Barriers to Recruitment and Rentention of Entry-level Employees

Perceptions From Employers in Suburban Ramsey County

Introduction

Due to the lack of affordable housing in the suburban area, low-income individuals in Ramsey County primarily reside in the urban neighborhoods; these individuals may not access entry-level jobs in the suburbs since they do not own cars, and there is not a reliable transit service between the two locations (Fan, Guthrie, and Das, 2016).

Actions have been taken by Ramsey County to tackle the spatial and skills mismatch. RCWFS has helped to mitigate skills mismatch and build up connections between employers and workers by providing training opportunities and personalized assistance to job seekers. The Metro Gold Line and the Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which are currently in development, are expected to alleviate the spatial mismatch by improving the accessibility of suburban areas. Still, RCWFS are looking for more options to overcome the employment barriers in collaboration with local employers (Figure 1).

Research Questions

What circumstances do employers in suburban Ramsey County perceive to be contributing to the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining entry-level employees in their organizations? In what ways might spatial and skills mismatch play their roles, and in what ways are they interested in working with Ramse County to mitigate those circumstances?

Sampling Strategy

The initial purposeful sampling strategy was rather straightforward and inclusion criteria was limited to staff contacts at businesses who directly partner with RCWFS. This group of organizations did not produce a large enough sample for the team to move forward with the study. As a result, the research team created a purposeful sampling strategy to increase the size of the sample. The inclusion for this second round were: 1) The business or organization must have at least one location in Ramsey County, 2) the participant must have knowledge of the hiring process for entry-level employees, 3) the organization has concerns with recruitment and maintenance of entry-level employees. This second round of sampling was designed also to prioritize organizations in two different industries: home health care and manufacturing. Based on the conceptual framework, researchers believed that certain features of these industries would provide the ability to make useful comparisons.

Major Research Findings

1. Public Transportation is unreliable for entry-level employees in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors because of their nonstandard work schedules.

2. A large proportion of the applicants for entry-level jobs are less educated immigrants, who do not always have access to language and job training programs. There were always people looking for jobs, but most of them are not qualified for the posted positions.

3. Half of the employers we interviewed did not anticipate that the Rush Line and Gold Line would really help with hiring because most of their employees did not live where the routes would go.
WFS programs barely result in direct hires that can help with their entry-level labor shortage.

4. It would be beneficial for local employers if the county allocates more money to job training.

5. Employers from the healthcare sector applaud the idea of providing temporary subsidies for ride-sharing, including carpooling services provided by Uber and Lyft.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

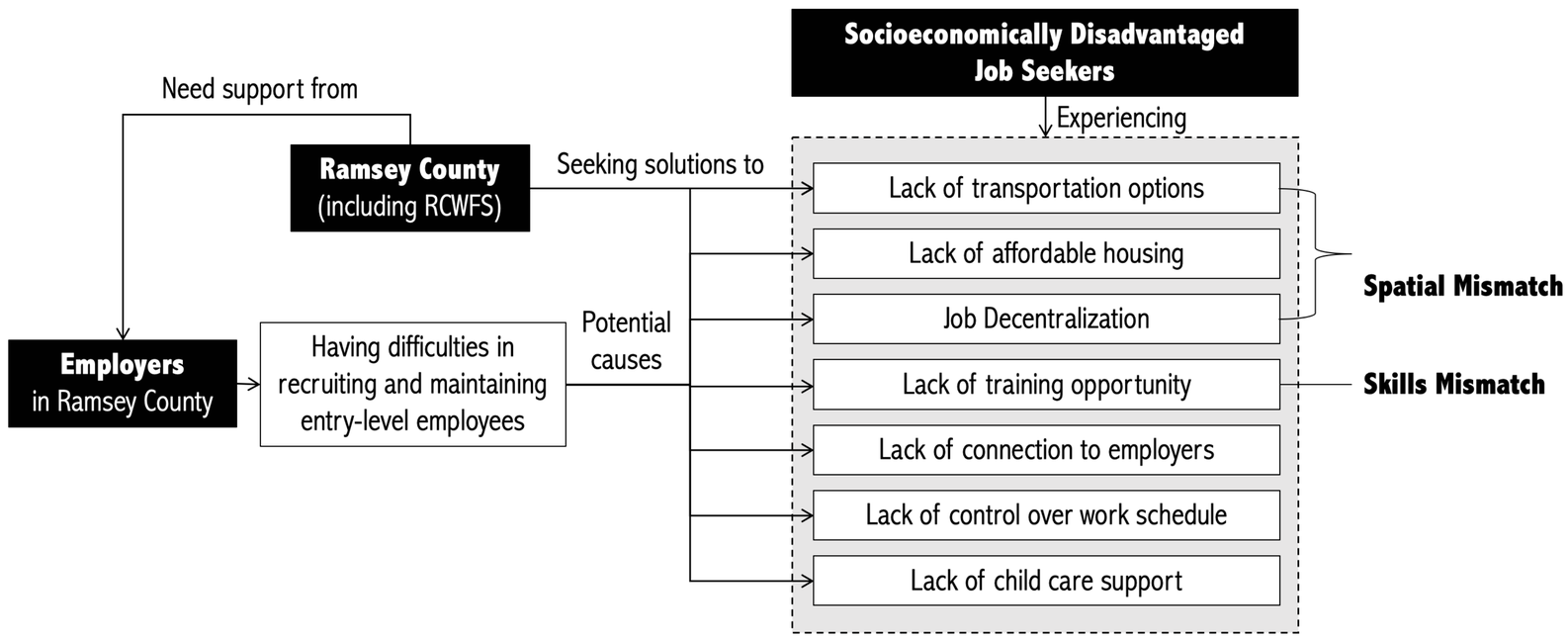
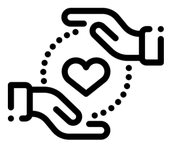


