



Ten Years of Impact Report

SEPTEMBER 2022



CHICAGOLAND
WORKFORCE
FUNDER
ALLIANCE

TEN YEARS OF IMPACT

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Message from **Matthew Bruce**, Executive Director, **Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance**



I am thrilled to see the release of this report about the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance's first 10 years of impact. Obviously the work of the Alliance is very important to me, both professionally and personally. Every day, I try to remind myself what a privilege it is to lead an effort that centers the values I hold most dear: collaboration, systems thinking, persistence, and equity. The impacts we are so proud to highlight in this report all stem from the combination of these values. If we can continue to center them, I believe a regional workforce funder collaborative will play an essential role in Chicagoland for many years to come.



Message from **Andrea Sáenz**, Interim President and CEO, **The Chicago Community Trust**



The Chicago Community Trust is proud to be one of the original investors and the host of the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance. Ten years on, we see the power of collaboration and civic leadership that has helped elevate employer-led solutions to our region's workforce challenges.

The Funder Alliance has become a go-to resource and partner to workforce development funders looking to grow their impact and those just beginning to explore the idea. Their commitment to raising the floor for wages and working conditions across the Chicago region and creating ladders to family-sustaining careers aligns with the Trust's goal of closing the racial and ethnic wealth gap.

The collaborative approach at the heart of the Funder Alliance's ethos will continue to enable equity, cohesion, and connectivity across all systems, making it easier for all Chicagoans to find their way to a fulfilling career.

Congratulations on 10 Years of Impact!



Message from **Amanda Cage**, CEO & President, **National Fund for Workforce Solutions**



Since its inception 10 years ago, the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance has been essential to the National Fund for Workforce Solutions' network. The team at Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance is always eager to explore new ideas and pilot new programs to invest in the workers and employers in the Chicago area. They consistently step up to take on new challenges to push the field of workforce development forward. The work they have done to enshrine job quality and racial equity as foundational elements of their mission is so vital to their success. The

National Fund is looking forward to seeing the incredible work we know Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance will do over the next 10 years.

Executive Summary

The [Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance](#) (CWFA or the Funder Alliance) envisions an equitable and prosperous Chicagoland built by employer, worker, and community collaborations. Its mission is to foster these efforts, and to help ensure their impacts reduce racial disparities in employment and earnings. CWFA was launched in May 2012 by five workforce funders: [The Chicago Community Trust](#), [The Joyce Foundation](#), the [Lloyd A. Fry Foundation](#), the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) and the [Polk Bros. Foundation](#).

Since then, the Funder Alliance has become the region's major convener of the philanthropic community interested in workforce development and employment, having grown from 5 to 14 fully pooled funders and another 14 partially pooled funders. Using a combination of grant-making and civic leadership, the Funder Alliance has created a unique position for itself at the complex intersection of social justice, education, workforce and economic development.

In order for the labor market and workforce development to help close the region's racial and ethnic wealth gap, CWFA believes it must pursue three major systems changes:

Employers

Through changes to their own practices, employers can foster both the stability and mobility of their workers

Workforce System

By developing greater capacity, the workforce system can provide more and better services

Workers

If workers have more power in the labor market, job quality will improve

At its core, CWFA is a collaborative, and so collaboration is the engine that drives both CWFA and its approach of creating, empowering, and investing in initiatives that advance the following: Collaboration among employers that leads to positive employer practice changes. Collaboration within the workforce system that leads to greater resources and improved system performance. And, collaboration across workers and worker-led organizations that leads to greater worker power.

Collaboration allows a group to do the things its members never could on their own, and this is the essence of the Funder Alliance. CWFA was created by and for workforce funders so that they could have greater collective impact.

The 5 Ls of Collaboration



Leverage

increased resources



Learning

better informed



Leadership

stronger voice



Logistics

more agile



Leaps

greater risk

The pages that follow highlight initiatives of the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance.

