BUILDING A LATTICE 
TO SUCCESS:
WORKFORCE INCLUSION & COMMUNITY 
CO-CREATION IN DUBUQUE, IOWA

Prepared for the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque 
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MIT Sloan School of Management

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You wouldn’t ask why the rose that grew from the concrete
Had damaged petals. On the contrary, we would all celebrate its
Tenacity. We would all love its will to reach the sun.

Well, we are the roses – this is the concrete –
and these are my damaged petals.

Don’t ask me why...ask me how.

Tupac Shakur
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Nancy Van Milligen, Peter Supple, Paul Duster, and the rest of the team at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque: thank you for introducing us to Dubuque, for welcoming us into your family, for all of the support, insight, and levity you provided throughout this project, and for your steadfast commitment to your community and to improving the lives of everyday Dubuquers. We cannot imagine a better host or client for this project, and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with you all.

To the community leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders we met during our time in Dubuque: thank you for generously sharing your time and your slice of Dubuque with us, for your candid insights into what is working and what could use some refining, and for your commitment to your community. We remain in awe of the collective energy and commitment to making Dubuque a stronger and more inclusive community. Dubuque is a special place, and we hope you never forget that.

To Sister Rita and the Sisters of the Presentation: thank you for taking us under your wing and providing us such an incredibly warm and welcoming home base during our stay in Dubuque.

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Finally, to our faculty advisor, Barbara Dyer, and the entire Bridging the American Divides teaching team: thank you for sharing your time, your insights, and your wealth of experience as we sank our teeth into both course topics and our projects, for creating a much needed space at MIT to engage what divides us but also what unites us, and for your belief that communities like Dubuque, Iowa might just have something to teach us about ourselves and our collective working future, if we would only stop long enough to listen.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past several months, the project team - comprised of graduate students studying management, city planning, and public policy - has had the privilege of partnering with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD) and a variety of its local partners on a workforce and community development project as part of a field lab course at the MIT Sloan School of Management called Bridging the American Divides: Work, Community, and Culture, colloquially known as “USA Lab.”

CFGD tasked the project team with examining, and researching potential strategies to help address, three interrelated challenges facing the Dubuque community:

1. First, with a tight labor market and unemployment below 2 percent, employers in Dubuque are struggling to find workers with the right skills and training to fill open positions;
2. Second, despite low unemployment, poverty rates in Dubuque have remained stubbornly high;
3. Third, the Greater Dubuque region’s strong economy has not benefited all residents, with the unemployment rate for people of color hovering around 15 percent.

While working to gain an in-depth understanding of these issues, and the community more broadly, we spent two weeks on-site in Dubuque. During our visit, we interviewed more than 20 stakeholders spanning the local workforce development and social services ecosystem, including government officials, non-profit and education leaders, top executives from the region’s largest employers and staffing agencies, as well as individuals seeking employment and/or otherwise engaged with these program and organizations. We also conducted independent research and data analysis on the region’s economy. Additionally, with the support of CFGD and local partners, we administered a survey among Dubuque job seekers, low-income residents, and those disconnected from the workforce to gain further insight into the most significant barriers to employment and opportunity.

Our findings are laid out in detail throughout this report, with an emphasis on painting a holistic picture of the Dubuque ecosystem as we encountered it. This includes an analysis of existing conditions and the region’s service coverage model, as well as a summary of recurring themes that emerged during the course of our research.

Key Findings

- The workforce development and social services ecosystem is incredibly robust, yet complex.

  We were amazed by the wide variety of programs available to help lift up those indeed. The extensive engagement and collaboration among Dubuque’s many non-profit organizations, local government agencies, and businesses is a testament to this community’s sense of togetherness in working to tackle big challenges. Despite an uncommon level of collaboration between local organizations, however, the system as a whole appears quite complex from a user perspective. With so many different touch points spanning various organizations, individuals may find it difficult to fully take advantage of all the services available to them.
• One critical ingredient to creating a more robust, diverse, and inclusive Dubuque workforce involves helping to lift up current residents living in poverty and facing significant barriers to employment.

Much of what we heard from employers and social service providers centered around the barriers facing many unemployed individuals and new entrants to the labor force, as well as the need to identify more comprehensive approaches to serving this population. From our interviews and observations, there appear to be opportunities to strengthen the workforce and social service coverage model for these individuals, with an emphasis soft skill development, transitional employment to build work experience, and post-hire retention support to achieve sustained self-sufficiency and upward mobility.

• Local community and business leaders are genuinely and deeply committed to improving diversity, equity, & inclusion for minority populations in Dubuque. However, there is an apparent disconnect between action and results.

Based on our understanding, it seems that this may be due to political barriers (i.e. insufficient public support), or perhaps a lack of mutual understanding regarding the specific steps that must be taken to achieve tangible, positive change. We were impressed by the Business Leader Equity Cohort and various community, civic, and business leaders coming to the table to foster a more equitable and inclusive community. The Cohort is positioned to provide needed leadership and a solid foundation for the broader community, and we are encouraged by the impact it could have in Dubuque moving forward.

• Building mutual trust among different communities will be key to bridging divides across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic lines.

We found agreement across stakeholders on two key factors required to build trust: relationships and outcomes. There are no silver bullets to this work, yet confronting unequal power dynamics, treating community members as authentic and indispensable partners, and keeping “nothing about us, without us” in mind will go a long way to fostering strong relationships and ensuring outcomes achieve their intended impacts. There are no “easy wins” or shortcuts to building trust; it is an iterative and long haul project that will either unlock success or ensure failure.

• This moment in time presents a unique opportunity to take collective action on all of these issues.

With unemployment so low, the business community is eager as ever to help equip individuals living in poverty with the skills and support to succeed professionally. With an increasingly diverse population and a new generation on the rise, both business and community leaders are doubling on their commitment to creating a more inclusive Dubuque. The time is now.
Based on the key findings, we then researched best practices and precedent models that have been successful in helping other communities and organizations overcome similar challenges. The examples we identified, while not intended to serve as explicit recommendations, highlight interesting insights and innovative ideas that community leaders might wish to consider in devising strategies to overcome the challenges discussed herein. These case studies fall into three categories:

**Workforce Development:** Innovative workforce development models designed to bring individuals living in poverty who face multiple barriers to employment into the workforce and onto a sustainable, rewarding career path. The programs highlighted incorporate some or all of the following key features that could help strengthen Dubuque’s workforce development and social service ecosystem:

- Comprehensive, centralized wraparound services;
- Intensive soft-skill training;
- Transitional employment, in some instances through social enterprises; and
- Post-placement job retention support

**Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:** Rigorous research studies and evidence examining common best practices for promoting diversity, equity, & inclusion within organizations, along with a case study highlighting an interesting program that provides resources and support to communities working on issues of immigrant inclusion. The research on diversity, equity, & inclusion within organizations, intended to help support the on-going efforts of CFGD’s Business Leader Equity Cohort, emphasizes the importance of establishing data-driven systems and processes to promote accountability and transparency with respect to diversity, equity, & inclusion goals.

**Community Engagement & Co-Creation:** Programs designed to advance equity through intensive community engagement and a co-creation approach to developing strategies to serve those communities. These examples might help inform efforts to build mutual trust and overcome racial and socioeconomic divides in Dubuque.

We believe the key for communities seeking to overcome challenges like these lies not in asking why a rose with damaged petals has risen from the concrete, but rather, how it has managed to do so in the face of such impossible odds. What foundations and unsung heroes helped enable that unlikely, yet – in the right circumstances – achievable, ascent up the “lattice of opportunity”? Based on our research, the CFGD and other community stakeholders are asking the right questions, with a focus on the “how” and “what,” when it comes to local workforce and diversity challenges. Moreover, these leaders are committed to identifying solutions that will help build this lattice of opportunity and provide a stronger foundation to help disadvantaged individuals and communities thrive.

Our findings and observations reflect a series of high-level questions: Rather than erecting a new building, should we instead focus on constructing the scaffolding? Rather than a flower garden, should we instead construct the lattice to enable new roses to rise up from the concrete? We hope that our work this semester might help shed light on some of these issues and provide useful examples to catalyze positive, productive, and meaningful change within the Dubuque community.
Over the course of the study, the problem statement evolved through a series of iterations and refinements based on conversations and analyses that both affirmed and confounded our understanding of the problem at hand. At the outset of the project, the project team and the Community Foundation staff collectively defined a broad, two-pronged challenge facing the Greater Dubuque community:

• How to attract, prepare, and retain talent to sufficiently support the growth and success of the local Dubuque economy
• How to build a career pipeline for low income residents and people of color in Dubuque currently left out of the region’s economic prosperity

Through additional research into the existing economic and social conditions and numerous interviews with the Community Foundation and other local stakeholders during a two-week site visit in Dubuque, however, a more complicated picture emerged. These conversations and background research revealed three interrelated challenges:

• First, with such a tight labor market, employers in Dubuque are struggling to find the skilled labor locally they need to fill open positions;
• Second, despite low unemployment, poverty rates in Dubuque have remained stubbornly high;
• Third, the benefits of this tight labor market are not shared equally within the region, with the unemployment rate for people of color hovering around 15 percent

Local stakeholders cited an array of factors contributing to these three trends: a soft skills gap, an unwelcoming environment for diverse job seekers in workplaces and the broader community, a lack of trust in local institutions and systems, and a slew of compounding barriers preventing job seekers from entering the labor force, low-wage employees from upskilling to better jobs, and people of color from feeling included and valued in Dubuque. The conversations with stakeholders across the workforce development and social services ecosystem in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors generated a refined set of three distinct yet connected problem statements:

• How to reduce barriers to employment opportunities for current job seekers to better integrate them into the local economy
• How to effectively upskill low-wage workers to put them on pathways to higher paying careers
• How to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for people of color within the Dubuque community and among its employers
Despite these sticky and stubborn workforce challenges, the Dubuque community seems to have the economic and political will to see meaningful change, given the active involvement and partnership between public, nonprofit, and private sector leaders. Moreover, these cross-sector partners view this moment as an inflection point in which the tight labor market presents a unique opportunity to tackle this challenge head on. Building upon the aforementioned evolutions of the problem statement, this project seeks to take advantage of this unique call to action to answer the following questions:

1. What is the coverage model of the existing ecosystem of service providers, and where are the gaps?

2. For each of these three problem statements, where can the coordinated efforts of the Community Foundation and its partners have the greatest impact?
PROJECT SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

This project includes four primary tasks: analysis of existing conditions, stakeholder interviews, comparative analysis of other communities and organizations working toward more inclusive and equitable workforce development and community engagement strategies, and identifying precedent models for the Community Foundation and its partners to consider.