Table 1. About the Organizations

#	Sector	Current Number of Entry-level Employees	Number of Entry-level Employees looking to hire	Hourly Wage ($)	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Perception of Public Transportation	Previous Experience with WFS	Perception of WFS	Schedule
1	Manufacturing	20	4	13.5	N/A	N/A	It helps	Yes	It wasn't a good fit	A switch schedule. Three 12-hr shifts a week, Mon to Wed and Thu to Sat. Every 13 weeks employees swap Mon-Wed and Thu-Sat. Employees are sometimes required to work overtime on short notice in order to meet deadlines.
2	Health Care	42	Depends on the number of clients	15	92%~95% are women	Many immigrants (Somali)	Not reliable	N/A	It is not doing enough	A set schedule. Caregivers typically go to 2 homes a day. A newly recruited caregiver will be put into different scenarios to ensure the best fit.
3	Manufacturing	50	5 per week	14~18	Predominantly women	N/A	Neutral	Yes	It doesn't go much further than information sharing	A set schedule. Morning shifts begin in rotation at 6:30 am, 7 am or 7:30 am and end at 3:00, 3:30, 4:00 (depending on the position of the employee).
4	Manufacturing	20	2~4	15	10%	Many immigrants (Asian & Black)	Neutral	Yes	It helps, but none have resulted in job placements	A tight schedule. Shifts for entry-level jobs are 05:00 - 13:30 and 20:00 - 05:30. Sometimes has mandatory overtime requests.
5	Accommodation and Food Services	4	Depends on the customer flow	12	N/A	N/A	Not reliable	No	Not sure about whether they could help	A set schedule. If they have a plan to change the schedule, they give their employees notice three to four weeks in advance.
6	Health Care	760	65	11~13	70% are women	Many immigrants	Neutral	No	N/A	A set schedule, but things come up and it is common to pick-up or trade shifts.
7	Health Care	400	30~40 interviews per week	12	75% are women	Many people of color	It won't help	Yes	It has been hit or miss	A set schedule. Scheduling is included in the initial stages to ensure fit. They do offer overtime, but it is voluntary.
8	Health Care	97~121	20	14.7	85% are women	N/A	It won't help	Yes	It didn't really lead to anything	A set schedule.

Manufacturing



Healthcare

Food Service

Car Ownership Matters More than Public Transportation

Tight work schedules, evening or overnight shifts, and mandatory overtime requests make the public transportation irrelevant to most of the entry-level workers (Table 1). There were a few entry-level employees who commute by public transportation in every organization we interviewed, but in general, it was not an option for the majority. Most of these organizations are not directly on the bus/metro stop, and it is the same for their employees' homes. Oftentimes, the employees have to walk to the bus/metro stop if there are no other connecting options. Consistent with our literature review, people are much less likely to use public transportation when the physical distances between stations and trip origins/destinations are greater than what people are typically willing to walk, especially in extreme weather conditions. This is consistent with the answers we got from interviewee #2 and #3. Instead of getting off at a bus/metro station that is more than 15 minutes walk from their workplace, what the entry-level employees need are "buses to pick them up at their front door, and drop them off at [the client]'s door".

The Organization Lacks Relative Competency in Terms of Wage and Commute Time

The lack of relative competency in terms of pay, benefit packages, and commute time is one of the barriers that were frequently brought up by our interviewees. This barrier is most evident in the healthcare sector. Job seekers always prefer higher paying jobs keeping other factors constant.

Resilient Communities Project

University of Minnesota

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