

# 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.

## NORTHEAST OHIO

In Northeast Ohio, the Generation Work partnership aims to develop a coordinated and accessible workforce system that blends positive youth development and demand-driven strategies to build quality career pathways for young people of all backgrounds. The initiative is designed to address the needs of young adults with an initial focus on 18- to 24-year-olds who are enrolled in federal workforce development programs and eligible to receive public benefits.

### Context

Traditional education and training models are failing to equip young people, especially youth and young adults of color, in Greater Cleveland and surrounding Cuyahoga County with the skills and credentials necessary to land jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.<sup>1</sup> African Americans are less likely to find employment, and when they do secure work, on average earn lower pay than their white counterparts. At the same time, employers in the resurgent manufacturing sector, health care, information technology (IT) and other areas of economic growth, have difficulty filling job openings.

The Generation Work partnership in Northeast Ohio is addressing the systemic and institutional barriers to work that young adults of color and other youth from low-income families face and helping them attain the necessary education and training to secure meaningful careers.

<sup>1</sup> Policy Matters Ohio. (2017, August 9). *Cleveland youth face barriers to good jobs*. Retrieved October 4, 2018, from <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/fair-economy/work-wages/workforce-development/cleveland-youth-face-barriers-to-good-jobs>

## KEY PARTNERS

In Northeast Ohio, the Generation Work partnership is made up of nonprofit youth service providers, workforce development organizations, local government and funders. The core team includes the following:

- **Towards Employment** is a workforce development organization that builds career pathways to successful, long-term employment while creating a talent pipeline for local businesses. It partners with Youth Opportunities Unlimited to provide services on behalf of the public one-stop career center, OhioMeansJobs|Cleveland-Cuyahoga County (OMJ|CC), at the Young Adult Resource Center (YRC).
- **Youth Opportunities Unlimited** helps teens and young adults succeed by providing educational and workforce opportunities, skills development courses and access to career pathways. It partners with Towards Employment to provide services at the YRC.
- **The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board** operates OMJ|CC, which houses the YRC and administers Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. The Workforce Development Board also supports a very active standing subcommittee called the Youth Council.
- **Cuyahoga County** administers state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding and workforce development programming through its offices of human services and economic development.
- **The Fund for Our Economic Future** is a collaborative of foundations, corporations, universities, health care systems, private businesses and civic agencies that focuses on advancing economic growth in Northeast Ohio.

## Northeast Ohio's approach

The Generation Work partnership in Northeast Ohio provides a framework for local policymakers and providers of workforce services for young people to share new learning, strengthen referral relationships, improve data accessibility and promote racial equity efforts. The partnership's framework relies on three primary strategies designed to improve current practice, connect and align systems actors and institutionalize change.

The first strategy supports the enhancement of the Ohio Means Jobs Young Adult Resource Center. Established in 2010 as a local effort to strengthen services to youth, the Generation Work partners use the YRC to measure and refine positive youth development strategies, improve employer engagement and sector strategies and pilot new and innovative workforce services. Under a contract with OMJ|CC, the center is run by Towards Employment and Youth Opportunities Unlimited, two of the region's leading workforce development agencies. Young adults can drop in to the YRC to access training, employment, mentoring and services that remove barriers and help them connect to career pathways in growing industries.

The second core strategy focuses on leveraging a consortium of TANF providers to spread innovation and coordinate among service providers. While the YRC provides a single service delivery location, the Comprehensive Case Management Employment Program (CCMEP) Workforce Consortium<sup>2</sup> offers access to a wider range of young adults and providers in the region. Initially convened in 2017, the Consortium brings together public benefits coordinators and workforce training providers to extend summer work experiences throughout the full year — therefore increasing the career pathway options available to more young adults.

The third strategic component leverages the Youth Council, a standing subcommittee of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board that is chaired by a business leader and includes representatives from providers of young adult workforce services as well as public representatives from the city of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The Generation Work partners provide strategic and administrative support to build the capacity of the Youth Council, enabling it to lead the development of a shared community vision for young adults, streamline employer access to services and use of

<sup>2</sup> Ohio's CCMEP is a state initiative that mandates the integration of TANF and WIOA funds, starting with youth and young adults. The Cuyahoga County CCMEP plan was developed with Generation Work partners at the table, and it includes Generation Work priorities.

learn-and-earn strategies and improve data- and information-sharing mechanisms.

This work is being conducted with a keen focus on racial equity and economic inclusion. Generation Work supports ongoing efforts to build awareness of systemic racism and implicit bias. Specifically, the team is investing in a “back map,” which outlines the data contributing to wage disparities between white young adults and young adults of color. They will follow this with training on a Racial Equity Impact Analysis tool for providers of youth services and will engage industry associations to build awareness of implicit bias in hiring among member companies. Finally, the Generation Work-Northeast Ohio team will collect data disaggregated by race so that programming decisions can be made in ways that improve outcomes for youth and young adults of color.

## Opportunities

Through the YRC, the CCMEP Workforce Consortium and the Youth Council, the Generation Work partnership in Northeast Ohio aims to grow the effectiveness of workforce and young adult services in Greater Cleveland by building connections and alignment among public agencies and nonprofit service providers throughout the region. There is an opportunity to guide the community in developing a shared vision for young adults, streamlining outreach to employers and improving access to information and data.

## Challenges

The Northeast Ohio partnership has identified several key challenges to achieving its objective of a more aligned and coordinated system for serving young adult jobseekers:

- The need for a shared vision among nonprofit, public and employer stakeholders. The Generation Work partnership in Northeast Ohio seeks to develop a cohesive regional strategy to ensure that programmatic efforts align with industry demand and are intentionally inclusive of underserved communities.

- The disconnect between existing youth development programming and the workforce-related needs of businesses in the region. To foster greater alignment, the partners are engaging employers to ensure the training and education young people receive is tailored to the specific demands in high-growth industries.
- The complex and complicated workforce development system, which can make it difficult for young adults to access available services and resources. Through Generation Work, the team in Northeast Ohio hopes to align the programs and organizations in the YRC to provide a coordinated access point for young people who seek services. As the work moves forward, the team will need to balance the immediate demands of providing high-quality services to young people with implementing broader systems change.

## Measuring success

The Generation Work partnership in Northeast Ohio defines success as producing a coordinated and accessible workforce system in Cuyahoga County that blends positive workforce development with demand-driven strategies to build quality career pathways for young people of all backgrounds. The following conditions will help build such a system:

- Young adults are aware of and can access a YRC with innovative career pathway programming *and* the public sources of support needed to help them be successful.
- Generation Work partners, providers beyond the YRC and community stakeholders are supportive of and engaged in efforts to increase the quality of young adult programming by promoting best practices, sharing innovations and facilitating learning.
- The Youth Council’s work promotes positive youth development, demand-driven strategies and racial equity; it is recognized as the strategy table for the young adult workforce; and policy recommendations and decisions emerging from the Youth Council are applied across systems.
- Employers, workforce providers, funders and other stakeholders understand the racial disparities in young adult wages and are engaging in learning and peer discussion about how to reduce them.

## 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](http://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information about REI, Generation Work and early lessons from across the five sites are 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/](http://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](http://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](http://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>