to the area. Include realtor information and listings.
 - **Work with Volunteers** from existing organizations to coordinate activities for all newcomers. Establish own network of volunteers and advisors to support all services provided.
 - **Assist in development** of integrated, one-stop employment website.
 - **Develop ongoing relationships** with employers, particularly those who hire professional staff, and help maintain and update employment trends.

2. **Structure/Organization**. Program will be developed and implemented as a new service through the Austin Area Chamber of Commerce. Benefits of that association include:
 - Working knowledge of the community
 - Existing community receptionist materials, including community profile magazine “Someplace Special” and newcomer folder “Welcome to Austin”
 - Member-to-member connections and resources; 400 business members
 - Existing office space, technology and support staff
 - Grow Mower/Grow Minnesota, ongoing business retention program.
 - Leadership Austin, a community awareness and leadership training program

3. **Customer Base**. The focus of the service will be on assisting Austin area employers with the recruitment and retention of skilled, professional staff. Services are designed to introduce and connect the entire family to the community. We estimate the total pool of prospects at 200-300 families, annually.

Most prospects will come from large employers:

- 1) Hormel Foods Corporation – corporate offices, R&D, plant supervisors
- 2) Mayo Clinic Health System – Medical and Administrative staff
- 3) Austin Public Schools – teachers and administrators
- 4) Riverland Community College – Professors and Administrators
- 5) CliftonLarsonAllen – CPA’s
- 6) Media – Editors, Managers, Administrators
- 7) Quality Pork Processors – Managers, Supervisors
- 8) CRC – managers, supervisors
- 9) Hormel Institute – Scientists, key staff
- 10) Gerard School
- 11) St. Mark’s Lutheran Home
- 12) City of Austin
- 13) Mower County
- 14) IBI Data
- 15) Legal and accounting firms
- 16) Financial Institutions

4. How will this service be unique?

- The level of service will be professional, personal and comprehensive.
- Concierge will be a source of information and resources on an ongoing basis.
- Agreements will be reached and maintained with all participating employers, guaranteeing a personal interview for the trailing spouse.
- Newcomer Clubs and Awesome Austin introductory sessions will be professionally organized and coordinated.