

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. Partners in five sites across the nation — Cleveland, Hartford, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and Seattle — are working to align 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.

PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia, the Generation Work partnership is creating pathways for young people who traditionally have been disconnected from economic opportunity — primarily youth of color and those from low-income communities — so they can attain the skills and credentials needed to succeed in the local labor market.

Context

Among the nation's 10 largest cities, Philadelphia's poverty rate tops the chart at 26 percent.¹ Overall employment growth in the region has been slower than in other parts of the country, and a significant share of jobs has shifted from the city to the suburbs. Though median wages have risen among white Philadelphians over the last several years, the city's education and training systems have struggled to connect low-income residents of color — especially young people — to well-paying jobs in the regional labor market.

Recognizing this, Mayor Jim Kenney recently joined forces with public and private stakeholders from across the city to launch a comprehensive strategy that aims to align Philadelphia's education and workforce systems with the business needs of employers in high-growth industries.²

The Generation Work partnership is playing a key role in this effort by working with city leadership and workforce practitioners to develop strategies that build capacity and increase quality job opportunities for the city's 18- to 29-year-olds.

¹ Pew Charitable Trusts. (2017, November). *Philadelphia's poor: Who they are, where they live, and how that has changed*. Philadelphia, PA: Author. Retrieved from www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2017/11/pri_philadelphias_poor.pdf

² City of Philadelphia. (2018). *Fueling Philadelphia's talent engine: A citywide workforce strategy* (Executive summary). Philadelphia, PA: Author. Retrieved from www.phila.gov/media/20180205133527/2018-WORKFORCE-PLAN_FINAL_SPREAD.pdf

KEY PARTNERS

The Generation Work partnership in Philadelphia is made up of the following four organizations:

- **District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund**, an educational trust fund, leverages its relationship with a large network of nearly 100 industry partners — including hospitals, nursing homes, home care and behavioral health organizations and early childhood centers — to provide young people with training and education opportunities, career coaching and wraparound services that enable them to gain the certifications and credentialing necessary for careers in the health care and human service fields.
- **YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School** helps young people ages 18–20 earn a high school diploma while gaining work-based learning experiences in key industries, such as child care, health care and construction, in a supportive, community-oriented environment.
- **Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN)** is a local collaborative composed of workforce development funders committed to increasing equitable access to family-sustaining jobs and careers for individuals in the Greater Philadelphia region. JOIN is led by the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey and is an affiliate of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.
- **Philadelphia Youth Network** coordinates and supports a network of organizations that develop solutions and provide services designed to equip 12- to 24-year-olds from low-income families with the education and employment experiences needed to prepare for well-paying careers in the local labor market.

Philadelphia's approach

Generation Work provides a platform for local policymakers and service providers to share new lessons, strengthen referral relationships, improve data accessibility and promote racial equity efforts on behalf of Philadelphia's young people. The partnership relies on three primary strategies that it hopes will help improve practice, connect and align funding and institutionalize change to strengthen education and training pathways.

The first strategy seeks to increase practitioners' capacity to combine positive youth development techniques with best practices from the adult workforce and education field. The Generation Work partners established a peer learning exchange for six local workforce providers — District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, YouthBuild Philadelphia, JEVS Human Services, Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Temple University's Center for Social Policy and Community Development and PowerCorpsPHL — to share lessons on everything from referrals, recruitment and program fit, to racial equity and inclusion principles, trauma-informed care and funding sources.

The second strategy seeks to increase and align funding for workforce and educational support for young adults. The

Generation Work partners are leveraging the Philadelphia Youth Network and the Job Opportunity Investment Network to engage additional funders and city officials and secure their buy-in on a shared set of goals and strategies.

The third strategy seeks to develop and institutionalize more equitable hiring, advancement and retention practices by strengthening engagement among employers and service providers. Using a racial equity and inclusion framework (see page 4), the Generation Work partners are helping employers and other stakeholders understand, through trainings and other learning opportunities, the ways various systems and policies either help or hinder young people of color and those from low-income communities from reaching their full potential. Many local employers have embraced the Generation Work approach and are helping to support young adults as they join the workforce and move along career paths. For example, a prominent coffee chain holds hiring fairs and professional development workshops for YouthBuild students; provides coaching for those who interview with or work for the company; and is working to change its corporate policies to make it easier for applicants to overcome barriers to employment, such as criminal records.



Challenges

Organizations serving youth and young adults in Philadelphia often lack funding to provide the comprehensive programming and wraparound services needed to help young people from low-income communities succeed in the workplace and in life. Local partners cite a need for more professional development opportunities for staff of practitioner organizations, particularly in technical skills such as employer engagement, work-based learning and career coaching, as well as racial equity and inclusion training.

Matching a young person to the right program is another challenge. Youth and young adults sometimes require additional services beyond what their first placement can offer and may need to be referred to another program. They may also discover that a particular industry or job doesn't align with their interests, or they may face life circumstances that interrupt their participation.

The District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund and YouthBuild Philadelphia have an established set of career programs and continually work to expand the offerings. With better coordination and collaboration among organizations, the partnership is working to offer the most promising referrals to increase a young person's chances for success.

Opportunities and next steps

With growing interest from Mayor Kenney and others in the public and private sectors to develop talent pipelines, the Generation Work partnership has an unprecedented opportunity to develop a coordinated and accessible workforce system that connects more young people of color and those from low-income communities with jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and offer career advancement opportunities in high-growth sectors.

The following conditions will help build such a system:

- Employers, workforce providers and funders should understand factors behind racial disparities and engage in learning and peer discussion about how to reduce them.
- Generation Work partners and other service providers should support and engage in efforts to increase the quality of young adult programming by strengthening recruitment and referrals and promoting positive youth development, along with demand-driven and equity-focused practices within their own organizations and among peers.
- City government and system leaders should be willing to promote and embed Generation Work goals into legislation, administrative action and public planning efforts.

As the Philadelphia partnership continues driving these efforts, it remains focused not only on increasing young people's wages, but also on providing the support and guidance they need to realize their goals and attain the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

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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 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
- 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>