



**Rural Communities Initiative  
Employer Engagement Work Plan**

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## **Rural Employer Engagement Workshop**

# Louisville, Kentucky



**January 28-29, 2010**

Sponsored by:  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Family Assistance



## Background

The 2008-2010 economic recession has had profound impacts throughout the nation, with Rural America being no exception. While high agricultural and commodity prices initially shielded rural states from the worst of the economic downturn, recently the rural economy has lost jobs at a faster rate than the rest of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The growing impact of the recession in rural areas is closely tied to the heavy reliance in these areas on factory, farming, and other low-skilled employment. Rural communities dependent on manufacturing have witnessed a five percent loss in employment as compared to a two percent loss in other parts of rural America. Looking at the nation as a whole, over the last year, a declining manufacturing industry has caused a loss of 3.4 percent of jobs in rural counties, while urban areas only lost 2.8 percent of their jobs.<sup>2</sup> With the pace of unemployment increasing rapidly in the manufacturing industry and among those with only a high school diploma, rural communities are especially vulnerable to job displacement and prolonged periods of difficult reemployment.



## The Rural Communities Initiative Employer Engagement Forum

Rural communities have specific challenges in responding to changing economic structures, forces, and challenges. The growing rates of displaced rural workers calls for increased efforts to engage employers in identifying the workforce skills they need and jointly developing employment and training opportunities. Partnering in the creation of employee readiness supports helps develop a diverse workforce that is more responsive to the changing needs of employers.

The Rural Employer Engagement Workshop features innovative practitioners and recognized academics in the fields of rural economic development, job creation, employer outreach, and other topics identified by the Rural Communities Initiative Technical Assistance (TA) sites as critical to serving rural TANF participants. This

<sup>1</sup> Economic Research Service. (September, 2009). *Rural America at a Glance 2009 Edition*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Information Bulletin No. 59. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB59/EIB59.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Drabenstott, M., Moore, S. (2009). *Rural America in Deep Downturn*. Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for Regional Competitiveness.



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specialized event will provide TA sites with a hands-on, interactive opportunity to work with expert faculty to learn more about job development and partnering with employers, introduce new and effective models and tools, and facilitate the sharing of information between Technical Assistance sites. Attendees will be provided with tools, potential promising practice models, and guidance on establishing partnerships with employers as a way to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other low-income individuals.

Strategic partnerships with employers are necessary for rural communities to grow and thrive in times of economic change. During the Rural Employer Engagement Workshop, rural teams will have the opportunity to hear from experts and stakeholders, as well as peers as they develop new approaches for creating the kinds of jobs, education, and training that lead to long-term self-sufficiency.

**Content Faculty Introductions**

During the opening session you will hear from Federal, State, and Regional representatives from various agencies and programs assisting low-income populations. You will also hear from a set of national technical assistance specialists and job development experts who have years of experience working with rural communities and low-income populations. Below, you can take notes of any important items you hear and frame any follow-up questions you wish to ask.

| <b>Content Faculty Member</b>                                    | <b>Key Points</b> | <b>Follow-Up Questions</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Tori Conley &amp; Judy Moon, Arbor Education and Training</i> |                   |                            |
| <i>Ray Fleming Dinneen, CLIMB Wyoming</i>                        |                   |                            |
| <i>Linda Johnson, Georgia GoodWorks!</i>                         |                   |                            |



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| Content Faculty Member | Key Points | Follow-Up Questions |
|------------------------|------------|---------------------|
|                        |            |                     |

| Content Faculty Member   | Key Points | Follow-Up Questions |
|--|------------|---------------------|
| <i>Shauna King-Simms, Kentucky Community and Technical College System</i>      |            |                     |
| <i>Jan McKeel &amp; Donna Luna, South Central Tennessee Workforce Alliance</i> |            |                     |
| <i>Paul Moe, Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Program</i>                      |            |                     |
| <i>Jackie Savage, Connect Inc.</i>   |            |                     |
| <i>Ben Seigel, SeedCo</i>  |            |                     |
| <i>Dona Swenson, New Mexico TeamWorks</i>                                      |            |                     |
| <i>Melissa Young, National Transitional Jobs</i>                               |            |                     |



|                |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|
| <i>Network</i> |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|

### **Sharing the Impact Session**

Job development and employer engagement strategies in rural communities vary differently from efforts in urban areas. For each rural area, experiences will differ according to the local resources, industries, opportunities for collaboration, and other strengths that are inherent to their community.

