Since 2008, the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD) and the City of Dubuque have partnered to support Project HOPE. This initiative increases access to economic opportunity for all community members by supporting networks that drive systems change, expanding pathways to education and employment, and increasing access to financial institutions.

**WHY IT MATTERS**

From 2000 to 2015, the percentage of individuals living below the poverty level in Dubuque has increased from 9.5% to 16.2%. Research has shown that living in poverty can affect family stability, a child’s readiness for school and ability to learn, high school dropout rates, and physical health. All of these factors can affect someone’s ability to advance their economic future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals Below the Poverty Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Dubuque</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000: 9.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015: 16.2%</td>
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau
WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

Project HOPE was started in 2008 and since then, it has successfully built a network of partners addressing barriers to economic opportunity in Dubuque. Through the work of partners, successful initiatives have been launched that focus on high school dropout re-engagement, connecting individuals to job training and careers, and connecting families to financial services. Some key accomplishments include:

- Created a network map in 2015 highlighting over 750 relationships between more than 150 nonprofit and government agencies.
- As of 2016, Re-engage Dubuque has connected over 400 opportunity youth who did not complete high school to alternative education options and post-secondary education. 126 have received their high school diploma or HSED.
- As of 2016, Opportunity Dubuque, which is a training/employment partnership, has accepted 538 students, and 482 have graduated or are currently in training.
- Convened a Coaches’ Peer-Learning Network of professionals working with youth or young adults on education, career or self-sufficiency goals, creating a strong referral network and improving awareness of community resources.
- Conducted Needs Assessments focused on mental health and child care services. The Assessments will serve as resources to help influence current and future programming in the community.
- Supported partners who implemented Take the Lead, a program creating a stepping stone into education and employment.

WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON

Project HOPE is participating in two learning cohorts in an effort to learn best-practices and strategies to implement within the Dubuque Community: the Family Economic Security (FES) Cohort, which focuses on community wealth building strategies and a family’s access to financial asset-building strategies; and the Financial Inclusion Systems and City Leadership (FISCL) Cohort, where Project HOPE is partnering with the City to assess the current financial system and how we can be more inclusive through providing access to banking and tools to help individuals and families grow their financial strength.

Project HOPE will continue to convene stakeholders for the Mental Health and Child Care Needs Assessment to facilitate conversations around how partners can take action on the recommendations.