Existing Conditions Analysis

The analysis of existing conditions provided the foundation for the problem definition and help refine the objectives and focus of the project. This portion of the scope included but was not limited to:

1. Demographic change in Dubuque and Dubuque County, including historic trends and future projections
   - Race and ethnicity
   - Income levels
   - Poverty rate
   - Age
   - Educational attainment

2. Economic analysis
   - Jobs, wage, and distribution
     - Job type, sectors, and distribution by demographic groups
     - Job quality and wages
     - Unemployment
   - Industry and sector analysis
     - Primary industries in Dubuque regional economy
     - Potential growth industries in the region
   - Anchor institutions and companies
     - Primary job providers in Dubuque
     - Organizations and companies functioning as community anchors

3. Dubuque’s existing service coverage model
   - Workforce development
   - Diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies
   - Community-based resources (e.g., churches, schools, etc.)
Stakeholder Interviews & Survey

Stakeholder interviews constituted a core component of the project team’s two-week site visit to Dubuque in March. The Community Foundation arranged over twenty conversations with local civic, business, and nonprofit leaders in the region to gain insight into their role in the regional economy and perspective on this vexing issue. The interviews served as a qualitative complement to the initial quantitative analysis, and these conversations affirmed and shed new light on the trends unearthed prior to our site visit.

The list of stakeholders interviewed includes:

- Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
  - Inclusive Dubuque
  - Local College Access Network (LCAN)
  - Project HOPE
- Greater Dubuque Development Corporation
  - Dubuque Works
  - Opportunity Dubuque
- City of Dubuque
  - Economic Development
  - Gaining Opportunities
  - Human Rights
- Dubuque Community School District
- Business Leader Equity Cohort and other business leaders
- Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)
- Fountain of Youth
- Multicultural Family Center
- United Way of Dubuque Area Tri States
- IowaWORKS
- Jackson County Economic Alliance
- East Central Intergovernmental Association
- Express Employment Services
- Opening Doors
- Loras College Intercultural Programs

The project team also developed a brief survey to assess the relative potency of various barriers to employment, the primary motivations of job seekers, and the demographic makeup of those seeking yet failing to find employment. We partnered with the Community Foundation to distribute these surveys at a number of sites across downtown and the Washington neighborhood, including Iowa Works, Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC), and Fountain of Youth over a three-week period in April 2019.

A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix.
Comparative Policy & Programming Analysis

Following the preliminary analysis of demographic and economic trends and the stakeholder interviews, the project team conducted a comparative analysis of other communities who have spearheaded efforts to address workforce inclusion and community dialogue to identify precedent models that may be appropriate in Greater Dubuque. This analysis included both race-based and race-neutral efforts led by community foundations or other organizations analogous to CFGD, as well as municipalities, community development corporations (CDCs), nonprofits, and private sector actors. In researching precedent models, the project team cast a wide-net of both more conventional policies and programs, such as targeted workforce training, marketing, and public-private partnerships, as well as more innovative and experimental approaches.

Identifying Precedent Models

The project culminated with the identification of suggested precedent models for workforce development, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and community engagement and co-creation for the Community Foundation to consider. Drawing from the preliminary quantitative analysis, stakeholder conversations, and comparative analysis, the project team highlighted examples of other communities and organizations seeking to address similar challenges that community and business leaders in Dubuque hope to solve.
Lower Outcomes at Multiple Stages

One of the starkest differences in outcomes across racial lines in Dubuque is homeownership. The homeownership rate for Dubuque’s white citizens in 2017 was 67 percent and has risen slightly from 2015 levels. Meanwhile, the homeownership rate for Dubuque’s black citizens is just 8 percent, down from roughly 10 percent in 2015.

Disparate outcomes arise at younger ages as well, particularly in comparative dropout rates. The overall dropout rate in grades 7 to 12 in the Dubuque Community School District is 2 percent. The dropout rate for white students is 1.5 percent. The dropout rate for students receiving free or reduced lunch benefits is 3.7 percent, while the rate for black students is 6.7 percent, indicating an effect above and beyond differences in household income levels.

Stark differences can also be found between the unemployment rates for Dubuque’s white and black residents. Despite a nearly identical labor participation rate (68.1 percent for black residents and 66.7 percent for white residents), the 2017 unemployment rate for black residents is 15.3% compared to 4.4% for white residents.

The project team heard about difficulties faced by black residents with accessing higher paying jobs in Dubuque, and analysis of data from Iowa Workforce Development bears out those claims. Analysis by the MIT team indicates that jobs with higher levels of black workers as a percentage of the total tend to have a lower median hourly wage.

The chart on the next page depicts part of this relationship. Each dot represents a type of occupation (e.g., “cashier” or “insurance sales agent”). Each dot is plotted on two dimensions: median hourly wage on the vertical X axis and % of positions filled by black residents on the Y axis. The jobs represented on this chart are the top 30 jobs in Dubuque as ranked by number of 2019 positions and represent 40 percent of the total positions in Dubuque.

The accompanying table provides a summary list of the top 10 occupation types, again ranked in descending order by number of 2019 positions.

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1. U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey
2. Iowa Department of Education
3. U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey
### Dubuque's Top Jobs - Median Hourly Wage by % Positions filled by Black Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Occupation Type</th>
<th>2019 Positions</th>
<th>Median Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Retail Salesperson</td>
<td>1,753</td>
<td>$12.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>$26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>$15.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Combined Food Preparation &amp; Serving Workers, Including Fast Food</td>
<td>1,511</td>
<td>$9.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Office Clerks, General</td>
<td>1,314</td>
<td>$13.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Heavy &amp; Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>1,252</td>
<td>$16.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Assemblers &amp; Fabricators</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td>$16.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Customer Service Representatives</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>$16.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>General &amp; Operations Managers</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>$41.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Janitors &amp; Cleaners, Except Maids &amp; Housekeeping Cleaners</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>$13.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employers Struggling to Fill Open Positions in a Tight Labor Market

As of March 2019, the unemployment rate in Dubuque was just 2.8 percent. Every employer with whom the MIT team spoke, ranging from John Deere to a local car repair shop, cited the lack of available talent as a key challenge in running their business. One hiring manager told the team, “If someone can fog a mirror, we’ll give them an interview.” Looking to the future, projections by the economic data provider Emsi indicate continued simultaneous growth in employment and decline in the working age population in Dubuque.

Employers, particularly those whose workers must have a certain level of education or advanced competency, are pursuing several avenues for developing “homegrown” talent within Dubuque. These efforts include:

- Partnering with schools, sometimes as early as middle school, to educate students about opportunities within their companies and the skills required to access those opportunities;
- Working with the city and the non-profit community to design transitional programs for those entering the workforce;
- Recruiting in primarily minority communities as a way to de facto expand the available labor market

Employers Struggling to Fill Open Positions in a Tight Labor Market

To learn more about those seeking employment within Dubuque, the project team designed a survey that was distributed at three providers of job support services: Fountain of Youth, IowaWORKS, and Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC). Twenty-three responses were recorded. The survey, which can be found in full in the appendix to this report, was designed to provide a fuller picture of the status and challenges of the “looking for better work” population (so named because not all respondents seeking work are unemployed). In addition to demographic data, the main survey questions centered about the types of barriers standing between respondents and employment opportunities.

Out of 11 possibilities, the top three barriers encountered by this sample of Dubuque job-seekers are:

- “The jobs I find don’t pay enough to cover my basic costs of living
- “Health issues may prevent me from being able to work certain jobs”
- “I can’t afford, or don’t know how to get, the training/education needed for the jobs that I want”

The average age of the respondents was 43 years old, and 70 percent live in either the 52001, 52002, or 52003 zip codes.
During our two-week site visit in Dubuque, the project team was introduced to a robust yet complex workforce and social service ecosystem. As outsiders, we often found ourselves struggling to wrap our heads around how we might navigate the various programs and services meant to serve under-resourced populations, let alone how the actual clients might piece together these loose threads. We were struck by how many potential touchpoints exist and how difficult it would be, particularly for a person or family living in poverty, to understand how to best interact with said ecosystem.

To distill the complex ecosystem of government agencies, nonprofits, social service providers, and tax and income rules in place, we have developed a series of three example coverage models to reflect the ways in which various members of the Dubuque community might navigate the social service and workforce development ecosystems.