#### **Objective**

This session will allow each of the six rural sites to provide a brief overview of the employer engagement successes/challenges in their area and to outline the achievements they would like to make during this Workshop. This session will draw on information provided in each site’s Economic Roundtable Profile and pre-work conducted prior to the Roundtable (separate document) regarding employment challenges, local industries, as well as current and potential employers. While listening to the overviews, think about the conversations you would like to have with the other participating Rural sites. Is there a connection between your goals and experiences and those of your peers? Have they framed their intended achievements in a way that might strengthen your approach? In what ways can your expertise in employer engagement benefit the achievement of their goals?

#### **Participating Sites**

- **Arkansas**, agency information
- **Florida**, agency information
- **Pennsylvania**, agency information
- **South Carolina**, agency information
- **Texas**, agency information
- **West Virginia**, agency information



Follow-up Questions and other Points to Ponder:

| Rural Communities     | Key Points | Follow-Up Questions |
|-----------------------|------------|---------------------|
| <i>Arkansas</i>       |            |                     |
| <i>Florida</i>        |            |                     |
| <i>Pennsylvania</i>   |            |                     |
| <i>South Carolina</i> |            |                     |
| <i>Texas</i>          |            |                     |
| <i>West Virginia</i>  |            |                     |



| Rural Communities Initiative Site | Key Points | Follow-Up Questions |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---------------------|
|                                   |            |                     |

### The Louisville Story

Creating an effective public-private partnership in a rural community is no easy task. Developing strategies for retaining employees, mutually identifying effective training programs, and addressing concerns with hiring an individual on TANF are only some of the challenges that must be addressed before achieving a successful collaboration. Examples of strong partnerships show us how these barriers can be overcome and the positive results business and communities have achieved.

#### Objective

This session will highlight the relationship between the City of Louisville and UPS as an example of an accomplished partnership.

#### Speakers

- Jerry Abramson, Mayor of Louisville
- Kelli Stamper, Workforce Planning Manager, UPS
- George Poling, Executive Director, Metropolitan College

Follow-up Questions and other Points to Ponder:

| Speaker   | Key Points | Follow-up Questions |
|---|------------|---------------------|
| <i>Jerry Abramson, Mayor of Louisville</i>            |            |                     |
| <i>Kelli Stamper, Workforce Planning Manager, UPS</i> |            |                     |



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|---|--|--|
|   |  |  |
| George Poling, Executive Director, Metropolitan College |  |  |

**Faculty Scheduling Session**

Each Team will complete an Employer Engagement Workshop Team schedule and faculty scheduling request by 1:00 PM on Thursday, January 28, 2010. Each Team should allot some time to address each of the four elements but may choose to spend additional time on topics they believe to be a priority. Each Team may also sequence their work in any order that meets their needs.

A portion of the final Team Work Session time should be used to prepare the Team presentation of priorities and action steps. Teams will make the requests for specific faculty experts based on overviews for each faculty expert/promising program included in the Workshop binder

| Team Work Session       | Employer Engagement Element | Faculty Request        |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Thursday<br>1:30 – 3:00 |                             | 1.<br><br>2.<br><br>3. |
| Thursday<br>3:15 – 4:15 |                             | 1.                     |





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|-------------------------|--|--|
|                         |  | 2.   |
| Friday<br>10:15 – 11:45 |  | 1.<br><br>2.<br><br>3.                             |
| Friday<br>12:00 – 1:45  |  | 1.<br><br>2.<br><br><b>3. Prepare Presentation</b> |

**Employer Engagement Team Work Session 1:  
Thursday, January 28, 1:30 – 3:00 PM**

Team Work Sessions will give Rural sites the chance to have intensive facilitated discussions on a variety of subjects related to employer engagement.

