

# 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.

## HARTFORD

In Hartford, the Generation Work partnership is creating career pathways to help young adults ages 18–29 who are unemployed or not in school attain the skills and credentials needed to succeed in high-demand industries.

### Context

Despite regional job growth since the Great Recession, the city of Hartford's unemployment rate of 6.2% is nearly double the statewide rate.<sup>1</sup> Recent budget constraints have made it more difficult for education and training systems to prepare low-income residents of color — especially youth and young adults — to meet local business demands and secure long-term careers.

Generation Work is helping education and training providers implement the most effective workforce strategies, better integrate data and assist employers in adopting practices that lead to greater hiring and retention of the city's youth and young adults.



<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Labor. (2019). *October 2019 - Current monthly data*. Retrieved from <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/laus/lmil23.asp>

## KEY PARTNERS

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

- **Capital Workforce Partners**, the region's workforce development board, helps individuals overcome employment barriers and closes the gap between skills and local hiring needs.
- **City of Hartford Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation**, which oversees early childhood education and other youth programming, works to ensure young people ages 9–24 achieve academic success and self-sufficiency.
- **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**, the region's largest community foundation, brings together organizations to share information, understand local issues and apply resources to effective solutions.
- **Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative** brings together stakeholders, including funders, public partners and service providers, to collectively implement strategies that connect Hartford's youth to education and employment.
- **Our Piece of the Pie**, a community-based organization, helps young people develop educational, employment and personal skills that contribute to their success.
- **United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut**, the partnership's convener, mobilizes people and resources to support youth success and economic mobility, providing individuals with training and education that lead to stable jobs and family-sustaining wages.
- **Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford** is a funders' collaborative committed to developing an educated, economically self-sufficient workforce that meets employer needs through sector-based partnerships.

## Hartford's approach

Generation Work provides a platform for local policymakers and service providers to share lessons, improve access to data and promote racial equity. The partnership relies on three primary strategies designed to improve and align education, training and support services, and better connect youth and young adults with opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials and advance in careers.

The first strategy aims to engage young people and identify and promote effective practices that help them gain skills needed for employment in high-demand industries, such as manufacturing. Through the Young Adult Action Network, Generation Work partners help young people shape activities and programs that affect them. Partners also helped launch the Hartford Data Collaborative, a group of local nonprofits, workforce organizations and public institutions that will facilitate information sharing, integration and analysis to find the most effective strategies for serving young people seeking work.

The second strategy seeks to improve workforce practitioners' abilities to incorporate these practices into their work. For

instance, the partnership has supported the Workforce Leaders Academy — a fellowship program for the heads of community-based organizations, colleges, workforce development groups, government agencies, labor unions, employer groups and others — to learn how they can develop, implement and sustain employment initiatives for young people. The academy shares lessons from other workforce efforts and teaches leadership, planning and racial equity skills.

The third strategy seeks to ensure young people obtain jobs that fit their interests and accommodate their needs. Using connections through the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford, Generation Work partners are helping employers develop policies for onboarding, scheduling, training and supervision that better serve young workers. An example is adopting trauma-informed practices, such as training supervisors to coach employees on how to manage and process anger. Partners are also promoting racial equity and inclusion frameworks and practices (see page 4) that encourage the hiring and retention of young people of color — such as staff trainings on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

## Challenges

Organizations that help young people find employment in Hartford have traditionally worked in isolation and developed separate programming and metrics for success. Many of these organizations have also struggled to coordinate their efforts directly with public institutions and employers. In addition, public resources for specific skill-building and credentialing programs are scarce — making it difficult to prepare youth and young adults with the education and experience needed to meet local business demands.

Given this, mentorship and career-readiness organizations are partnering with skill-building and credentialing groups and building connections with employers to expand opportunities for young people to obtain work training, internships and other on-the-job opportunities.

## Opportunities and next steps

Generation Work partners in Hartford have an opportunity to use their strengths to help more young people find quality career opportunities in high-demand industries — such as manufacturing — and facilitate better collaboration among workforce organizations, community nonprofits, educational institutions and employers.

To achieve its goals, the partnership will continue pursuing the following activities:

- Support the Hartford Data Collaborative by ensuring its sustainability and improving its governance and data reliability.
- Build the capacity of youth and workforce development practitioners to serve young adults through the Workforce Leaders Academy and other initiatives.
- Strengthen relationships with employers and provide coaching to increase understanding and adoption of practices that encourage the hiring and retention of young adults, especially those of color.
- Develop a tool to inform workforce practitioners of the various sequences and combinations of services, educational opportunities and credentials that lead to well-paying jobs and career advancement for young people.

Generation Work provides a platform for local policymakers and service providers to share lessons, improve data accessibility and promote racial equity.



## 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 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/](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>