These case studies include:

1. An unemployed job seeker with multiple barriers to employment
2. An asset-limited income-constrained employee (ALICE) seeking a better paying job
3. A person of color moving to Dubuque, looking for employment and community
In such a tight labor market, unemployed Dubuquers looking for work often face multiple barriers to employment, including health issues, income restrictions on benefits, housing insecurity, unreliable or unaffordable transportation and child care, criminal records, or substance abuse. There are a handful of citywide initiatives designed to help community members overcome these obstacles, such as the Gaining Opportunities Initiative and Project HOPE. These job seekers often do not qualify for programs like Dubuque Works or Opportunity Dubuque; instead, staffing companies like Express Employment and Sedona Staffing Services often offer channels into the workforce, as they are more inclined to assume risk employers are unwilling to take on. Fountain of Youth stands out as an organization charged changing mindsets and changing perceptions to help lift community members out of generational poverty.

Job seekers with multiple barriers to employment often require a wraparound approach to not only identify employment opportunities but to also address underlying challenges preventing economic security. Dubuque is home to a host of nonprofit service providers that address a number of these barriers through critical service provision, yet the referral system among service providers bifurcates employment and social services, rather than taking a holistic approach to pathways out of poverty.

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**Unemployed Job Seeker with Multiple Barriers to Employment**

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**Programs & Initiatives**

**Employment**

**Wraparound Services**

- **The City of Dubuque**
  - Masterpiece on the Mississippi
- **Express Employment Professionals**
- **Hillcrest Family Services**
- **Project HOPE**
- **Sedona Staffing Services**
  - CareerPros, LLC
- **The Salvation Army**
- **Pathway of Hope**
- **Fountain of Youth**

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Programs & Initiatives

**Hillcrest Family Services**
Hillcrest Family Services is a regional non-profit organization providing adoption, residential care, education and a boarding school for troubled youth, mental health counseling for adults and adolescents, and health and wellness services.

**Pathway to Hope**
(The Salvation Army)
Developed by The Salvation Army, the Pathway of Hope is an approach — to providing targeted services to families with a desire to take action to break the cycle of crisis and enable a path out of intergenerational poverty. Families accepted into the program will work with The Salvation Army Dubuque Corps team on an intensive basis, developing life skills and utilizing a range of resources to address their specific barriers to increased stability and sufficiency.

**Gaining Opportunities Initiative**
(City of Dubuque)
Part of the city's Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Gaining Opportunities provides resources to enhance self-sufficiency, helping individuals and families move out of poverty in a sustainable way. Its programs focus on enhancing opportunities for meaningful employment, education and training for the workplace, financial stability, accessibility to essential seeds, social capital, and the ability to navigate systems.

**Wraparound Services**

**Project HOPE**
Project HOPE is a city initiative that encourages and facilitates collaboration, communication, and advocacy among service providers, employers, and individuals seeking employment build bridges to rewarding, long-term employment that reduces existing disparities in employment and economic opportunities.
Employment

Staffing Providers:
Express Employment Professionals & Sedona Staffing Services

Express Employment Professionals and Sedona Staffing Services are top staffing companies that operate nationally and have a strong presence in Dubuque. Express offers employment solutions that include evaluation and hiring, direct hiring, and temporary staffing. These companies play an important role in connecting low and mid-skill workers, particularly those who are unemployed and/or may have limited work histories, with employers who have hiring needs.

Fountain of Youth

Fountain of Youth works with underprivileged youth and adults that come from generational poverty to help them re-imagine their self-image and potential. The organization offers individualized programming focused on mentoring and providing participants the necessary training and tools to become gainfully employed, as well as complete their GED and pursue higher education or vocational opportunities.
Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employee (ALICE)
Seeking a Better Paying Job

ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, is used to convey the struggles of individuals and families who are working and make above the Federal Poverty Level but are still unable to afford basic needs. According to the United Way of Dubuque Area Tri-States, 22 percent of Dubuque County households fit this criteria in 2016, up from 16 percent in 2014 and 14 percent in 2010.

There has been concerted effort within Dubuque to support create career pathways for low-skill, low-wage workers. Programs like Dubuque Works and Opportunity Dubuque are nationally recognized for their efforts to prepare a pipeline of employees and link this talent with capacity-strapped employers. IowaWORKS complements this work by connecting ALICE workers career development services, apprenticeships, and short-term training opportunities. Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) plays a pivotal role in serving workers seeking to upskill to better paying jobs and careers; NICC offers both Career Pathway Certificates to fast-track these transitions as well as hands-on career coaching to support students in and outside of the classroom. From our conversations with the Opportunity Dubuque Career Coaches and students at NICC, these programs and the case-based approach they adopt seem to make a real difference in the lives of participants. However, demand seems to far exceed the capacity of NICC staff, and for participants, transitioning from a low-paying job to a certificate program and the prospect of a higher-paying career pathway requires an at times risky leap of faith.
Programs & Initiatives

Dubuque Works
Dubuque Works is a nationally recognized collaborative regional partnership of employers, funding partners, workforce experts, and educators (including CFGD and many of the other partners listed below) which focuses on addressing local employers’ recruitment and retention priorities, developing the skills of Dubuque’s workforce, facilitating program evaluation, and promoting collaboration among regional stakeholders.

Opportunity Dubuque
Opportunity Dubuque is a vocational job training initiative run through NICC and developed in close collaboration with the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC) and local employers. The initiative focuses on upskilling low-wage workers into better-paying jobs and allows individuals to earn industry certifications (e.g., welding, certified nurse aide, IT programming) at no cost and provides job placement services upon completion.

Employment

AccessDubuque
AccessDubuque.Jobs.com is the top recruiting platform for the Greater Dubuque area and connects employers to qualified talent.

IowaWORKS
IowaWORKS is a collaboration between the State of Iowa Workforce Development agency and local partners. The program establishes IowaWORKS Centers around the state, which offer various services to connect people with jobs, such as: resume building, mock interviews, workshops, job search assistance, job fairs and hiring sessions, career development, re-employment services, registered apprenticeship opportunities, short-term training opportunities, unemployment assistance, job and pay data, and additional help for veterans and people with disabilities.
Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)

NICC serves eight counties in northeast Iowa and surrounding areas. It offers an array of programs, including more than 85 academic programs of study, online and blended learning, business and industry certifications training, and adult education and literacy classes. NICC is a critical player in many of the community partnership initiatives convened by CFGD and GDDC, including Opportunity Dubuque. It works closely with the business community to develop relevant skill-based curriculums, conducts outreach to attract unemployed, underemployed, and other low-wage workers, and provides extensive wrap-around services to high-needs students.

NICC is split into divisions focused on its: 1) 2-year associates degree and 4-year college transfer missions; and 2) Industry certification and business solutions offerings. However, the college is currently working to better integrate these programs.
New Dubuquers represent another important constituency within the workforce and social service ecosystem. The experience of newcomers helps to reveal the inclusivity and accessibility of the Dubuque community. From our conversations with stakeholders, newcomers tend to fall into two buckets: higher-skilled, educated professionals relocating to Dubuque for work or personal reasons, and people of color, particularly black, Latinx, and Marshallese communities. It is important to note that these buckets are not mutually exclusive and do not capture the intersectionality of experiences; for instance, a South Asian engineer working at John Deere, a Latinx student at Loras College, and an African-American transplant from Chicago will likely interact with available support services differently and experience varying levels of inclusiveness within the Dubuque community and their respective workplaces or classrooms.

Despite efforts to foster a more inclusive Dubuque and embrace a more diverse community, it appears that most of the high-profile efforts within the newcomer services ecosystem appear targeted toward the higher-skilled professionals relocating to Dubuque. Some efforts, such as the Dubuque Black Men Coalition, seek to bridge this gap, and others like the Employee Resource Groups at various employers serve to build community among working professionals, including those who relocate to Dubuque. Additionally, there are a handful of neighborhood-based organizations that provide services to people of color in Dubuque, including relative newcomers.
GDDC Newcomer Services
Greater Dubuque Development hosts the Newcomer Services Program, a one-stop platform for newcomers to help ease their transition to the Dubuque community. The program supports individuals and families who have chosen Dubuque and ensures they are “not only welcomed into the community, but also equipped with the knowledge needed to make the most of the experience.”

Big Life, Small City
Online platform hosted by GDDC that highlights the Dubuque community and shares various resources related to employment, education, housing, and things to do in the region.

Distinctively Dubuque
Free, interactive learning experience where newcomers gain valuable knowledge about the community, meet new people, and participate in networking activities with community leaders and residents. The program is a collaboration between GDDC and Northeast Iowa Community College.

Thrive Relocation Guide
Brochure developed by GDDC highlighting various newcomer services, including connecting new residents to employment opportunities, personal tours of the community, housing resources, classes about the community, education, child care, health care options, worship and recreational opportunities, and social and civic organizations.

Inclusive Dubuque
Inclusive Dubuque is a peer-learning network of partners committed to creating an informed, equitable and inclusive community where all people are respected, valued, and engaged. The network includes over sixty leaders from faith, labor, education, business, nonprofit, and government dedicated to advancing justice and social equity in their organizations and the broader Dubuque community.

Dubuque Black Men Coalition
The Dubuque Black Men Coalition is a network of black professionals who offer support and leadership for programs and services that help area youth grow and succeed. This group offers positive alternatives in educational, vocational, and recreational activities for African American boys and young adult men.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
ERGs are company-sponsored, employee-run organizations formed around a common dimension of diversity, interest, or experience that affects the workplace. Ex. John Deere and Prudential.