Teams will have dedicated space for each Team Work Session.

*Element One:* Taking the First Steps: Engaging Employers through Outreach Strategies and Tax Credits

*Element Two:* Building Employment Opportunities: Maximizing the Effectiveness of Subsidized Employment and Transitional Jobs Programs

*Element Three:* Keeping the Momentum and Developing Continued Success: Strategies for Effective Job Placement and Retention

*Element Four:* Partnership Building and Leveraging Resources: How to Utilize Workforce Intermediaries

***Selected Topic:***

***Selected Content Speakers:***



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**Objective**

Leaders in the field, with identified promising practices, will serve as faculty experts and contribute to the topical discussion and development of reasonable local actions steps. These faculty experts will be available based on the schedule each Team develops and on-call as much as possible.

Throughout the Team Work Sessions, Rural sites will also complete concise action plans that summarize the key points and questions that emerged from their discussions and capture how sites will use this information to develop concrete actions locally. Team Work Sessions will conclude with a brief report-out and presentation from all rural sites on the key ideas and strategies they identified during the session. Using the “points to ponder” section you can jot down notes and information that you gain from your conversations with content faculty.

**Points to Ponder:**

**Promising Strategies Discussed:**

**Additional Resources to Pursue:**

**Further Questions to Explore:**



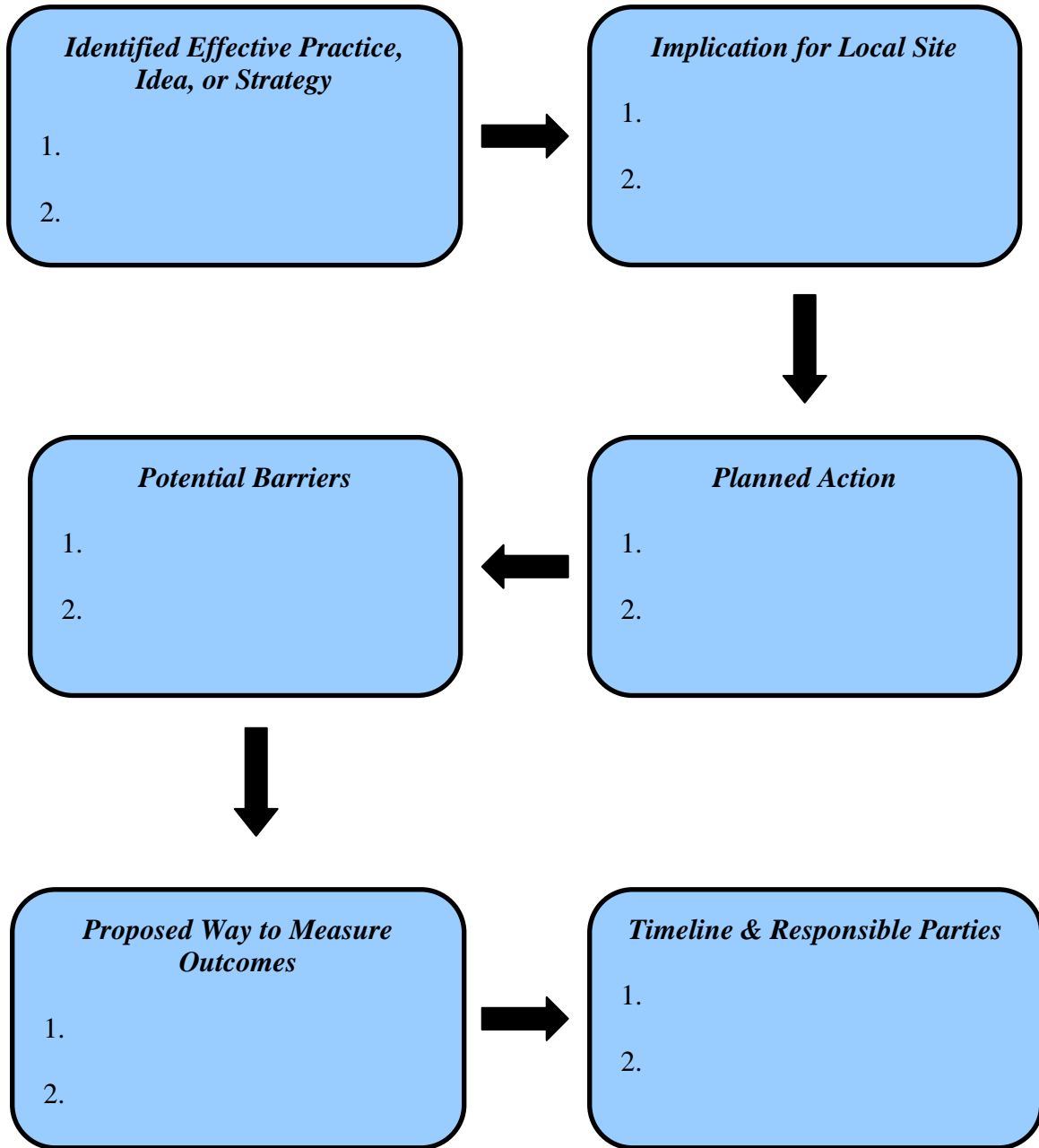
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**Work Session One - Mini Action Plan**



