



SHARED VALUE



COMMUNITY CASE STUDY: Spartanburg Academic Movement

Organization Overview

Focus Area: Education

Headquarters: Spartanburg, South Carolina

Annual Budget: \$300,000

Background

In 2008, only 19.2% of Spartanburg adults 25 years of age and older held Bachelor's degrees compared with a 27% national average. Spartanburg Academic Movement (SAM) was started to shift educational indicators, recognizing that educational achievement is inextricably linked to economic development and health status.

Goals

SAM aims to foster a countywide culture that values and measurably improves educational achievement and to support a robust local economy via collective impact. SAM's effort rests on four principles: shared community vision, evidence-based decision making, collaborative action, and investment and sustainability.

Engaging Stakeholders for Collective Impact

SAM's Collaborative Action Networks (CANs), composed of education practitioners and nonprofits, make measurable improvements in countywide educational outcomes. SAM has also partnered with Spartanburg's Way to Wellville and the Mary Black Foundation to focus on health and well-being. In identifying opportunities to increase health and well-being in Spartanburg, Spartanburg's Way to Wellville and SAM share a common outcome of success in kindergarten.

Shared Value via Collective Impact

SAM engaged BMW to support the CANs' work, because BMW's largest global manufacturing plant is located in Spartanburg. The business offers CANs Lean Six-Sigma¹ continuous-improvement training to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the collective impact effort. As BMW supports CANs, they can work toward their goals of improving educational outcomes in Spartanburg using Six Sigma five-step problem-solving methodology. Increasing educational attainment leads to a more skilled workforce pipeline, higher median earnings and lower rates of unemployment. For example, in 2013, of Spartanburg's unemployed residents, 14.2% had less than a high school diploma compared with 3.2% with Bachelor's degrees. Likewise, median earnings of residents with Bachelor's degrees were nearly 64% higher than those of residents with less than a high school diploma.

Evaluation Framework

Focusing on community-level factors that drive academic outcomes, not just school environments, reflects SAM's approach to systemic change. SAM established six core indicators corresponding with each critical learning stage from cradle to career, and uses county-wide data from school districts and public sources to measure performance.

- **Short Term:** As the CANs work through the Six Sigma process, key contributing factors, or drivers of outcomes at each learning stage such as health, can become the focus of collective action. Each CAN uses the Six Sigma problem solving process to identify opportunities to improve outcomes directly.
- **Long term:** SAM monitors local data on Bachelor degree attainment to measure progress towards its overarching goal of having 40% Bachelor degree attainment by the year 2030.

¹ *Definition:* Lean Six Sigma is a methodology that relies on a collaborative team effort to improve performance by systematically removing waste, combining lean manufacturing/lean enterprise and Six Sigma to eliminate the eight kinds of waste: defects, overproduction, waiting, non-utilized talent, transportation, inventory, motion, extra-processing. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean_Six_Sigma

Looking to the Future: Impact in Development

SAM's long-term collective impact effort is well positioned to benefit the community through increased educational attainment and economic development. SAM's efforts benefit business through the creation of a qualified workforce pipeline. Communities with healthy and productive workforces can help local businesses maintain a competitive advantage, generating more value than their competitors, and comparative advantage, in which economic value is generated with lower costs. Entrepreneurship, technological advancement and overall economic development thrive in educated and healthy communities.

This case study was adopted from a semi-structured qualitative interview and publicly available information. To learn more about the link between workforce and community health and the strategies businesses are implementing to invest in community health, read the Vitality Institute's report "Beyond the Four Walls: Why Community is Critical to Workforce Health."

To access the report and additional case studies, visit www.thevitalityinstitute.org/communityhealth or look us up on social media @VitalityInst #Beyond4Walls.