

GENERATION WORK

Launched by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2015, Generation Work™ aims to connect more of America's young adults with meaningful employment by changing the way public and private systems prepare them for jobs. As part of the initiative, partners in five sites across the nation — Cleveland, Hartford, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and Seattle — are working to align various education, employment and support services to help young people develop the skills required to succeed in the working world; link them with employers; and increase advancement and earning opportunities.

By combining employer-facing strategies that are aligned to labor market needs with positive youth development techniques such as hands-on learning and mentoring, the initiative aims to blend services into more cohesive pathways that promote equitable employment opportunities for all young people.

INDIANAPOLIS

The Generation Work partnership in Indianapolis aims to improve the way skills-training and educational programs prepare young people, especially youth of color and those from low-income communities, for labor market success. By enhancing and expanding coaching and workforce development services, the partnership hopes to address barriers young job seekers face and connect them with career pathways that lead to family-sustaining wages.

Context

In Indianapolis, like many other cities across the nation, traditional education and training models are failing to equip young people, especially youth and young adults of color, with the skills and credentials they need to develop well-paying careers. Though the labor market overwhelmingly requires education beyond high school, only 39 percent of adults ages 25–64 in Greater Indianapolis and surrounding Marion County hold a postsecondary credential, compared to the national average of 48 percent.¹

Generation Work is focused on integrating a more robust set of services to ensure that students pursuing a postsecondary education also receive one-on-one coaching, occupational training and job-placement services that equip them with the skills, connections and support they need to succeed in the workplace.

¹ Lumina Foundation. (2019). *A stronger nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent*. Retrieved from <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#nation>

KEY PARTNERS

The core Generation Work leadership group in Indianapolis includes the following organizations:

- **Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana**, a nonprofit, operates The Excel Center[®], a free public school for adults who want to earn their high school diploma.²
- **Indiana Department of Workforce Development** oversees all state-led training, employment and adult education programs.
- **EmployIndy** is a nonprofit that serves as the local workforce development board for Marion County. A subset of its staff, called the business solutions team, focuses on developing relationships with local businesses to better understand their needs and ensure programs prepare job seekers to meet them.

The Indianapolis approach

The Generation Work partnership in Indianapolis is helping to embed employment development services and individualized career and life coaching within the adult education system.

Specifically, the partnership is adapting and integrating promising components of Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana's Excel Center coaching model, including comprehensive support services for youth and professional development opportunities for staff.

The Excel Center model pairs young people with a coach who helps them develop an action plan to meet their educational, employment and financial goals, and connects them with tools and supplementary services — such as transportation and child care assistance — to stay on track. The model also includes professional development and trainings on topics such as equity and inclusion, financial literacy, mental health and mindfulness to help coaches provide more customized support.

The Generation Work partners plan to expand this curriculum to include other elements, such as resiliency strategies, and will train additional direct services providers. They also plan to include these lessons and best practices in a formal tool kit that can be used for ongoing professional development.

Challenges

The shift from traditional case management, which primarily focuses on program compliance, to coaching, which centers more on the individual, can be challenging for adult education providers.

In the past, frontline staff used a standardized process to diagnose and address an individual's needs. Through Generation Work, they must now dedicate time and energy to build meaningful relationships with young people, understand their goals and create a plan together to meet those goals.

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² The Excel Center. (2019). *The Excel Center*. Retrieved from www.excelcenter.org

The Indianapolis partnership has also struggled with recruitment. With a relatively tight labor market and low unemployment rate, there are jobs in Indianapolis for young people who do not have secondary or postsecondary credentials. However, these options rarely offer the long-term career and advancement opportunities that credentialed positions do. It can be difficult to get young people to look beyond their immediate income needs to enroll in adult education programs that better position them to earn more in the future.

To overcome these hurdles, Generation Work hopes to strengthen outreach and engagement techniques and expand partnerships with other community-based groups.

Opportunities and next steps

The Generation Work partnership has a significant opportunity to embed high-quality coaching into more adult education programs throughout the region and, ultimately, provide a pathway for underserved young people to advance into well-paying careers.

To achieve this goal, the partnership will continue pursuing the following activities:

- Coordinate with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to integrate components of The Excel Center model, skill-building and credentialing opportunities and connections to work-based learning experiences.
- Disaggregate data by race and ethnicity to better understand and address disparities in high school completion, employment and postsecondary enrollment.
- Develop a tool kit with best practices and strategies related to coaching, employer engagement and career matching to provide young people with customized support.
- Strengthen relationships with employers and encourage them to develop work-based learning opportunities for students and invest in their career development.



WHAT IS A RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION (REI) FRAMEWORK?



A RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION (REI) FRAMEWORK helps identify strategies and target resources to address root causes of inequities based on race.



RACIAL EQUITY is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.



INCLUSION means authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, decision making and policymaking in a way that shares power.

SOURCE: www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information about REI, Generation Work and early lessons from across the five sites is available in the following resources:

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide: 7 Steps to Advance and Embed Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization*. www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Generation Work: Equipping Young People With In-Demand Employment Skills and Credentials*. www.aecf.org/resources/generation-work
- Child Trends. *The PILOT Assessment: A Guide to Integrating Positive Youth Development into Workforce Training Settings*. www.childtrends.org/publications/the-pilot-assessment-a-guide-to-integrating-positive-youth-development-into-workforce-training-settings
- The Aspen Institute. *Now Jobs in Young Adult Workforce Programming*. <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/06/Now-Jobs-In-Young-Adult-Workforce-Programming.pdf>