The Genesis Movement

The **Genesis Movement** was the result of the Funder Alliance awarding [Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center \(IMEC\)](#) a planning grant to support the development of an Industry Workforce Partnership for manufacturing. In 2013, IMEC and the Funder Alliance began to partner with The Hitachi Foundation on their work with “Pioneer Employers” — a term for employers that derive their competitive advantage in ways that require investment in their frontline workers. With a grant from The Hitachi Foundation and substantial additional funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, IMEC and the Funder Alliance launched The Genesis Movement, which continues its impact today.

The Genesis Movement recognized that process and product optimization did not have much impact without improvements on the “people” side too. People-Process-Product became the mantra of Genesis, and IMEC began to build out its own ability to help manufacturers improve their HR practices. By 2016, two years into an implementation grant, Genesis stopped being an experiment for IMEC, and instead became its preferred way to do business.

People-Process-Product became embedded in IMEC’s new strategic plan, and wherever possible IMEC attempted to engage employers in the “Genesis Way,” long-term, holistic and cognizant of the interdependence between labor and capital in best-in-class companies.

IMEC assists more than **1,600** manufacturing companies annually with improvement and innovation projects using the “Genesis Way”

[The Genesis Evaluation Report](#) is a companion evaluation report conducted by partners at [The Aspen Institute](#).



“From day one, our experience with the CWFA was built upon a learning agenda...together and collaboratively. We created an initial plan of action. As we gained new insights, we recreated our approaches. We always have had full support from CWFA. We are a changed IMEC. We evolved and are evolving our mission and how we integrate job quality in everything we do. As a result, the companies we assist are changing and integrating job quality in their work settings. These investments are accruing ongoing positive community benefits every day throughout Illinois.”

Dave Boulay,
President, IMEC

Click Here to Watch How the The Genesis Movement is Improving Job Quality for Frontline Workers



Raise The Floor Alliance

Since 2013, the Funder Alliance has invested in Chicagoland's worker centered movement, helping eight grassroots worker centers to unite and form the [Raise the Floor Alliance \(RTF\)](#). Built on the successful Working Hands Legal Clinic and its Public Welfare Foundation funded Just Pay for All Coalition, RTF is a first-of-its-kind worker centered coalition.

Together, they empower low-wage workers to improve workplace standards and advance policies for dignified, family-supporting jobs. They work to fight wage theft, push back against employer retaliation, expose and prevent discrimination and occupational segregation among low-wage industries, and stand up for essential health and safety standards for workers.

Through a combination of worker empowerment, legal services, and policy advancement, RTF has succeeded at raising standards for low-wage workers across Illinois by:

**Helping workers
win back over
\$20 million in
stolen wages**

**Reaching over 1.1 million workers
in Illinois during the pandemic
and educating them about their
safety rights on the job**

**Distributing critical
personal protective
equipment at
2,562 worksites**

**Supporting 725 compliance
referrals to public health &
employment agencies**

**Notifying 881 employers about their
employment responsibilities throughout
the COVID-19 Pandemic**

RTF has been an important part of significant policy progress in Illinois, including passage of the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, the Responsible Job Creation Act, minimum wage increases in Chicago and Illinois, fair scheduling policies, earned sick time policies, and more.

**Click Here to Watch How Raise the
Floor is Empowering the Worker Voice**



**RAISE
THE
FLOOR**

“Since our founding, CWFA has been a steadfast champion of Raise the Floor Alliance and the Chicagoland worker center movement to realize stable, dignified jobs rooted in racial and economic justice. Not only has our partnership significantly advanced the workforce development field by tackling the greatest threats to job quality and worker power, but also it has made possible the opportunity to amplify our achievements to national audiences. We applaud the Funder Alliance for reaching this critical milestone, and look forward to the next decade of collaboration ahead!”