Employment
AccessDubuque
Employment opportunities for newcomers are predominantly posted on the online platform AccessDubuqueJobs.com.
Dubuque is home to four colleges and universities - University of Dubuque, Loras College, Clarke University, and Emmaus Bible College. These institutions serve a critical function as both a potential pipeline for the Dubuque workforce and an introduction to Dubuque for non-area students, particularly domestic and international students of color. During our stay in Dubuque, we learned about UD’s support for first generation college students and other students from underserved backgrounds and the efforts of the Intercultural programs at Loras to serve students of color on campus.

Dubuque Community School District
The Dubuque Community School District includes 18 schools with over 10,500 students. As the frontline of Dubuque’s demographic change, the school district plays a unique role in the ecosystem and appears to take this role seriously. There are ongoing efforts to diversifying its staff and embed trauma-informed pedagogy into its curriculum. The school district also hosts the Faces & Voices Cultural Celebrations initiative, which seeks to “create a more inclusive, integrated, and welcoming community.”

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)
In addition to the array of programs it offers students, NICC is a key partner in the Distinctively Dubuque program with GDDC.

Higher Education

Fountain of Youth
Fountain of Youth works with underprivileged youth and adults that come from generational poverty to help them re-imagine their self-image and potential. The organization offers individualized programming focused on mentoring and providing participants the necessary training and tools to become gainfully employed, as well as complete their GED and pursue higher education or vocational opportunities.

Dubuque Dream Center
The Dubuque Dream Center is a community outreach center committed to impacting youth, strengthening families, and building community, using the In Your Life Mentoring model. In Your Life Mentors are strategically connected around an individualized plan to provide a child with the assets they need to be successful in school and life. The program also includes an academic center, activities, healthy meals, character development curriculum, and family engagement.

Multicultural Family Center
The Multicultural Family Center works to “empower all families and community members of Dubuque to reach their potential and build unity through diversity, equity, and inclusion.” It provides a wide range of programming, as well as a space for community-building, for local youth, young adults, and families, from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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**Takeaways**

The project team recognizes that there are still unanswered questions related to the needs, interests, and motivations of those currently looking for work, struggling to keep a job, or combating generational poverty. During our visit to Dubuque, the project team met with a wide range of community leaders, nonprofit service providers, city officials, and business leaders; however, we directly interfaced with only a handful of job seekers or low-wage workers who fit our target population. This appears to be a broader symptom within the workforce development and social service ecosystem, as we consistently heard from local stakeholders about a lack of understanding regarding what motivates people living in generational poverty or struggling with compounding barriers to employment opportunities.

While this disconnect will not be resolved overnight, there are clear opportunities to elevate the voices and lived experiences of the residents these organizations seek to support and to practice more inclusive and empowering modes of policy making and programming, from engagement to co-design. To establish initial insights, the project team developed a brief survey to assess the relative potency of various barriers to employment, the primary motivations of job seekers, and the demographic makeup of those seeking yet failing to find employment. We hope these surveys and a spirit of design thinking will serve as a first step toward more inclusive, consistent, and collaborative engagement with low-income residents and people of color who navigate the workforce and social service ecosystem in Dubuque on a daily basis.
Distinctively Dubuque

Dubuquers take great pride in their city, state, and region. Over the years, Dubuque has been named one of America’s best places to live, raise a family, and find a job, among other accolades. Dubuque also enjoys a strong sense of community, perhaps as a result of this pride, coupled with its resilience and eventual triumphs in the face of adversity.

The dramatic downturn in the early 1980s stands out as a defining moment. Amidst the Dubuque Packing Company plant closure and significant layoffs at John Deere, Dubuque posted an unemployment rate of around 23 percent, the highest in Iowa. When speaking of this time, stakeholders and other residents consistently mentioned the mass migration from the city and oft-referenced slogan - “would the last person out of Dubuque please turn the lights off?”

Yet, the conversation quickly turned to the coalition of community leaders committed to fighting for Dubuque’s future and the series of initiatives that served to reinvigorate and diversify the local economy. By 2005, Dubuque was leading the entire Midwest in job growth, and as of 2018, the unemployment rate was below 2 percent. Today, Dubuque stands out for the extent to which strong civic institutions bring people together and businesses invest in the local community, reflecting the same spirit of collective action that resuscitated a city on life support in the 1980s.

That tight-knit community, which largely revolves around informal social networks among long-time residents, can be both a strength and hinderance. We heard many stories detailing frequently asked questions around where people went to high school and last names that don’t sound like those of long-time Dubuquers. However, Dubuque, like communities across the country, is changing; though people over 65 are roughly 99 percent white, one in five children in Dubuque is non-white. Over the years, several racially-charged incidents - including cross burnings - have stained the community’s reputation. Nearly all of the stakeholders we spoke with acknowledged that the effort to make Dubuque more inclusive and equitable for its growing communities of color remains a work-in-progress.

From our time in Dubuque and the conversations we had, we were heartened to see community and business leaders frame and approach diversity, equity, and inclusion as the next generational challenge for the community to rally and unite around. There seems to be a sense, at least among some community members, that how Dubuque adapts to a more diverse community will define its trajectory and potential, as well as a firm belief that if anyone is going to crack this riddle, “why not us.”
Soft Skill Gap

One of the most oft-mentioned terms of the two-week site visit in Dubuque was a “soft skill gap.” Through discussions with numerous community members and leaders, this “soft skill gap” seems to suggest that not all barriers to employment are as straightforward as transportation, childcare, or access. Some barriers are stickier and harder to understand. The repeated mention of soft skills, those personal attributes that allow one to interact harmoniously with others in context-specific settings, begs several questions. First, how has this gap arisen? Second, what can be done? Soft skills can be difficult to teach and to motivate as important. In many cases, an apparent lack of soft skills may only be the external manifestation of deeper root causes such as low emotional resources resulting from trauma and generational poverty.

Checking Assumptions About Dubuque’s Working Poor & People of Color

During a day visit to Maquoketa, a town in rural Jackson County, we met a man who grew up in poverty in the Chicagoland area and now runs factory operations for a multinational manufacturer. He shared a story about an experiment he recently ran, in which he offered a group of eight production workers in one of his factories a 50 cents pay raise from $11.00 to $11.50 per hour if they showed up to work on time every day for two consecutive weeks. After the two weeks, only one of his employees took him up on the offer. When we relayed this story to other community leaders in Dubuque, we were met with head shakes and disbelief.

This anecdote underscores what we perceive as a general lack of understanding of the motivations and goals of the working poor in Dubuque County, perhaps even those living in poverty more broadly. This disconnect is not unique to the business community, but rather, came up throughout our conversations with community leaders, hiring managers, and social service providers throughout stakeholder interviews and conversations. In this case, a 5 percent raise for the simple act of showing up on time may sound like a good deal to many, yet for whatever reason, that deal either was not compelling or was simply not possible for the eight production workers. If those looking to reach these populations in Dubuque are to be successful, there is a pressing need to understand what that “whatever reason” is.
Mutual Trust as a Foundation to Workforce & Community Integration

A foundational and persistent barrier to the integration of Dubuque’s communities of color into the workforce is a lack of mutual trust. Those who have seen the system exclude and fail them, who believe it was not designed to work for them, view outreach efforts by Dubuque’s civic organizations with suspicion. Integration into the workforce and broader community will require mutual investment, of services, dollars, time, and care from the city’s established interests as well as time, effort, and hope on the part of Dubuque’s underserved. Most critically, it will require trust.

Trust is not built, and more importantly, mistrust is not reversed, overnight. Fidelity and commitment to trust building, however, is essential for sustainable, well-informed impact. The disconnect regarding what motivates underserved Dubuquers and the disproportionate concentration of street cameras in the Washington neighborhood, where a majority of Dubuque’s Black community lives, are reminders that there is plenty of work left to do.

We did find agreement across multiple organizations on two key factors required to build trust: relationships and outcomes. There are no silver bullets to this work, yet confronting unequal power dynamics, treating community members as authentic and indispensable partners, and keeping “nothing about us, without us” in mind will go a long way to fostering strong relationships and ensuring outcomes achieve their intended impacts. There are no “easy wins” or shortcuts to building trust; it is an iterative and long haul project that will either unlock success or ensure failure.

An Opportunity for Strategic Alignment

Much like the moment of civic collaboration following the 1980s recession, the Dubuque business community has joined public and nonprofit leaders at the table to tackle the issue of workforce inclusion. Owners and hiring managers are frustrated that they cannot find enough employees to fill the roles they need to run their businesses at optimal levels. For the people of color that make up an inordinate portion of Dubuque’s unemployment labor force, the frustration of the business community is an opportunity. CEOs and business owners actively wonder how they can make their workplaces more hospitable to minority candidates, candidates who have been out of work for a while, or candidates who are living in poverty. However, this moment of tripartite strategic alignment will not last forever; there is a tacit understanding that should unemployment rise and encompass more of the population that could be more readily “plugged in” to a role there will likely be less energy and urgency among businesses to help solve the workforce inclusion challenge.
Based on the key findings summarized above, we researched best practices and precedent models that have been successful in helping other communities and organizations overcome similar challenges. The examples we identified, while not intended to serve as explicit recommendations, highlight interesting insights and innovative ideas that community leaders might wish to consider in devising strategies to overcome the challenges discussed herein. These case studies fall into three categories:

**Workforce Development:** Innovative workforce development models designed to bring individuals living in poverty who face multiple barriers to employment into the workforce and onto a sustainable, rewarding career path. The programs highlighted incorporate some or all of the following key features that could help strengthen Dubuque’s workforce development and social service ecosystem:

- Comprehensive, centralized wraparound services;
- Intensive soft-skill training;
- Transitional employment, in some instances through social enterprises; and
- Post-placement job retention support

**Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:** Rigorous research studies and evidence examining common best practices for promoting diversity, equity, & inclusion within organizations, along with a case study highlighting an interesting program that provides resources and support to communities working on issues of immigrant inclusion. The research on diversity, equity, & inclusion within organizations, intended to help support the on-going efforts of CFGD’s Business Leader Equity Cohort, emphasizes the importance of establishing data-driven systems and processes to promote accountability and transparency with respect to diversity, equity, & inclusion goals.