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Employer Engagement Team Work Session 2:  
Thursday, January 28, 3:15 – 4:15 PM



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**Points to Ponder:**

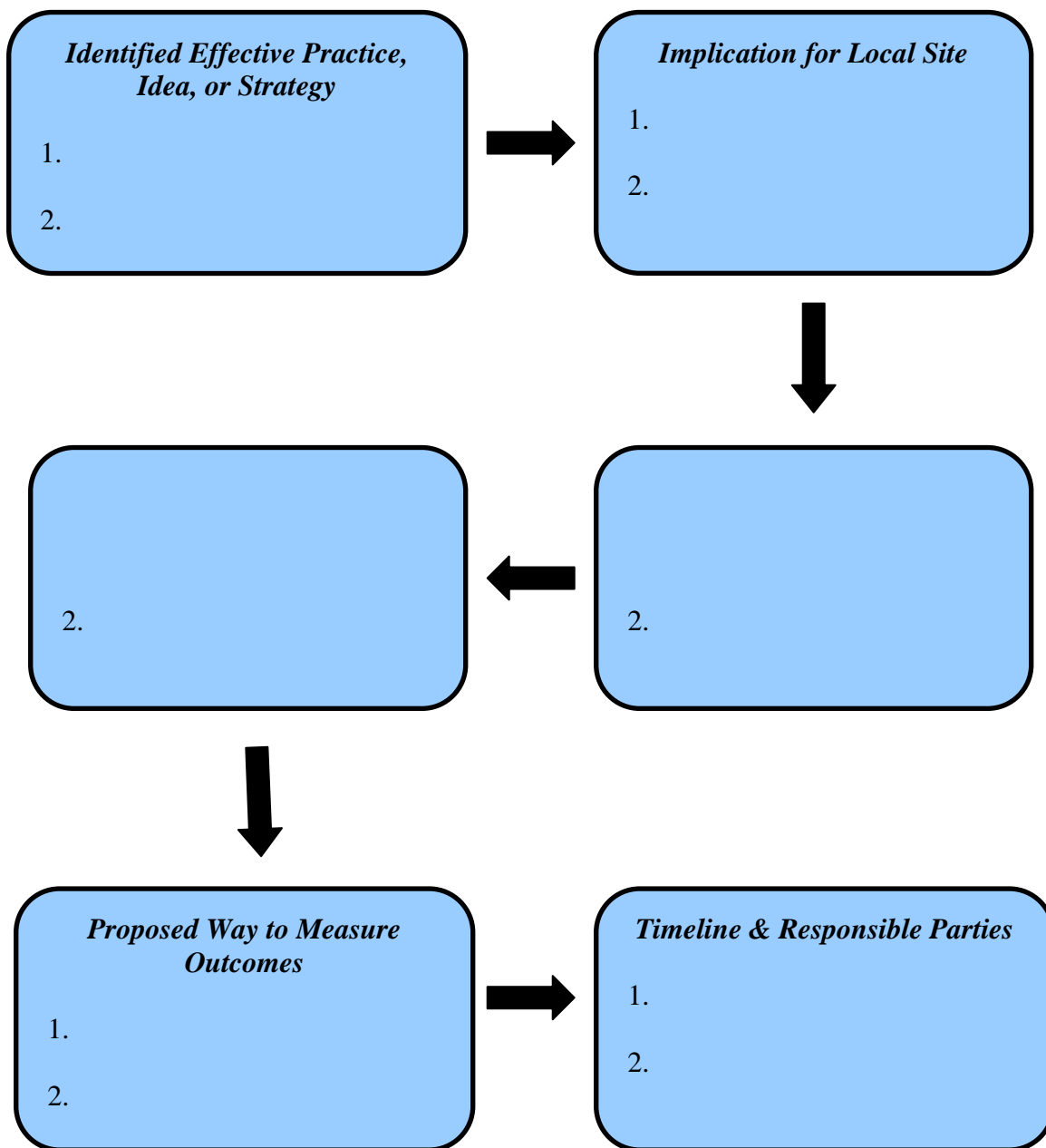
**Promising Strategies Discussed:**



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**Work Session Two - Mini Action Plan**





### **Report Out Awards and Review UPS Tour Logistics**

During this session, each team will take 2-3 minutes to present their “best idea for action at home so far”. Following the presentations, each participant will vote for the idea they feel is most likely to make a difference, though they cannot vote for their own idea. The two teams receiving the most votes receive prizes.

Use the following template to prepare your brief presentation:

*What is the idea?*

*How does this idea connect to your original intended achievements?*

*What makes this your best idea?*





**Friday, January 29, 10:15 – 11:45 AM**

Team Work Sessions will give Rural sites the chance to have intensive facilitated discussions on a variety of subjects related to employer engagement.

Teams will have dedicated space for each Team Work Session.

*Element One:* Taking the First Steps: Engaging Employers through Outreach Strategies and Tax Credits

*Element Two:* Building Employment Opportunities: Maximizing the Effectiveness of Subsidized Employment and Transitional Jobs Programs

*Element Three:* Keeping the Momentum and Developing Continued Success: Strategies for Effective Job Placement and Retention

*Element Four:* Partnership Building and Leveraging Resources: How to Utilize Workforce Intermediaries

*Selected Topic:*

*Selected Content Speakers:*

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**Points to Ponder:**



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**Promising Strategies Discussed:**

Empty blue box for notes on promising strategies discussed.