Sophia Zaman,
Executive Director, Raise the Floor Alliance

Construction Initiatives

In the spring of 2017, the Obama family made a \$1 million gift to the Funder Alliance with instructions to use the funding to support a “generational shift” in Chicago’s building trades workforce. The Funder Alliance created the [Obama Building Equity Fund \(OBEF\)](#) and started designing philanthropic investment strategies including:

- » Creating a **Barrier Reduction Fund** to reduce discrete barriers to success on the path to a building trades career.
- » Creating and supporting career pathway and apprenticeship programs through [Hire360](#), [Chicago Women In Trades](#) and [St. Paul’s Community Development Ministries](#).
- » Developing and supporting the Construction Workforce Strategy Group. The core premise is that construction contracts and employment opportunities should be distributed more equitably across the region’s communities so that construction buyers can work together, coordinating their policies, strategies and investments, in order to have a greater collective impact.

Over **440 candidates** have received over **\$250,000 in assistance**, helping launch countless of great careers since the inception of this fund

“Without the support of the Chicago Workforce Funder Alliance, HIRE360 would not exist. The funding gave us the ability to put together partnerships necessary to launch our industry-led coalition. Further, their support was critical in launching our barrier reduction fund which has paid for a first set of tools, boots, or stipends for hundreds of new apprentices. We cannot thank the Funder Alliance enough for their generous, early, and impactful support.”

Jay Rowell,
Executive Director, Hire360

Click Here to Watch How Employment is Creating Opportunities



Apprenticeship 2020

Apprenticeship 2020 was a Chicago-based collaborative of philanthropies committed to growing equitable access to apprenticeships in nontraditional fields. It was funded by The Pritzker Traubert Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, JP Morgan Chase, The Joyce Foundation, The MacArthur Foundation, The Salesforce Foundation and by CWFA. Apprenticeship 2020 coordinated closely with the Chicago Apprentice Network, an employer-led collaboration co-created by Aon, Accenture and Zurich North America.

This Network was and is the driving force behind apprenticeship expansion efforts in the Chicago region. Apprenticeship 2020's strategy was to develop infrastructure, build systems capacity and test new solutions to address employer barriers in launching apprenticeships and other types of work-based learning models. The \$3.2 million fund invested in City Colleges of Chicago, enabling it to build its Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning,

and it helped expand the capacity of organizations like One Million Degrees, the only organization in Illinois providing pre-employment training, mentoring and wrap-around services to community college students.

"Through the support of partners like the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance, Career Launch Chicago (CLC) was able to launch our inaugural cohort of Youth Apprentices from all over the city. CWFA's invaluable connections within the workforce development ecosystem was an important factor in the success of this program."

Stephanie Gomez,
Director of Career
Launch Chicago,
City Colleges of Chicago

of Chicago or the Chicago Apprentice Network, all receive classroom learning, paid on-the-job training, mentorship, and access to career pathways with family sustaining compensation. The workforce systems infrastructure of these initiatives and institutions is the lasting legacy of the Apprenticeship 2020 Fund.



Career Launch Chicago launched a pilot cohort of **50** apprentices starting in 2020, with a goal of growing the initiative to **1,000** apprentices by 2024.

In 2019, Apprenticeship 2020 helped to create **Career Launch Chicago**, a collaborative initiative between Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, the City of Chicago and the business community. Career Launch Chicago's mission is to scale the impact of youth apprenticeship opportunities for young Chicagoans. Support from Apprenticeship 2020 was critical to helping the new initiative secure national funding through the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship or PAYA. Career Launch Chicago now focuses on creating work-based learning opportunities for CPS students that will connect them to City College integrated pathways and careers in the areas of information technology, manufacturing, and healthcare.

All the apprentices touched by the investments of the Apprenticeship 2020, whether through Career Launch Chicago, the City Colleges

CHICAGO APPRENTICE NETWORK

CITY COLLEGES
OF CHICAGO



Network of Employer-Led Workforce Solutions

“Through the Chicagoland Healthcare Workforce Collaborative, CWFA provides a space for healthcare employers to develop and share innovative workforce solutions, respond to the rapidly rising demand for healthcare talent, and promote inclusive hiring practices.”

“CWFA champions employer-led workforce solutions in Chicagoland by bringing diverse stakeholders and projects together to learn from each other, leverage shared resources, and seek systems-level change.”