**Community Engagement & Co-Creation:** Programs designed to advance equity through intensive community engagement and a co-creation approach to developing strategies to serve those communities. These examples might help inform efforts to build mutual trust and overcome racial and socioeconomic divides in Dubuque.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
1. Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA RISE)
2. North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) U-Turn Program
3. Cara Chicago
4. STRIVE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION
1. Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies
2. Achieving Meritocracy in the Workplace
3. Welcoming Economies Global Network

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CO-CREATION
1. On the Table (The Chicago Community Trust & Knight Foundation)
2. Crossroads Charlotte (Foundation for the Carolinas)
3. MIT CoLab
4. MIT D-Lab Lean Research
Context

The first core element of our best practices research centers around innovative workforce development programs designed to help bring people living in poverty who face multiple barriers to employment into the workforce and onto a sustainable, rewarding career path. As noted throughout the discussion above, Dubuque has a wide range of non-profit organizations which, coupled with various government programs, offer a robust set of workforce development and social services. However, several consistent themes that emerged through our conversations with community leaders and subsequent research suggest potential opportunities to further strengthen Dubuque’s workforce development ecosystem.

First, as detailed above, the decentralized nature of the service delivery system - with a disconnect between employment and social services, provided by a vast array of different government and non-profit agencies - can be complex and potentially quite confusing for those looking to take advantage of the opportunities that it offers. This indicates that a more centralized, closely-coordinated wraparound service model could help improve program uptake and outcomes.

We also heard from a number of stakeholders about the considerable barriers facing some who remain unemployed or out of the workforce in Dubuque, as well as the challenges this poses for service providers and employers looking to work with these individuals. Based on our understanding, there appears to be room to improve the coverage model with respect to this population, many of whom may not qualify for certain existing programs like Opportunity Dubuque. As previously noted, one of the recurrent themes from our conversations with employers and service providers concerned deficiencies in the “soft skills” required to get and keep a job (e.g. coming to work on time every day, workplace etiquette, teamwork, conflict resolution, etc). In many cases, individuals may have limited work history, contributing (along with other factors cited above) to these soft skill deficits and making it more difficult to get hired. The same goes for the formerly incarcerated, those experiencing homelessness, and others with multiple barriers that require comprehensive social services in addition to workforce development training. Collectively, these challenges suggest that a wraparound service model - incorporating intensive soft skill training, subsidized transitional employment, and post-hire job retention support - could advance the Dubuque community’s efforts to help lift these populations out of poverty.
Overcoming Barriers to Employment through Coordinated Wrap-Around Services, Soft-Skills Training, Transitional Jobs, and Retention Support

Based on the considerations outlined above, we conducted research to identify successful local workforce development models designed to serve similar populations in other communities around the country. The programs highlighted below each include some or all of the following features:

- Centralized wraparound service delivery, integrating workforce development and other social services
- Intensive soft skill development training
- Subsidized transitional employment, providing paid work experience as a bridge to permanent job placement
- Post-placement job retention support to help participants overcome any barriers that emerge on their path to self-sufficiency

Some of the programs identified achieve these objectives, in part, through an innovative strategy that involves creating or partnering with local social enterprises. Social enterprises are mission-driven, revenue-generating businesses dedicated to hiring, employing, and training individuals - typically on a transitional basis - who face barriers to employment. These organizations integrate paid work and wraparound services to help employees enhance their skills and job readiness on the path toward self-sufficiency and permanent competitive employment. Moreover, because their profits are reinvested to further support their mission, social enterprises also provide funding that makes programs less dependent on external revenue sources and more sustainable.
Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA RISE)

Centralized wraparound services, transitional employment through social enterprises, soft skill training, and post-hire job retention support

**Location:** Los Angeles, California

**Key Organizations:** City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, The Roberts Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), social enterprises, non-profit workforce agencies & social service providers, for-profit employers, community colleges

**Target Population:** Formerly incarcerated individuals, those at risk of homelessness, and youth (18–24 years old) who are neither working nor attending school

**Program Description:** LA RISE is a centralized wraparound service model that provides specified groups facing significant barriers to employment (see further details on targeted populations above) with paid transitional work experience through social enterprises; job placement and retention assistance to secure permanent employment; intensive soft-skill training; and various personal supports (e.g. housing, transportation, legal services). The program was launched in 2015 as a partnership between the City of Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) and California-based non-profit REDF, supported by a $6 million Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Due to its early success, LA RISE is now available county-wide and funded locally by the City of LA and LA County, as well as the contributions of their non-profit partners and existing city, county, and state workforce development institutions.

The LA RISE program model, as illustrated in the figures on the next page, begins with paid transitional employment at a social enterprise. During this phase, participants receive intensive job readiness and soft-skill training, as well as comprehensive case management services, from workforce agencies (i.e. LA’s EWDD-contracted WorkSource Centers) which are physically co-located and organizationally embedded within these social enterprise employers. After completing a minimum of 300 hours in transitional work, and passing the LA RISE Job Readiness Assessment twice throughout that period, individuals are placed into either: competitive, permanent jobs with private sector employers or the City of LA; or, as applicable based on the person’s background, skills, and career goals, vocational training programs. Upon placement, participants continue to receive wraparound services (e.g. personal development, housing, health, financial literacy) for up to one year to help ensure job retention, overcome any barriers to self-sufficiency that may arise, and set them on a sustainable path toward long-term success and upward mobility.
The LA RISE model includes several particularly innovative elements that make it distinct as compared with most traditional transitional employment programs:

- **Social Enterprises**: Select examples of LA RISE social enterprise partners include:
  - **Homeboy Industries** is a chain of 10+ social enterprises that operate cafes/diners (including one at LA City Hall) and bakeries, provide catering services, and produce popular food items sold at local grocery stores (e.g. tortilla chips, baked goods), among other business lines. Homeboy primarily employs formerly incarcerated individuals, many of whom are ex-gang members, while providing comprehensive soft skill training, job placement, and other wraparound services.
  - **Chrysalis**, which provides similarly comprehensive services, while offering employment opportunities in street maintenance (through local government partnerships) and with its own staffing agency.
  - **Goodwill of Southern California**, which employs LA RISE participants in its own stores and various other jobs, providing support services along the way.

- **Coordination & Co-Location**: WorkSource Center partners are physically co-located on-site and integrated into the social enterprise organization. Agency and social enterprise personnel are reportedly viewed as one team, enabling a seamless user-centric case management experience for participants. Additionally, the program’s JobsLA/CalJobs data-tracking systems provide a common platform for all LA:RISE partners to communicate efficiently and share information. Collectively, these approaches have resulted in a unique level of close cross-agency coordination and integrated case management service delivery.
North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) U-Turn Program

Centralized wraparound services, transitional employment through social enterprises, soft skill training, and post-hire job retention support

**Location:** Chicago, Illinois

**Key Organizations:** North Lawndale Employment Network, Sweet Beginnings (NLEN-run social enterprise), City of Chicago, Cook County, State of Illinois, non-profit workforce agencies & social service providers, for-profit employers, community colleges

**Target Population:** Underemployed and unemployed residents of the North Lawndale neighborhood and surrounding communities who face significant barriers to employment

**Program Description:** NLEN is a non-profit that was founded in 2000, with the goal of helping to put formerly incarcerated individuals and others with significant barriers to employment on the path to permanent employment and self-sufficiency. The organization is funded by private donors, state and local government agencies, contributions from non-profit partners, and re-invested income generated by its wholly-owned subsidiary for-profit social enterprise, Sweet Beginnings LLC, which develops and sells all-natural skin care products featuring the company’s very own locally-produced honey. Through its signature U-Turn program, NLEN provides wraparound services and paid transitional work experience via Sweet Beginnings, supplemented by soft skill and credential-based training programs, as well as job readiness, placement, and retention services.

As depicted in the diagram below, the U-Turn program begins with an intensive four-week workshop focused on providing job readiness and life management skills, such as workplace etiquette, work habits, punctuality, teamwork and conflict resolution. Participants are then assigned a personal workforce coach and financial coach to guide them through the job placement process and provide a path to financial self-sufficiency. Importantly, this phase also involves transitional employment, typically through Sweet Beginnings, but in some cases with business partners as well. From there, workers are placed into permanent private-sector jobs or NLEN-affiliated skills training programs. They also gain access to NLEN retention support services for life and become part of the U-Turn Alumni Fellowship networking community.
North Lawndale Employment Network
Participant Flowchart

Referral from word-of-mouth, parole, community partners, faith-based organizations, Illinois Department of Corrections, and other stakeholders

North Lawndale Employment Network

U-Turn Permitted Program: employability and job readiness training or an abbreviated job preparedness workshop for formerly incarcerated men and women and others with multiple barriers to employment

Unsubsidized employment through business clients that provides income, work experience, skill building, and a career path

NLEN Workforce Development Coaching: simultaneous workforce coaching, life-management skills training, conflict resolution, career planning, academic skill enhancement, credential attainment, financial education, credit repair, etc.