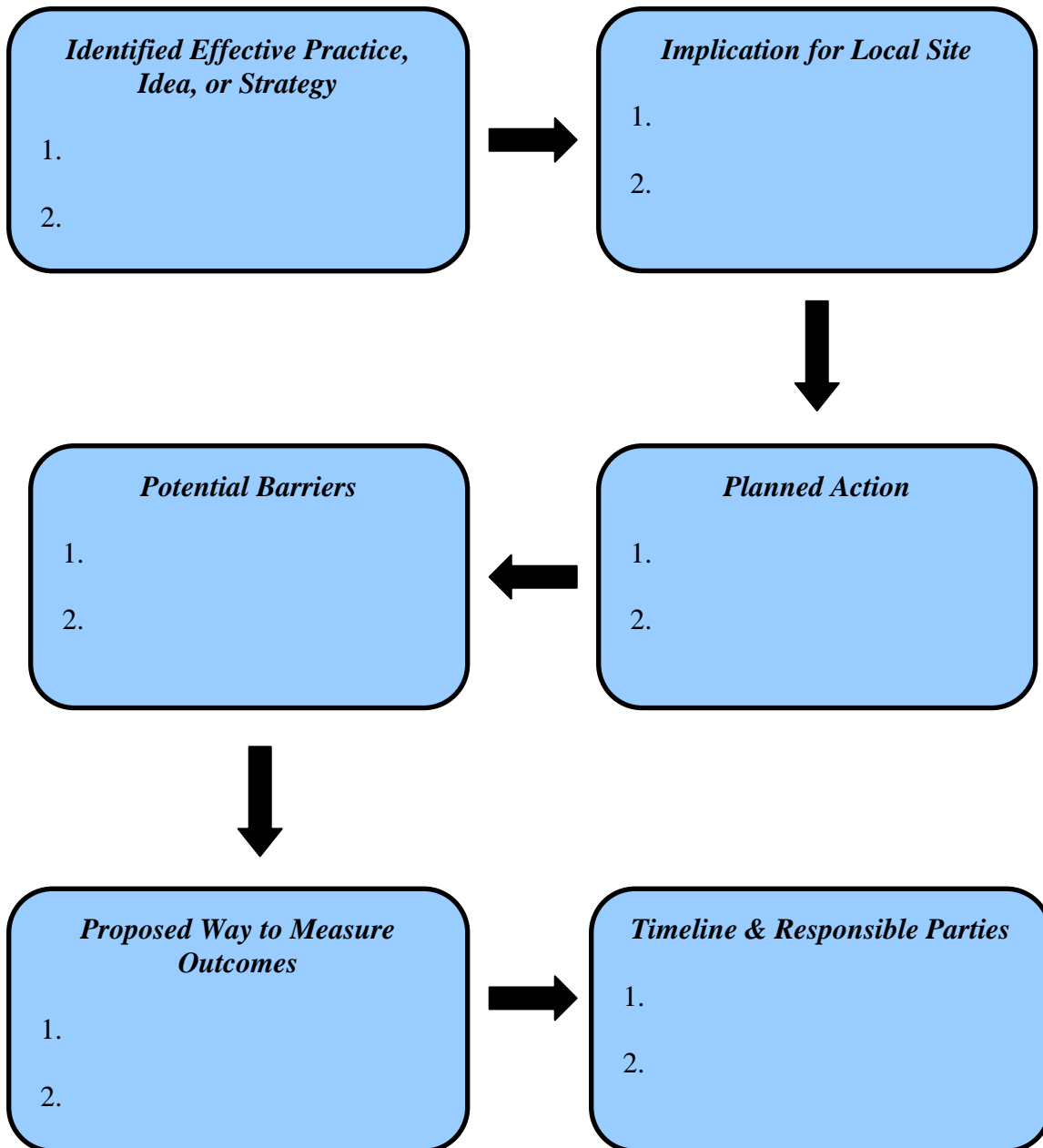
**Additional Resources to Pursue:**

Empty blue box for notes on additional resources to pursue.

**Further Questions to Explore:**

Empty blue box for notes on further questions to explore.

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**Employer Engagement Work Session Four:**



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**Friday, January 29, Noon – 1:45 PM**

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*Element Two:* Building Employment Opportunities: Maximizing the Effectiveness of Subsidized Employment and Transitional Jobs Programs

*Element Three:* Keeping the Momentum and Developing Continued Success: Strategies for Effective Job Placement and Retention

*Element Four:* Partnership Building and Leveraging Resources: How to Utilize Workforce Intermediaries

*Selected Topic:*

*Selected Content Speakers:*

**Objective**

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**Points to Ponder:**



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**Promising Strategies Discussed:**