April Harrington,
Project Manager, Chicagoland
Healthcare Workforce
Collaborative

The Network for Employer-Led Workforce Solutions (NEWS) is a hub for Chicagoland employer-led partnerships to network and develop shared resources. Launched in 2021 by CWFA and Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, NEWS promotes employer collaboration on shared workforce challenges and provides tools that facilitate connecting with other employers and community resources.

CWFA and Cook County wanted to create a space for the existing sector partnerships to obtain the support they need to thrive and to build an infrastructure to launch emerging sector partnerships and other employer-led initiatives.

NEWS was inspired by the success of CWFA-supported sector partnerships such as [Chicagoland Healthcare Workforce Collaborative](#), the [Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership](#) and the Early Childhood Workforce Partnership.

NEWS is grounded in the belief that collaboration among employers can create benefits for employers, workers and communities. By engaging with NEWS members, employers have made positive

By engaging with NEWS members, employers have made positive changes, including implementing equitable hiring practices, increasing on-the-job training opportunities, and helping define industry-wide career pathways that can lead to family-sustaining wages.

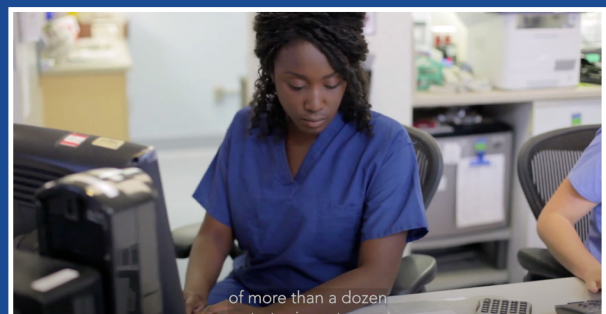
changes, including implementing equitable hiring practices, increasing on-the-job training opportunities, and helping define industry-wide career pathways that can lead to family-sustaining wages.

All NEWS members believe employer participation in workforce development is a necessary condition of business success at both the individual and sector level, and it is critical to sustainable and equitable economic development.

NEWS | NETWORK OF EMPLOYER-LED
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS



Click here to learn more about the Network of Employer-Led Workforce Solutions



Talent Solutions Connector

The **Talent Solutions Connector** is an online directory of workforce services available to Chicagoland employers. Many employer tables have informal methods for employers to share talent solution resources and services with their peers. However, there was no consistent method for capturing, maintaining and sharing this information. The Talent Solutions Connector allows employers to share their positive experiences with workforce service providers and make new connections to services already available in the region.

Built for employers, by employers, the Talent Solutions Connector helps employers find, train, and retain the talent their business needs to succeed.

“Being part of the development for the Talent Solutions Connector was an excellent experience. 1. You were part of a solution for employers designed by employers. 2. You were able to collaborate with other employers to help fill the knowledge gap on important workforce development resources. 3. As an employer/end-user, I was able to get a glimpse into the complex development process of such a tool. If someone has the opportunity to be part of a project like this I'd highly recommend it.”

Kraig Kistinger,

Director of Human Resources,
National Tube Supply

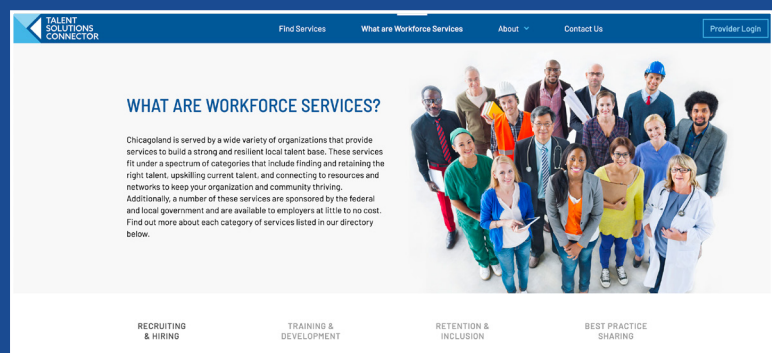
The creation of the Talent Solutions Connector was made possible by the collaborative work of CWFA, Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, [Origami Works Foundation](#) and an engaged group of employers. By engaging employers throughout the development and design process, Talent Solutions Connector became a tool that is both intuitive to employers and provides a service they truly need. The connections made through the Talent Solutions Connector foster strong, resilient, diverse, sustainable talent pools that are mutually beneficial for employers and workers.