Subsidized employment through Sweet Beginnings or other business clients that provides income, transitional work experience, workplace acclimation, skill building, and access to a career path

Transition to Self-Sufficiency

Post-Secondary Education
Private Sector Employment
Entrepreneurship
Career Path Advancement with Employer
Cara Chicago

Centralized wraparound services, transitional employment through social enterprises, soft skill training, and post-hire job retention support

**Location:** Chicago, Illinois

**Key Organizations:** Cara Chicago, Cleanslate Chicago & Cara Connects (both Cara-run social enterprises), City of Chicago, State of Illinois, non-profit social service providers, for-profit employers

**Target Population:** Underemployed and unemployed Chicago residents who face significant barriers to employment

**Program Description:** Cara Chicago, a non-profit founded in 1991, helps place individuals living in poverty - many of whom are recovering from addiction, experiencing homelessness, re-entering society after incarceration, or dealing with other significant barriers - put themselves on a path toward obtaining and maintaining quality employment. The organization derives its funding from private donations, state and local governments, the contributions of non-profit partners, and income generated by its two wholly-owned subsidiary for-profit social enterprises:

- **Cleanslate Chicago LLC** is a social enterprise that provides exterior maintenance services to customers across Chicago. It effectively serves as a vehicle for people with significant barriers to employment to build work experience through transitional jobs, while receiving intensive wraparound support services.

- **Cara Connects LLC** (formerly TCP Staffing), another Cara-owned social enterprise, serves a similar function within the program. Cara Connects is a temporary staffing agency that both directly employs participants as part of their transitional phase and manages employment, job placement, and retention services for other individuals in the program.
The diagram below illustrates the core tenets of Cara’s program model. The process begins with intensive full-time simulated workplace training that equips participants with industry credentials, other critical job readiness skills like digital literacy and workplace etiquette, and a set of personal development tools to help unpack, confront, and move past previous life challenges that may be holding them back. Next, individuals are placed into transitional employment jobs with one of the organization’s two social enterprises, while continuing to receive wraparound support services. Cara then works with its for-profit business partners—all of whom meet their job quality standards—to place participants into permanent, competitive entry-level jobs. Post-placement, Cara continues to work with their alumni for at least one year and often longer, providing support services to ensure retention and coaching to help advance their careers.
STRIVE

Centralized wraparound services, soft skill training, and post-hire job retention support

**Location:** Multiple cities across the U.S. (see local network affiliate organizations below)

**Key Organizations:** STRIVE International (Parent organization, New York City affiliate), Odyssey House (Flint, Michigan affiliate), A Safe Haven (Chicago, Illinois affiliate), Public Health Management Corporation (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania affiliate), L.I.F.E. North Carolina (Greenville, North Carolina affiliate), The Center for Working Families (Atlanta, Georgia affiliate), Center for Urban Families (Baltimore, Maryland affiliate), Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington (Washington D.C. affiliate), New Orleans Business Alliance (New Orleans, Louisiana affiliate), Second Chance (San Diego, California affiliate), Career Resources Inc. (Connecticut affiliate - Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury), Justice Resource Institute (Boston, Massachusetts affiliate), Westchester/ Putnam Workforce Board (New York State affiliate - Mt. Vernon, White Plains, Yonkers), local & state governments, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, non-profit workforce agencies & social service providers, for-profit employers, community colleges

**Target Population:** Under and unemployed individuals facing significant barriers to employment

**Program Description:** A non-profit organization founded 35 years ago in New York City by a Harlem native who had overcome multiple incarcerations and substance abuse issues, along with two socially-minded businessmen, STRIVE has since expanded to more than 20 U.S. cities; its innovative model has even been replicated in other countries around the world. The program aims to equip individuals experiencing chronic unemployment with the tools, skills, and support necessary to find a job and sustainable career path. The organization’s funding comes from private donors, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as state and local governments, federal grants, and resources contributed by its non-profit partners. Like the other programs described herein, STRIVE represents a distinct, innovative approach as compared with many traditional employment and training models. Featuring a relatively short and intense job readiness training sequence designed around behaviors and life situations common for individuals facing generational poverty and other barriers, along with job placement and long-term job retention support, the organization’s emphasis on career readiness has become a national model for improving job placement and retention.
STRIVE’s flagship career pathways program begins with a 10-12 week job readiness training delivered in three phases: Phase 1 focuses on mindsets and attitudes, fostering development of self-awareness, problem solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. Phase 2 is geared toward professional skills, such as communication, decision-making, and workplace etiquette. The 3rd phase then looks toward job readiness, covering topics like long-term career planning, resume writing, and interview preparation. Upon completing the workshop, participants receive intensive occupational skills training, earning industry-recognized credentials aligned with specific industries such as construction, food service and healthcare. Throughout the entire process, STRIVE provides wraparound services and supports, including childcare, health care, and housing. Lastly, upon earning their credentials, STRIVE graduates are matched with full-time job opportunities and provided with lifelong access to career development, job retention, and placement services.
PRECEDENT MODELS: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Context

Another critical step toward building a more robust, diverse workforce is to ensure that people of color and newcomers feel welcome, both at work and in the community. At the organizational level, this involves implementing human resource practices and policies that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. This has been a key focus area, yet remains an on-going challenge, for many companies across the U.S. and worldwide. From a local workforce and community perspective, it is also important to spread these best practices across all employers in the region and foster an inclusive environment for those underrepresented groups outside of work.

Recognizing the vital importance of these issues, CFGD and the Dubuque business community launched the Business Leader Equity Cohort last fall. The Business Leader Equity Cohort serves as a forum for top executives from Dubuque companies and other key stakeholder organizations to collaborate on efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations and create a more diverse local workforce and inclusive community, among other related objectives. Launched in October 2018, the group convenes every two months to share best practices, develop initiatives, and devise a regional strategy for achieving Dubuque’s diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

As noted above, while visiting Dubuque, we had the opportunity to participate in a cohort meeting and engage with the group about their work as it relates to our project. We also met separately with senior leaders from some of Dubuque’s biggest employers, including John Deere and Prudential, who are part of the cohort. From these discussions, it was clear that Dubuque’s business community is steadfastly committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, both individually and collectively, and that notable measures toward achieving these goals were either in place, under way, and/or being considered.

To build upon and support these efforts, we explored the available research and empirical evidence on diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices, identifying a number of interesting insights and ideas that the Business Leader Equity Cohort might find helpful in informing and advancing their work. It is important to note that our fieldwork certainly did not provide us with a detailed understanding of Dubuque employers’ specific approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion; thus, the insights and ideas discussed below are not intended to address any perceived deficiencies in the current practices of Dubuque employers. Rather, these national-level studies highlight common challenges faced by all organizations, along with potential remedies to move the needle on these issues.
Promoting Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion within Organizations

Through consultations with MIT faculty who specialize in this field, we came across two particularly eye-opening research briefings on diversity, equity, and inclusion practices within organizations. In both cases, the research is based on studies of real U.S. companies and provides evidence regarding the effectiveness - or lack thereof - of various popular diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies. The common thread emerging from this work is as follows: any successful program should include robust systems and processes that establish responsibility and accountability for meeting the organization’s diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.
Best Practices or Best Guesses?
Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action

Frank Dobbin (Harvard), Erin Kelly (University of Minnesota), & Alexandra Kalev (UC Berkeley)

This study measures the impact of three approaches commonly employed by companies to increase diversity:

1. Establishing organizational responsibility for diversity (affirmative action plans, diversity committees, full-time diversity-focused staff);
2. Addressing managerial bias with training and feedback (diversity trainings and diversity-specific evaluations & feedback);
3. Combating social isolation of women and minority workers within the organization (networking programs and mentoring programs)

As the authors note, each of these strategies is rooted in well-founded theories on the underlying factors that lead to a lack of diversity (e.g. lack of accountability, managerial bias, and social network isolation). However, this does not necessarily mean that commonly used approaches for addressing those issues are actually effective at doing so. Thus, using national data detailing 708 companies’ workforce composition from 1971 to 2002, as well as HR surveys to determine when various diversity initiatives were implemented, while controlling for a number of other factors, the researchers calculated the effect that these practices had on the share of African-Americans and women in managerial roles.
Key Findings

- Diversity training and diversity-based performance evaluations & feedback had little to no effect on improving managerial diversity.

- Programs that promote mentoring and networking for underrepresented groups had a modest impact on increasing representation in the managerial ranks.

- Initiatives establishing responsibility for diversity resulted in the most significant and widespread increases in managerial diversity. The two specific practices that had the largest impact with respect to both African-Americans and women were as follows:
  
  - **Diversity Staff:** Employing at least one full-time staff member, or creating a department, solely dedicated to working toward and monitoring the company’s diversity objectives, rather than leaving these efforts to front-line managers or staffers who have other responsibilities.
  
  - **Diversity Committees:** Creating a task force or committee, with the appropriate level of authority and responsibility, to oversee diversity initiatives, identify challenges and recommend solutions, and monitor progress toward the company’s diversity goals.

