

# Roxbury's new job-hunting website

Project seeks to boost hiring local

**Jule Pattison-Gordon** | 12/29/2015, 10:21 a.m.

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A tech startup and economic development nonprofit have joined forces to connect Roxbury workers with Roxbury jobs.

Jobcase and Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative announced last week that they are partnering to bring the former's career-focused social media platform to a community level. The product: a Roxbury-specific section of the site where neighborhood jobseekers can create profiles that highlight their skills and local employers can post jobs and search for hires. Another feature: Jobcase sends alerts to users about job openings and to employers about potential good matches.

While users can make similar posts and searches on the site in general, the new neighborhood portal gathers local activity onto one webpage and encourages residents to have conversations on community discussion boards. The site is free to use for both employers and job-seekers.

## **Roxbury's unemployment**

The project particularly is suited to Roxbury, where unemployment levels are high and many who are employed commute outside the neighborhood for work.

At last count, unemployment in the neighborhood was 11.5 percent, nearly twice the national average. Jobcase both seeks to ease paths to employment and, through the profile approach, showcase skills that may not be apparent on a traditional resume, including periods of unemployment, said Fred Goff, CEO.

"We focus on the 70 percent of the country without traditional four-year college degrees, back-to-work moms [and] people with gaps in their resumes," he said.

## **Hire local**

Other benefits: local employer-employee matches keep money circulating in the community and reduce many people's lengthy commutes, Goff said.

Money spent in the black community does not tend to stay and circulate, according to a 2014 report by Jeffrey L. Boney, founder and CEO of the Texas Business Alliance. Many community activists have pointed to this as a major concern.

Additionally, nearly a fifth of workers in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan spend at least an hour commuting to jobs, twice the city average, according to The Boston Foundation's 2015 Indicators Report. Residents there also are disproportionately reliant on buses.

“It’s really difficult sometimes to get public transport to and from Roxbury, and commute is huge part of people’s lives,” Goff said.

### **Network reach**

The Dudley Street neighborhood corner of the site is scheduled for release in January. Currently, the main Jobcase site has more than 900 job listings in the area and approximately 5,000 Roxbury-area businesses listed, according to Christopher Scranton, director of corporate development for Jobcase. Nearly 12,000 residents already are signed up, giving a sense of the potential pull the community-specific page could have.

### **Path to partnerships**

The collaboration was sparked when DSNi reached out to Jobcase, Goff said. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative had been looking to create a local job board, and instead of building it from scratch, realized they could call upon what Jobcase had already created.

This is the second such partnership Jobcase has done, Goff said, the first being an app the company built in November for YouthHub to help young people find job opportunities.

Goff set high goals for the Dudley Street Jobcase portal: every neighborhood resident of working age would have a profile and all local employers would post job opportunities on the site.

“Success would be everyone in Roxbury puts their profiles there and that all employers in Roxbury should list jobs,” he said.