

ViewPoint: Taking steps to address Boston's opportunity gap

Boston is booming, but the region's soaring economy is leaving too many people behind. While we have some of the most exciting economic innovation and robust job growth in the nation, unemployment in some neighborhoods is stuck in the double digits, and tens of thousands lack the skills to access good jobs. Boston's level of inequality is the third-highest of any city in America.

The need is growing: Consider that 70 percent of all jobs will require post-secondary education by 2020, and yet just one in three adults in greater Boston has a high school education or less. A recent survey by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education found that two-thirds of business leaders have difficulty finding employees with the right skills. Boston's residents and businesses face a growing opportunity gap.

JVS has joined with the commonwealth of Massachusetts, the city of Boston and area employers such as Partners HealthCare, [Legal Sea Foods](#), and CVS to create a new Center for Economic Opportunity in the heart of the city's innovation economy. The center is a bridge between the high-skills innovation economy and its quality jobs, and the thousands of residents who seek those jobs, but lack the education and skills to secure them. It includes a welcome center, where all clients can learn about comprehensive training, employment and economic opportunity services.

The Center For Economic opportunity reflects an innovative partnership between business, nonprofits, and philanthropy to provide a continuum of education, training and career ladders that allow workers to engage in life-long learning and attain good jobs that can support their families.

Classes and coaching to help employees increase their skills and move up career ladders are held on-site at Mass General Hospital, Brigham & Women's Hospital, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, [North Shore Medical Center](#), and at a JVS training facility in the Longwood Medical Area, known as the Healthcare Training Institute. These classes, delivered on-site by JVS instructors, have helped thousands of health care workers improve their English language skills, learn computer skills, prepare for college, improve their management skills, and improve health care delivery. This model has been expanded into the hospitality and biomanufacturing sectors as well. The new center will enable JVS and its partners to serve an additional 5,000 people a year, for a total of 25,000 people a year.

Boston's impressive growth is fueled by a deep culture of innovation. Applying our culture of innovation to open up access to good jobs and economic opportunity will go a long way to addressing our opportunity gap.

Jerry Rubin is president and CEO of Jewish Vocational Service in Boston.