- Companies that employ these responsibility and accountability strategies also experience stronger improvements from networking and mentoring and diversity training and evaluation programs.
This paper highlights the “paradox of meritocracy.” This phenomenon describes how merit-based compensation and reward systems designed to ensure meritocracy in the workplace can unintentionally lead to race, nationality, and gender-biased pay disparities. Moreover, managers who think of their company as a meritocracy, based on having a formalized evaluation process and performance-based (as opposed to seniority) reward system, appear to be more likely to exhibit such biases. The author draws on three different studies. Two of them examined a large service company’s (over 20,000 employees) organizational practices and HR data, identifying evidence of bias in compensation decisions and the effective elimination of such bias upon implementing new procedures to enhance transparency and accountability. The other was an experiment involving MBA students with managerial experience, examining bias in pay, promotions, and termination decisions when individuals were primed to believe their organization’s evaluation and rewards system was based on merit, rather than seniority.

Key Findings

• Within a performance-based “meritocratic” system, managers awarded higher compensation to men than to women who had identical performance evaluation scores. When making these decisions in a non-meritocratic organizational context, the bias flipped – managers awarded higher bonuses to women than men.

There are several potential explanations for these contradictory findings. Perhaps believing that one’s organization is meritocratic causes managers to be less vigilant about their own individual actions. Meanwhile, those in an environment perceived to be less meritocratic may have been over-compensating for presumed biases in women’s performance evaluation scores.

• Within the large service organization studied, which had a performance-based “meritocratic” system, annual salary growth was lower for African-Americans, Hispanics, individuals born outside the U.S., and females than for white men.

This result was produced even after accounting for other relevant factors, effectively comparing people who had the same job, performance evaluation score, supervisor, etc.

• In all studies, there was little to no bias detected for promotion and termination decisions.

This could be because such decisions are more visible to others in the organization and thus, subject to potential scrutiny, than are compensation awards.

Achieving Meritocracy in the Workplace

Emilio J. Castilla (MIT Sloan School of Management)
After the service organization implemented new processes to improve transparency and accountability, the pay disparities were almost entirely eliminated.

The specific changes that were implemented included:

- Appointing a performance reward committee - consisting of employees from various divisions, at least one HR professional and one executive, and a new dedicated full-time staff focused on analyzing compensation data - to evaluate compensation decisions for fairness. As part of their role, the committee regularly distributed company-wide data on merit-based pay increases to all seniors managers, allowing them to benchmark their decisions against other work units to identify any unintentional biases.

- Providing this committee with the authority to modify compensation decisions made by employees’ supervisors, if deemed appropriate.

- Requiring supervisors to award compensation according to a standardized process based on employee performance evaluation scores. As part of this process, supervisors had to document the rationale behind their decisions.

The central takeaway from this research is that data-driven, systematic organizational processes that establish accountability and promote transparency can help companies overcome unintentional managerial biases across racial, ethnic, and gender lines in performance management and rewards decisions.

The author proposes a three-pronged framework for achieving meritocracy through accountability and transparency:

1. **Processes and Criteria**: How will performance-based pay be distributed among employees?
2. **Outcomes**: What rewards are being given to employees?
3. **Audiences**: Who is responsible for and who knows about the pay processes, criteria, and outcomes?

This general framework can be also applied to a range of other HR practices, such as recruitment & selection, access to training & professional development, and promotions.
Promoting Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion through Community Programs

In addition to creating a welcoming environment within organizations and spreading diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices to all local employers, another critical consideration involves ensuring that newcomers and 1st generation Dubuqers feel at home within their community. As noted throughout our analysis, Dubuque has a number of services to help newcomers integrate into the community. Yet it appears that challenges nonetheless persist. Moreover, though not specific to Dubuque, there is an extensive body of nationwide research and evidence showing that social networks play a significant role in shaping employment opportunities and outcomes; these studies also demonstrate that minority groups who are relatively underrepresented in certain industries, professions, and/or communities may be at a particular disadvantage. Therefore, community-wide programs aimed at fostering inclusion for newcomers and minority groups represent another potential opportunity to advance the goal of creating a more inclusive Dubuque.

While the following section delves into these issues in greater detail from a community engagement and co-design perspective, we also came across an interesting program that serves as a national network for organizations and communities working to improve immigrant inclusion.
Launched in 2009, Welcoming America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded on the principle that being welcoming leads to prosperity. Through a variety of programs and initiatives, Welcoming America provides a network of local governments and nonprofit organizations in more than 500 communities nationally and globally the roadmap and support they need to become more inclusive toward newcomers and all residents. Governments, nonprofits, and individual professionals working in immigrant inclusion are eligible to join the Welcoming Network. Members commit to advancing and institutionalizing welcoming efforts in their community, and they receive benefits including training, resources, networking, and leveraged funding.

Welcoming America has also partnered with Global Detroit to organize the Welcoming Economies (WE) Global Network, a regional network of more than thirty initiatives from across the Rust Belt. The Network serves to strengthen the work, maximize the impact, and sustain the efforts of individual local initiatives across the region that welcome, retain, and empower immigrant communities and their contributions to local economies. Members benefit from peer-to-peer learning exchanges, increased publicity, policy and research tools developed for immigrant economic development organizations, access to technical assistance, and other capacity building resources. Current members include the Greater Des Moines Partnership.
This study’s focus on racial equity and inclusion in the Dubuque workforce builds on the ongoing efforts led by the City of Dubuque and the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. We situate our best practices related to community engagement within this broader context and highlight precedent examples to strengthen these efforts through co-design and community dialogue.

Following the recommendations of a community member task force in 2005, the Dubuque City Council hired a consultant to work with the City to identify barriers to inclusion within the City apparatus. After assessing the organizational structure of the City, the final report led to a series of organizational changes to build capacity, including cross-departmental teams charged with intercultural communication, two new staff positions focused on coordinating workforce development and community engagement, and an expansion of the scope of the Human Rights Department to include a commitment to advancing equity and inclusion.

Additionally, these ongoing reforms have been supplemented by Inclusive Dubuque, a network of more than sixty community leaders from faith, labor, education, non-profit, and government working to advance justice and social equity in Dubuque launched by the Community Foundation, the City of Dubuque, the City Council, and other partner institutions. The Inclusive Dubuque network completed a Community Equity Profile in 2015, which reviewed indicators of community health, disaggregated by race, gender, and income, across a variety of areas including housing, economic opportunity, health, and education.

Following the completion of the equity profile, the City Council codified equity into its mission and vision statements and incorporated equity into the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the City of Dubuque established several cross-departmental equity teams and four organization-wide goals with an eye toward the long-term change required to embed racial equity within departments across the City apparatus.

These guideposts include:

- Advance equity through workforce recruitment and retention efforts;
- Advance equity through grant, contract, and purchased services agreements;
- Advance equity through service delivery and community engagement;
- Advance equity through collective impact partnerships
Advancing Equity through Community Engagement and Co-Creation

To advance and sustain equity, those left out and left behind must be partners in creating a more equitable and inclusive solution. Community involvement in planning and program design exists along a continuum from low to high intensity, depending on the goals and desired outcomes of engagement. The design and implementation of community engagement directly affects the impact of these efforts and the level of trust between communities and decision makers. Community involvement that aligns with the necessary level of input and clearly defines objectives can help set expectations and promote transparency. Other times, however, shallow involvement can limit the realm of possibility, tokenize community voices, and breed distrust among community members.

Our analysis adopts the following five-level community engagement continuum - from outreach to shared leadership - as a framework for investigating precedent examples. We are particularly interested in case studies that embody collaboration and shared leadership because these models are the rarest and the hardest to execute, yet provide the greatest potential for sustained impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>OUTREACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CONSULTATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ENGAGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>COLLABORATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SHARED LEADERSHIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Outreach**
   - Some community involvement.
   - Decisionmakers initiate an effort and provide information.
   - Establishes communication and outreach channels.

2. **Consultation**
   - More community involvement.
   - Decisionmakers gather information or feedback from the community to inform decisions.
   - Develops connections.

3. **Engagement**
   - Better community involvement.
   - Decisionmakers engage community members to shape priorities and plans.
   - Visibility of partnership established with increased cooperation.

4. **Collaboration**
   - Community involvement.
   - Decision makers and communities form partnerships on each aspect of project from development to solution.
   - Partnership and trust building.

5. **Shared Leadership**
   - Strong bidirectional relationship.
   - Final decision is at community level with participation and from decisionmakers.
   - Broader outcomes affecting broader community.
   - Strong bidirectional trust built.
The Community Innovators Lab (CoLab) is a center for planning and development within the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), which facilitates the interchange of knowledge and resources between MIT and community organizations. CoLab’s work is grounded in the belief that ideas and lived experiences of people at the margins of society can provide important insights into institutional failure and social exclusion.

Echoing a common Bronx rally cry, “Nothing about us, without us, is for us,” CoLab’s guiding principles include:

- Planning is a participatory discipline
- Marginalized communities possess critical experience, insights and knowledge for addressing systems failures and driving innovation
- Collaborative innovation with communities is the most effective way to generate sustainable solutions to local and global problems

**Participatory Planning**

Understanding and addressing complex problems like inequality, poverty, and socioeconomic inclusion requires diverse types of knowledge. Participatory planning recognizes that communities that live with and experience systems failures and engage in local problem solving hold valuable insights for generating solutions – making community knowledge as crucial as knowledge emerging from mainstream centers of knowledge production, such as academic and policy circles.