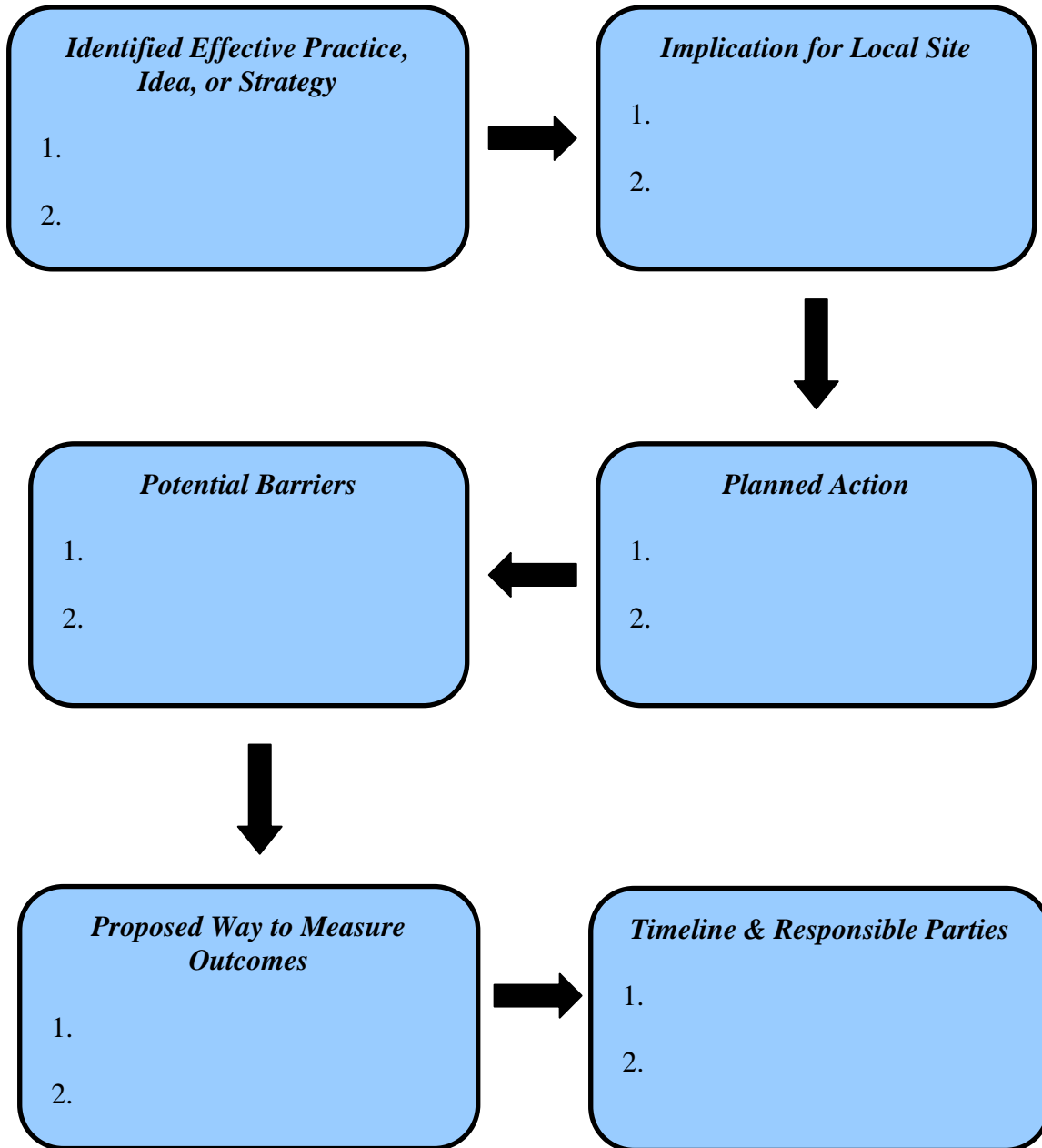
Empty blue box for notes on promising strategies discussed.

**Additional Resources to Pursue:**

Empty blue box for notes on additional resources to pursue.

**Further Questions to Explore:**

Empty blue box for notes on further questions to explore.





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Each Team will give a 5-6 minute report using a Powerpoint template designed for this session. The template will help sites integrate their work on the four elements of employer engagement highlighted during this Workshop. It will also guide each Team in prioritizing action steps that are likely to accomplish the statements of intended achievements of progress they developed on Thursday morning.

Two panels will rate the presentations and give feedback. One panel will consist of three faculty experts. The other will have three participant volunteers.

Please use the following template to prepare your presentation:

*What were your original intended achievements? If they have changed over the last two days, how so?*

*Based on your four mini action plans, what steps do you envision taking over the next six months?*

*What are the two main barriers to accomplishing these goals and how do you plan on overcoming them?*

*What impact/outcomes do you hope to accomplish?*

*How will you measure this impact?*



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The Rural Communities Initiative is coordinated by:



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