220 Total services included in Talent Solutions Connector

125 Total providers with 13 sectors served

1,572 Users since launching in November 2021

Click Here to Visit the Talent Solutions Connector Website



**TALENT
SOLUTIONS
CONNECTOR**



Pro Path Fund

The Pro Path Fund is a funder collaborative established in 2015, composed of CWFA and a group of education funders in pursuit of a shared vision: a Chicagoland education and workforce system with a seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary programs.

Pro Path Fund's aim is to change the "college for all" mindset, replacing it with an accessible, well-connected, transparent career pathway system with multiple entry and exit points. This career pathway system actively centers postsecondary opportunities that may come before, in addition to, or instead of a four-year degree program. These opportunities, referred to as Progressive Pathway programs, include vocational training, stackable credential programs, and apprenticeships, among others.

The Pro Path Fund works with partners like [Chicago Public Schools](#), [Chicago Jobs Council](#), and [Youth Guidance](#) to conduct research, develop new frameworks, create resources for educators and future workers, and make systematic change in how the education and workforces systems function together.

Chicagoland CareerPathways

The Pro Path Fund supports [Chicagoland Career Pathways](#), the only free and open online directory of Progressive Pathway programs in Chicagoland. What began as a list of postsecondary opportunities for young adults has expanded to include programs for adult career-seekers and changers. Chicagoland Career Pathways hosts events to support all its stakeholder by:

- » Connecting interested individuals with programs
- » Sharing vast stores of data on Chicagoland's progressive pathway system with decision-makers
- » Connecting interested funders with vetted programs
- » Creating professional development opportunities for secondary and postsecondary guides and instructors

Click Here to Watch How Chicagoland Career Pathways is Strengthening Progressive Career Pathways



"As primarily a funder of education, we have learned so much from being part of CWFA. The Pro Path Fund was able to hit the ground running and have impressive impact in a short period of time because of the existing expertise at CWFA. Pro Path initiatives like CareerPathways.net have filled a unique need, and we are thrilled to see them continue to expand."

Christy Uchida,

President, Brinson Foundation



Chicago Jobs Council Career Readiness Framework



Long-term CWFA partner, the [Chicago Jobs Council](#) (CJC), developed an innovative framework that confronts the systemic racism inherent in many workforce development programs and centers jobseekers as the agents in their own journey. The [Career Readiness Framework](#) educates workforce professionals to develop a new mindset and to prioritize:

Knowledge
and Adoption
of Behavioral
Science Research

Racial Equity
Practices

Trauma-Informed
Approach

Client-Centered
Mindset

To bring the Career Readiness Framework into practice, CWFA has supported CJC to incorporate it into its capacity building and training services for the region's workforce development ecosystem. By working with the career readiness instructors and leadership staff at its member agencies, CJC is helping transform how those agencies think about and deliver services to job seekers. This work is also a companion to a Funder Academy for CWFA members or affiliated workforce funders.

The Funder Academy will focus on rethinking workforce success metrics, evaluating the “logistics” of grant-making to better align with effective practices, and shifting the culture of philanthropy to embrace a more grantee-driven approach.

CJC and CWFA are taking a hard look at the shortcomings of the workforce system and the philanthropy that helps fund it. By being honest about our shortcomings and fully committing to racial equity, the Career Readiness Framework will lead to a better workforce system for all of Chicagoland.



SNAP to Success Intermediary

SNAP to Success Intermediary is part of the Illinois Department of Human Services' SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program. It leverages federal funding to partner with community providers who help SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) participants find employment or advance in their careers.