**Co-Production**

Co-production is explicitly meant to challenge the status quo of whose knowledge is most valued and seeks to increase the power of groups at the margins by building their capacity to define their own questions, design solutions, and ensure community ownership over the knowledge that is created.
MIT D-LAB LEAN RESEARCH

MIT D-Lab works with people around the world to develop and advance collaborative approaches and practical solutions to global poverty challenges. D-Lab approaches international development with a design mindset grounded in the following guiding principles:

- Use inclusive practices when designing FOR people living in poverty
- Engage in effective co-creation when designing WITH people living in poverty
- Build confidence and capacity to promote design BY people living in poverty

D-Lab uses a Lean Research framework which centers the experience of the human “research subject” in decisions about research design and implementation. The approach seeks to minimize burden on research subjects while increasing the quality of information gathered, improving the usefulness of findings, and maximizing the value of both the process and outputs to stakeholders, donors, and decision-makers. Drawing lessons from lean manufacturing as well as human-centered design, Lean Research focuses on continual improvement of the research process, particularly at “touch points” where researchers interface with research subjects, local partners, and others engaged in research production. It seeks to improve research outcomes by improving the experience of those most directly involved in research production and by orienting the process around their insights and priorities.

The four principles of Lean Research include:

1. **Rigorous**: conducted according to the highest standards of the research methodology that is best suited to the specific nature of the study.

2. **Respectful**: the dignity and delight of the human subject is placed at the center of the research experience, including a clear and informed consent process and power to review findings.

3. **Relevant**: clear value to stakeholders and addresses priority issues and questions for research subjects, study communities, as well as donors and decision-makers.

4. **Right-Sized**: research scope and methods are well-suited to the research objectives and the priority of the research questions to stakeholders.
On the Table is an annual civic engagement initiative pioneered by The Chicago Community Trust in 2014 that various community foundations, civic leaders, and community organizations have used to engage residents in dialogue about community issues. Since 2014, more than thirty communities have adopted the initiative and have collectively engaged more than 250,000 people across the country.

The Chicago Community Trust and the Knight Foundation partnered to create the On the Table National Learning Network—a virtual learning community for foundations, civic institutions and nonprofit leaders who have implemented or shown interest in replicating the On the Table model. This virtual learning community provides resources and support created for and by others who have implemented and adapted the On The Table civic engagement model to meet the needs of their local community. Members can engage with one another and share best practices, as well as access templates and inspiration from communities who have made this initiative their own.

The initiative was expanded by the Knight Foundation in 2017 and brought 40,000 residents in ten cities together in mealtime conversations to talk about ways to address pressing community issues. In 2018, the On the Table initiative partnered with community foundations in ten cities where the Knight Foundation invests, including Akron, OH; Charlotte, NC; Columbus, GA; Gary, IN; Lexington, KY; Macon, GA; Miami, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Philadelphia, PA; and San Jose, CA. Each city schedules one day when they will convene thousands of residents to share both a meal and ideas on how to make their city a better place to live and work, while identifying opportunities to address local challenges such as affordable housing, climate change, race relations, and urban design and public space improvements.
Crossroads Charlotte was launched in 2004 after the city participated in a national survey on social capital. The survey found high levels of faith-based involvement and philanthropy but ranked the city 39th out of 40 communities on social and interracial trust. Crossroads Charlotte was a collaborative civic project to remove barriers of mistrust and shape a positive shared vision for the future. Crossroads Charlotte engaged corporate and civic leaders to examine four scenarios for the city’s future and then craft deliberate steps to steer the community toward better outcomes.

The four vignettes included:

1. In “Fortress Charlotte”, Charlotte’s economy is in serious decline and the community is divided, with a widening gap in community income and rising tension between racial and ethnic groups;

2. In “Class Act”, Charlotte is a world-class city with a thriving economy, but old patterns of racial, ethnic, and social divisions remain;

3. “The Beat Goes On” tells the story of a Charlotte in which the economy is moving forward but technology-based companies in the new economy opt to bypass Charlotte for more creative, progressive destinations that do not harbor the same high levels of distrust, inequality, and resentment;

4. In “Eye to Eye”, Charlotte has a reputation as a tolerant and trusting community, where diversity is embraced as a strength and the new economy is not only robust, but is shared by all residents as the community works collectively to govern itself in trust and fairness.

The stories were produced in both written and video form and available on the project website, where Charlotte residents were asked to post responses and offer commitments for actions they will take to help craft the community’s future in more positive ways. These imagined stories have been presented in a variety of organizational settings – local corporations, government entities, nonprofit organizations, and schools have been asked to develop their own imagined storylines within these scenarios and identify specific positive actions they can take for a better future.

Over 1,800 people have participated in more than 30 public forums for initial community outreach and engagement. To-date, 33 organizations have introduced specific Crossroads Charlotte initiatives to advance equity and inclusion.
Precedent Model Sources

LA RISE & related social enterprises

- Program Website - City of Los Angeles
- REDF Website - Program Overview
  https://redf.org/larise/
- REDF Website - How It Works
  https://redf.org/larise-program/
- https://homeboyindustries.org
- https://changelives.org

North Lawndale Employment Network

- Program Website - Homepage
  http://www.nlen.org
- Program Website - Impact
  http://www.nlen.org/about-nlen/our-impact/

Cara Chicago

- Program Website - Homepage
  https://carachicago.org
- Program Website - Impact
  https://carachicago.org/our-numbers/
- Guide Star Profile
  https://www.guidestar.org/profile/36-4268095
- Third Way Article: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Workforce Programs
  https://www.thirdway.org/report/the-7-habits-of-highly-effective-workforce-programs
STRIVE

- Program Website - Homepage
  https://strive.org
- Program Website - Impact
  https://strive.org/about#our-impact
- Program Website - Network Affiliates
  https://strive.org/ouraffiliates#affiliates
- Program Website - Network Affiliates
  https://strive.org/ouraffiliates#affiliates

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

- Welcoming Economies Global Network: https://www.weglobalnetwork.org

Community Engagement & Co-Creation

- MIT CoLab: https://www.colab.mit.edu
- MIT D-Lab Lean Research: https://d-lab.mit.edu/research/lean-research
- On the Table: https://onthetable.com
- Crossroads Charlotte: https://www.fftc.org/our_initiatives
Dubuque Barriers to Employment Opportunities Survey

Our goal is to better understand the barriers to employment opportunity for workers in the Greater Dubuque Region. Your responses will be completely anonymous, and individual answers will not be shared. Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

1. What is your current employment status? (Check all that apply)
   - Unemployed/not working and not currently looking for a job
   - Unemployed/not working, but looking for a job
   - Employed, but looking for a job with higher wages, more hours, and/or better working conditions
   - Employed part time

2. If you have been unemployed in the past 12 months, how long in total were you unemployed?
   - Less than one month
   - One to three months
   - Three to six months
   - Six months to one year
   - More than one year
   - N/A – I have not been unemployed in the past 12 months

3. What are you looking for in a job? Please list 3 things that are important to you (ex. a higher wage, new skills, interesting work)

4. Below is a list of barriers that people might face when looking for or considering employment opportunities. For each barrier that applies to you, please rate the problem on a scale from 1 to 5: (1: minor problem → 3: moderate problem → 5: major problem). If the barrier does not apply to you, choose Not Applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>MINOR PROBLEM</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT PROBLEM</th>
<th>MODERATE PROBLEM</th>
<th>LARGE PROBLEM</th>
<th>MAJOR PROBLEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have trouble finding transportation to and from work</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't find dependable or affordable child care</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a criminal record</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug testing requirements may limit my work opportunities</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health issues may prevent me from being able to work certain jobs</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't find permanent housing</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will lose my benefits (ex. Medicaid, housing assistance, SNAP) if I work or earn too much income</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continue on the back ...
The jobs that I find don’t pay enough to cover my basic costs of living

I’m not sure how to search for a job or where to look for information on job opportunities

I can’t afford, or don’t know where to get, the training/education needed for the jobs that I want

I have problems in my personal support system

Any other problem (please specify)

5. In what year were you born?

6. Please select your race/ethnicity. (Select all that apply)
   - Asian or Asian American
   - Black or African American
   - White or Caucasian
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - Native American or Alaska Native
   - Marshallene or Other Pacific Islander
   - Other or Multi-Racial
   - Decline to Respond

7. To which gender identity do you most identify?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Prefer not to say
   - Other

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Check the highest level you have completed)
   - Less than High School
   - Some High School
   - High School Diploma
   - High School Equivalency Diploma
   - Completed career & technical education certification/license or apprenticeship
   - Some college education
   - Associate’s degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Above a Bachelor’s degree


10. How many years have you lived in the Dubuque area?

11. Any other thoughts or suggestions you would like to share?
## Best Practices or Best Guesses?
Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action

### Table 3. Estimated Average Differences in Managerial Composition Due to Adoption of Affirmative Action and Diversity Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Men</th>
<th>White Women</th>
<th>Black Women</th>
<th>Black Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmative Action Plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–1.8%**</td>
<td>7.6%**</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.2%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity Committee</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–3.0%**</td>
<td>13.9%**</td>
<td>29.8%**</td>
<td>10.0%**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity Staff</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–1.5%</td>
<td>8.9%**</td>
<td>14.3%**</td>
<td>14.3%**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity Training</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–1.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>–5.9%**</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity Evaluations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.720</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.024</td>
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<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>–8.3%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking Programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
<td>.702</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
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<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–2.6%**</td>
<td>6.7%**</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>–10.0%**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring Programs</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in year of adoption</td>
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<td>.216</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion with practice</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent difference due to adoption</td>
<td>–3%</td>
<td>–5%</td>
<td>23.5%**</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table was taken directly from the study cited above, which appeared in the American Sociological Review journal. * or ** indicate statistically significant results.
Community Engagement Continuum