In 2020, CWFA, IDHS and the National Able Network partnered to launch an expansion of SNAP to Success Intermediary with a focus on increasing the number of organizations that can provide work and training resources for SNAP recipients in Illinois. The joint effort supports small and medium-sized workforce providers to participate in the SNAP to Success Intermediary program by helping these smaller nonprofits build a more robust back-office infrastructure.

National Able Network serves as the intermediary and centralizes provider selection, monitoring, reporting and fiscal accountability requirements for the SNAP to Success Intermediary program in Chicago. This has helped a significant number of agencies that typically cannot partner with the state because of burdensome reporting and compliance requirements.

The expansion of SNAP to Success Intermediary represents

Over **\$600,000** of new resources realized in less than 2 years

both a short- and long-term strategy by immediately providing more meaningful opportunities in the community for skills training while expanding the long-term capacity and resiliency of the workforce system.

12 new providers brought into the SNAP E&T Network

“The SNAP to Success intermediary has proved to be a crucial addition to the Chicago area’s workforce system by helping to expand opportunities for area service providers and SNAP recipients alike. The Intermediary has enabled multiple community-based training organizations to expand their vocational training offerings to in-need individuals by providing access to funding and resources that wouldn’t have otherwise been utilized. This critical function has resulted in millions of federal dollars being distributed at the local level to train and provide hundreds of SNAP job seekers with access to employment within high-growth industries and family-sustaining jobs. We anticipate that the Intermediary will continue to be a conduit for area training providers to grow their service footprint and expand services to job seekers and communities throughout the Chicagoland area.”

Matt Weis,

President, National Able Network



Looking to the Future

Celebrating 10 years of the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance allowed us to celebrate the growth and success of our initiatives over the last decade. It has been a natural time to reflect on our work, what we have learned, and where we need to focus going forward. It has been the greatest privilege for the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance to invest in the work of our partners and promoting that work is what celebrating 10 years of impact is all about.

But we are also excited about what's coming in the years ahead:

- » In 2023, the [Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access](#), which we sponsored, will lead to some of the most impactful changes to the governance of Illinois workforce development in over a decade.
- » Over the next three years our [Network of Employer-Led Workforce Solutions](#) will play an integral role in the newly awarded \$18.5 million grant from the Good Jobs Challenge funded by President Biden's American Rescue Plan. Thanks to this grant, employers in Healthcare, Public Health, Technology, Transportation, Distribution & Logistics, and Manufacturing that we have been supporting for years will have significant new resources to drive their impact.
- » We will develop new strategies to address what we call the Social Determinants of Work. These are things like access to quality affordable childcare and affordable, reliable transportation, as well as systems-level challenges that affect all of workforce development.
- » And we will increase the linkages between the traditional workforce development field and workers' rights organizations. Through our new Worker Rights Fund we will center workers and worker empowerment, supporting workers on their career journeys towards greater dignity and prosperity.

To make progress on these challenges, we know we'll need to foster funder collaboration and find great partners whose work we can empower. We hope you'll continue to partner and collaborate with us as our work continues to grow and evolve.

Click Here to Learn More About CWFA's Impact Throughout the Last Decade



The CWFA Team: Cyndi Bergstein, Matthew Bruce, Kylin Fisher, Adrian Esquivel, and Nadine Fields (Left to right)

Thank You to our Leadership Funders

Polk Bros. Foundation*

J.P. Morgan Chase

Michael Reese Health
Trust

Pritzker Traubert
Foundation

Robert R. McCormick
Foundation*

The Chicago
Community Trust*

The Chicago
Foundation for Women

The Christopher Family
Foundation

The Harry and Jeanette
Weinberg Foundation

The Joyce Foundation*

The Lloyd A. Fry
Foundation*

The Woods Fund of
Chicago

United Way of
Metropolitan Chicago

*Founding Funders

Thank you to our many partners for
all of their generosity, efforts, and
commitment throughout our 10 years!